

The Eight Manifestations of Padmasambhava



*This is a special offering for everyone: a magnificent and in some ways cross-culturally seminal discourse on the **Eight Manifestations of Padmasambhava**, given by the late Khenchen Palden Sherab Rinpoche, in May 1992, at Padma Gochen Ling, in Monterey, Tennessee. This nearly eight hour discourse was translated by his brother, Khenpo Tsewang Dongyal Rinpoche. As stated in the colophon of this work, the tapes were then transcribed by members of the Turtle Hill Sangha and edited by Padma Shugchang.*

*We now reproduce the work in its entirety, with the kind permission of **Turtle Hill Sangha**, and the very best wishes of **Digital Tibetan Buddhist Altar**.*

This presentation is in keeping with our wish to make certain fundamental teachings available to everyone during the coming year. As Padmasambhava's followers, we can -- and will -- accomplish great things, when we learn to set aside any transient differences we may experience, and unselfishly work together for the benefit of all sentient beings. Rich appreciation of our shared tradition's fundamentals makes that possible. May your efforts in this regard bring you comfort and joy.

*My father is wisdom and my mother is voidness.
My country is the country of Dharma.
I am of no caste and no creed.
I am sustained by perplexity,
and I am here to destroy lust, anger and sloth.*

-Guru Padmasambhava

An Introduction

The year of the monkey is known as the year of Guru Padmasambhava. It is a very special time during which to discuss his teachings. According to the lunar calendar, today is the twenty-ninth day of the month, tomorrow is the new moon, and the day after tomorrow is the first day of the third month of the Tibetan calendar. All these aspects are very auspicious. I take this as a sign that you all have a special connection with Guru Padmasambhava, so I feel very happy to be here.

Those of you who are practicing on Guru Padmasambhava through visualization, chanting the Seven Line Prayer and reciting the Vajra Guru Mantra already know something about who Guru Padmasambhava is. But for those who aren't familiar with him or the benefits of practicing on Guru Padmasambhava, I will give a brief introduction so that you will be in a better position to receive teachings about his various emanations.

In the Tibetan language, Guru Padmasambhava is generally referred to as Guru Rinpoche, which means "precious master." Guru Rinpoche is a totally enlightened being, a fully awakened one, a buddha. He did not become enlightened gradually or start practicing the teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni and eventually gain enlightenment.

Guru Rinpoche incarnated as a fully enlightened being. Through his form, primordial wisdom manifested in the world to benefit all sentient beings.

Buddha Shakyamuni actually predicted Guru Padmasambhava's appearance. Nineteen different sutras and tantras contain clear predictions of his coming and activities.

In the *Mahaparinirvana Sutra*, Buddha Shakyamuni announced his parinirvana to the students who were with him at the time. Many of them, particularly Ananda, the Buddha's cousin and personal attendant, were quite upset upon hearing this.

So Buddha turned to Ananda and told him not to worry: "Eight years after my parinirvana, a remarkable being with the name Padmasambhava will appear in the center of a lotus and reveal the highest teaching concerning the ultimate state of the true nature, bringing great benefit to all sentient beings." Buddha Shakyamuni said that Padmasambhava would be even more enlightened than himself. Of course, Buddha Shakyamuni was fully enlightened and there is no higher realization, but by the Buddha's manner of expression, we can begin to understand the importance of Guru Padmasambhava. Some accounts hold that Guru Rinpoche is a direct reincarnation of Buddha Shakyamuni. Buddha Shakyamuni also said Padmasambhava would be an emanation of Buddha Amitabha and Avalokitésvara and referred to him as the embodiment of all the buddhas of the three times. Many prophecies indicate that Guru Rinpoche would be a fully enlightened buddha, appearing in this world to help sentient beings.

For the most part, Buddha Shakyamuni presented Hinayana and Sutra Mahayana teachings, while Guru Padmasambhava taught the Vajrayana. Both revealed the complete and perfect path to awakening so that individuals of all capacities would be able to benefit. The absolute level of the Buddha's teaching is beyond conception. If it did not go beyond the conceptual level, there would be no need to change our normal way of understanding things. To help us realize the primordial nature, Buddha Shakyamuni taught again and again that we must transcend clinging to ordinary dualistic conceptions, narrow attitudes, close mindedness, traditional rules, beliefs and limitations.

The ultimate meaning of the highest teaching is not readily understood by sentient beings. This is why Buddha Shakyamuni kept silent for forty-nine days after his enlightenment. He thought, "I have realized the most profound and subtle dharma, the clear light free of all complexity. However, this is much too deep for normal people to understand. Therefore, I will remain silent." He knew how hard it would be to communicate the truth of his insight. Although he eventually taught tirelessly for forty-five years, his first thought reflects the extraordinary nature of the state into which he had awakened relative to mundane ideas and conceptions.

Sutra is a Sanskrit word meaning "condensed or summarized." Scripture bearing this title indicates that these teachings were directly communicated in the world in order to provide a clear understanding of both the relative and absolute aspects of our existence.

They provide knowledge with which a practitioner can realize buddhahood.

Most of Buddha Shakyamuni's teachings address ordinary beings and offer a direct means of understanding the nature of our experience. It is a non-esoteric view which appeals to common logic, with tenets that can be verified by close observation of the elements which constitute our everyday world. With this knowledge, you can move toward enlightenment. This is the basic intention of Sutra Mahayana.

The Vajrayana is also known as *Tantra*. Tantric teachings are based upon the Sutra Mahayana, but offer additional means and methods. Vajrayana practices encourage us to take a deeper look at our perceptions, to understand the primordial nature and learn to maintain mind in that state. The Sutras may be called general teachings which clarify the nature of conditional mind and perception, while the Vajrayana reveals the secret structure of phenomena and is for more advanced practitioners. Although they share the same foundation, the Vajrayana goes further toward understanding transcendental reality. To practice both Sutra and Tantra together can bring enlightenment within this life, even within a very short period of time. Such acceleration distinguishes Vajrayana techniques.

The Buddha only gave Vajrayana teachings privately, to select groups of disciples. Because the essence and even the form of these higher teachings is beyond common conception, they are also known as secret teachings. After the Buddha entered mahaparinirvana, these secret doctrines were preserved by a host of wisdom dakinis.

When Guru Rinpoche appeared as the reincarnation of Buddha Shakyamuni, he revealed the Vajrayana teachings in their entirety. This is why Guru Rinpoche is known as the Buddha of the Vajrayana.

Our present knowledge is limited to the inputs of the six sense-consciousnesses. There is a horizon to what you can see. You hear sounds within the spectrum detectable by human ears. The flavors and fragrances you are aware of are within the limits of your senses of taste and smell. What you feel is conditioned by your sensitivity, and what you think reveals the parameters of your mental concepts. We do not really extend beyond that. These six define the frontiers of our knowledge and comprise the individual point of view.

We can ignore what lies beyond our senses and imagine such things cannot exist, but there really is much more to life than what we perceive.

We only notice one percent and habitually ignore the ninety nine percent still to be discovered. Our knowledge is very limited. We shouldn't block our ability to learn by assuming that what we cannot see does not exist and is not possible. This kind of thinking obstructs further knowledge. It is as if we don't really want any illumination.

We block all openings and sit there in the dark. You must open the door. This is the initial form of ignorance to be recognized. It is always necessary to stay open and be aware that there is an infinity of knowledge still to be discovered.

For example, if somebody next to you were threading a needle, it would be pretty obvious what they were doing, whereas from a hundred yards away, you would see neither the needle nor the thread. You might even imagine that there was no needle simply because you couldn't see it. This is the limitation on knowledge gleaned through the power of the eye. It doesn't mean there is nothing there. You just don't see it. There are a great many things to be discovered beyond our present understanding.

Beings who realize great equanimity discover the infinite energy of the true nature and can perform many beneficial activities using their eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body. They will not always act conventionally or in ways we normally understand. They may do things which don't fit in with our common perceptions. Phenomena which seem to go beyond physical limitations are sometimes referred to as miracles. At times, those who have the capacity will display miraculous phenomena in the common world. People who don't believe in the possibility of miracles think these stories are myths, metaphors or fairy-tales. In truth, there are people who can do amazing things, just as the ancient masters did. Don't ignore certain aspects of the universe by thinking those are just stories. The universe contains an infinite variety of wondrous qualities and activities.

These actions are incomprehensible from the ordinary, mundane viewpoint. They manifest to help destroy all conventional approaches to knowledge. Ego-based discrimination and habits have separated the world into samsara and nirvana. These dualistic notions are the only real cause of unhappiness.

Guru Padmasambhava breaks through that dualistic pattern to lead us into perfect enlightenment, beyond conception.

In order to have a deep understanding of the meaning of Guru Padmasambhava's activities, it is important to keep an open mind. We must go beyond our present conceptual limitations. See your tendency to doubt and criticize, and how that fills your mind with contradictions. Don't restrict your mind to the tyranny of having to affirm or deny. Most of our decisions are based in simplistic conceptual polarities. We ignorantly believe in the adequacy of this way of thinking and assume that what we don't see does not exist. If you create sharp divisions and cling to narrow definitions of subject and object, whatever you see will always appear in the context of those limitations. When you see something, you can say, "Yes, that exists," but what you do not see in the state of direct perception is easily denied. In Buddhism such views are known as obscurations or dualistic conceptions. They do not lead to true knowledge or wisdom, but are based in ignorance. It is ignorance which defines the world and puts limitations on our vision. We have to break through this barrier in order to understand the perfect activities of Guru Padmasambhava's emanations and the infinite possibilities of the true nature.

Dissolving fixed conceptions and not clinging to the limitations of sentient perception reveals the vastness of the true nature, the sphere of great equanimity. By breaking down the walls of rigid thinking, we merge with this evenness, seeing everything as inseparable and flowing in continuous transformation. This is also known as interdependent origination. In the Dzogchen teachings, it is called the unimpeded openness of the true nature.

Dzogchen is the highest teaching, but more precisely, Dzogchen is the real situation, the reality of all phenomena. Practice helps us break through the walls of ego-clinging and merge with the infinite expanse where anything is possible and everything arises perfectly without moving out of the sphere of equanimity. All of Buddha Shakyamuni's teachings, from the Hinayana on through to Atiyoga, are designed to transcend dualistic conceptions and actualize the full range of marvelous activities that arise within this profound equanimity. This is the central point of the Dharma and the inspired intention behind the actions of every great master. Guru Padmasambhava's teachings offer a direct path to actualize this understanding. The siddhi of his activity is especially powerful and effective in destroying the solidity of dualistic concepts and fixed opinions, and in awakening us to true freedom.

Wisdom dakini Yeshe Ts'ogyal said that Guru Padmasambhava has nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine biographies. That's a lot of biographies! These biographies are divided three ways: those relating the one hundred and eight activities of Guru Rinpoche according to his dharmakaya buddhahood, accounts told according to his sambhogakaya nature, and works chronicling his activities as a nirmanakaya buddha.

On the dharmakaya level, Guru Rinpoche is known as the primordial buddha, Samantabhadra. Inseparable from Buddha Shakyamuni and all fully enlightened beings, he lives as those who are never obscured or deluded, always free in the ultimate sphere of dharmakaya. He is our true nature, which is also known as all-pervading primordial wisdom because it suffuses every external and internal object in the ten directions unceasingly and is known as the dharmakaya Guru Padmasambhava. Fully awakened, this great equanimity is completely free of all conditional marks or complexities.

The dharmakaya continuously emanates five wisdoms in all directions. These appear as the five dhyani buddhas or the families of wrathful, semi-wrathful, and peaceful conquerors and their retinues. All these buddhas are Guru Padmasambhava in sambhogakaya form, emanating wisdom light to liberate all sentient beings in the six realms. Different emanations of Guru Rinpoche appear in each of the six realms as well as in every direction within those realms to teach sentient beings according to their capabilities and gradually lead them all to enlightenment. There are one hundred million Guru Padmasambhavas' helping sentient beings throughout the universe.

These represent his nirmanakaya aspect. Guru Rinpoche may take any number of forms within any realm. He is not limited to appearing in any particular guise. His character and way of teaching will vary depending on the sentient beings to be instructed.

In the mundane sense, Guru Padmasambhava's activities are called "miraculous," but from the viewpoint of absolute reality, these are not unusual phenomena. They are the natural, spontaneous activity of the true nature. From the perspective of realization, our normal, everyday activities are somewhat odd and unnatural. In this sense, we are great magicians, conjuring up something totally unreal.

When Guru Padmasambhava appeared on earth, he came as a human being. In order to dissolve our attachment to dualistic conceptions and destroy complex neurotic fixations, he also exhibited some extraordinary manifestations. If we try to compare our situation and capacities with that of Guru Padmasambhava and other realized beings, we will run into some difficulty. Our actions are based in dualistic ideas and habit patterns while Guru Padmasambhava's activities arise spontaneously out of the great equanimity of the true nature. Non-dual activities are incomprehensible within the scope of dualistic understanding.

A famous Tibetan master named Sakya Pandita told of a man who journeyed to a country totally inhabited by monkeys. When he arrived, all the monkeys gathered around to examine him. They were amazed. "How strange!" they thought, "This is the most unusual monkey we have ever seen. He has no tail!" Similarly, deluded sentient beings hear of the activities of enlightened beings and think that such stories must be mythical or magic because they do not meet our preconceived ideas of how the world works.

There are many stories explaining how Guru Padmasambhava was born. Some say that he instantly appeared on the peak of Meteorite Mountain, in Sri Lanka. Others teach that he came through his mother's womb, but most accounts refer to a miraculous birth, explaining that he spontaneously appeared in the center of a lotus. These stories are not contradictory because highly realized beings abide in the expanse of great equanimity with perfect understanding and can do anything. Everything is flexible, anything is possible. Enlightened beings can appear in any way they want or need to.

According to the regular or conventional way of thinking, if something is black, it is not white. Usually, only one of these notions can be applied at any given time. In trying to make reality fit the limitations of our preconceptions, we grow very narrow. Working in this way will not allow us to understand the mystical or profound aspects of the universe. Our tiny peep-hole of knowledge reveals very little of the actual world. We see only what fits through that small hole. Chronological or linear thinking is characteristic of dualistic conceptions; we cannot apply it to the true nature or the state of great equanimity. Peering through such a small crack will not allow us to see much. We have to open our minds if we are interested in seeing any more.

Buddha Shakyamuni taught that there are infinite world systems containing an infinite number of sentient beings. Therefore, there are also countless emanations of enlightened beings to serve their awakening. There are thirty-six other world systems which are near our own. Each one hosts a different emanation of Guru Padmasambhava. I will tell you about one of these worlds. To the east of here is a world where the concept of poverty does not even exist. Buddha Shakyamuni and Guru Padmasambhava have both emanated there to give Sutra and Vajrayana teachings. Being so strong and wealthy, it was only through the teachings that people in this world learned about poverty and imbalances like we have on earth. Upon hearing of this, they thought, "Oh, what a wonderful place! If only it was like that here, we could practice generosity and serve others. There is something very special in the acts of giving and receiving. It would be nice if we had that kind of situation in our world." This is an example of the influence of Guru Padmasambhava on beings in one of the thirty-six relatively nearby worlds.

Our own world is divided into six realms; gods, asuras, humans, animals, hungry ghosts and hell realms. To help liberate all sentient beings, there is a special buddha as well as eight emanations of Guru Padmasambhava, in each of those realms. That is, there are eight emanations of Guru Padmasambhava in the god realm, eight in the asura realm, and so on. Each emanation displays unique qualities in relation to the beings to be served and might be unrecognizable by any outer signs. In the human world he displayed one hundred and eight activities. These are summarized within his twenty emanations and are most easily comprehensible as the eight manifestations of Guru Padmasambhava. I am going to focus on these eight in the human realm as they embody his most beneficial activities on behalf of all beings.

Now you might wonder, "Why are there eight emanations instead of seven or nine?" Eight is a very special number in Buddhist philosophy. There are many meanings associated with the number eight. In a geographic sense, the eight emanations symbolize that Guru Padmasambhava offers assistance to all sentient beings in the eight directions. According to the abhidharma, the elements which make up both the external universe and the inner dimensions of sentient beings are based on eight original, very subtle atoms. These are the foundation our world is constructed on. Even the finest particles consist of aggregations of these eight. Four are known as the atoms of fire, water, earth and wind. These comprise the desire realm. Because our world has qualities of the form realm as well, there are another four atoms having to do with the

aspects of shape, smell, the past and the present. Although they are very small, all eight of these hold together and give rise to coarse atoms and molecules. Nobody created these things, no one ordered them to be like this. They are just part of the natural formation of the world. There is not much more that can be said about them.

This interpretation still relates to the external level.

On the inner level, there are the eight consciousnesses. Five are related to the sense organs; eye, ear, nose, tongue and body. The sixth is the mind consciousness, the seventh is emotional consciousness and the eighth is known as the subconscious storehouse or ground consciousness. These eight consciousnesses outline the science of the inner world. Mind is vast and profound, the depth from which everything arises. The outer world emerges from and reflects this inner world. So subjectively, these eight emanations are related to the eight consciousnesses.

Also, in learning to actualize knowledge of the true nature, we practice the Eightfold Noble Path to full realization. The inner tantras contain many other teachings relating to the number eight. Our physical structure has eight big bones, there are eight major energy pathways and eight general divisions which define ego's territory.

Externally, this is symbolized by the eight great charnel grounds. In elaborate mandalas, you will find eight cemeteries, eight trees and eight stupas, eight bodies of water, eight nagas and eight gods. Eight is the number of completion in Vajrayana mandala space.

The Eight Emanations of Guru Padmasambhava are quite popular in Tibet. Many different meanings and symbols are associated with them. Externally, Guru Rinpoche's emanations may be seen as reflections of his all-pervading nature. Internally, they are the eight consciousnesses. The transformation of the eight consciousness into the five wisdoms is the secret way to understand the theme of these descriptions. Taken together, the eight manifestations communicate all three levels of meaning.

Part Two



I will now name the eight emanations of Guru Padmasambhava. Guru means master, teacher or lama, and precedes the name of each manifestation.

1. The first is known as **Guru Padma Gyalpo** which means "lotus king."
2. The second is **Guru Nyima Özer**, meaning "ray of sun."
3. The third emanation of Guru Rinpoche is **Loden Chokse**, which is roughly translated as "the super-knowledge holder."
4. The fourth is called **Guru Padmasambhava**. This name is Sanskrit but even in Tibet, this is how we refer to this emanation. Padma means lotus, which is a symbol of spiritual perfection. Sambhava has many different usages, although in this case it means essence, so Padmasambhava signifies "lotus essence."

5. The fifth one is **Guru Shakyasengé**. Shakyas is a Sanskrit word and part of the family name of Buddha Shakyamuni. It means undefeatable or courageous. Sengé is a Tibetan word which means lion, so this title means "undefeatable lion."
6. The sixth emanation of Guru Padmasambhava is named **Padma Jungné**. In Sanskrit, this is translated as Guru Padmakara. Padma is lotus and kara is translated into Tibetan as jungné, meaning "arisen from." So this name means "born from a lotus."
7. The seventh is known as **Guru Sengé Dradok**. In Sanskrit it is Singha Nadi which translates as "the lion's roar."
8. The eighth emanation of Guru Rinpoche is known as **Guru Dorje Drolo**. Dorje is the Tibetan word for vajra. Dro'lo means ultimately or insanely wrathful, sometimes translated as "crazy wisdom." That is the name of the eighth emanation.

All the activities of Guru Padmasambhava performed in this world may be roughly summarized within these eight aspects.

Guru Padma Gyalpo the Lotus King

The first emanation is called Guru Padma Gyalpo [pictured above]. Gyalpo means king. Guru Padma Gyalpo is the form in which Guru Padmasambhava originally appeared in our world. He is directly related to Buddha Amitabha, the Buddha of the western direction, as well as to Avalokitesvara, the Buddha of compassion. Buddha Amitabha represents the dharmakaya, Avalokitesvara the sambhogakaya, and Guru Padmasambhava the nirmanakaya. Amitabha, Avalokitesvara and Guru Padmasambhava encompass all possible emanations of the Trikaya. Maybe you are wondering how such forms as dharmakaya Buddha Samantabhadra, Buddha Vajradhara and Buddha Vajrasattva are included. These are all contained within the three kayas of Amitabha, Avalokitesvara, and Guru Padmasambhava. Actually, the entire mandala of all the buddhas and all the kayas are within Guru Padmasambhava. Not only is he an important member of the Lotus family, he embodies the whole mandala.

The three kayas are symbolized by the three buddhas of the Padma family, one of five families of buddhas, each representing an aspect of primordial wisdom. In the mundane sense, the Lotus family is associated with common perception. Esoterically, it corresponds to our karmic winds and the speech center.

Ordinary views are transformed through deepening resonance with the primordial wisdom qualities of the Padma family, such as boundless loving-kindness and compassion for all sentient beings. The radiation of love and compassion coursing through the channels by the arising of wisdom winds is the inner action of this family.

Among the many beneficial activities characterizing the life of Buddha Shakyamuni, twelve are commonly noted. Of these, speech is his most powerful action. In spite of his great love and compassion, even the Buddha could not magically liberate anyone from the ocean of samsara. Sentient beings are subject to their own karmas and even Buddhas must respect this. The power of the Buddha's speech grants knowledge of antidotes which can help rescue sentient beings from samsara and establish them in the enlightened condition. Bereft of speech, the Buddha cannot offer much to sentient beings other than those who already have higher capacities and can receive teachings on the sambhogakaya level. The Lotus family symbolizes the power of speech in the spirit of love and compassion. The Vajra family, the Ratna family, the Karma family and the Buddha family are all contained and emanated within the Padma family ? the Lotus Lords of all buddha families. And Guru Padmasambhava is the supreme embodiment of them all.

Now I will tell you some details about the early life of Padma Gyalpo. According to Tibetan history, Guru Rinpoche was born four years after Buddha's Mahaparinirvana. Although Buddha Shakyamuni's prediction about the coming of Padmasambhava is rendered as eight years, the system used in India divides the month into two, reflecting the waxing and waning of the moon. According to the Tibetan calendar, Buddha Shakyamuni entered Mahaparinirvana during the Iron Dragon year and Guru Padmasambhava was born in the wood monkey year in the monkey month. In Tibetan Buddhism, every monkey year is considered the year of Guru Padmasambhava.

Bodhgaya is a village in northeastern India where Buddha Shakyamuni became fully enlightened. All Buddhists consider Bodhgaya the spiritual-geographic center, the supreme power spot of the universe. In Tibetan we call it Dorje-den which means, "indestructible vajra throne." It is also taught that every one of the thousand buddhas destined to appear in this aeon will attain enlightenment there. Buddhist cosmology explains that after hundreds of aeons, this world will be completely destroyed by fire, water and wind.

Everything will be reduced to atoms and scattered throughout space, without even a trace remaining. However, under the vajra throne at Bodhgaya there is a double-dorje which cannot be destroyed by fire or water . It will endure beyond the end of the present world cycle. What appears externally as the Vajrasana of Bodhgaya exists internally as the path which leads to the realization of our primordial nature.

Guru Padmasambhava was born to the northwest of Bodhgaya in a kingdom known as Oddiyana. Oddiyana has always been considered a very mystical place and is praised throughout Vajrayana literature. This mysterious land expresses a natural power in earth forms and subtler environmental structuring and became a major source of esoteric Vajrayana teachings. In the center of Oddiyana is the City of the Dakinis, and in that city, is the palace of the Herukas. Northwest of that palace, there is a small lake known as Dhanakosha.

Buddha Amitabha emanated a golden light from his heart center that took form as a five-pointed golden vajra inscribed with the syllable HRI. It landed right in the center of an Udambara flower, a very rare and precious species of lotus, growing in Lake Dhanakosha. A youthful Padmasambhava miraculously appeared from the union of the golden vajra inscribed with HRI and this beautiful, thousand-petalled lotus growing in Lake Dhanakosha. Normally we take birth by means of parents, but by spontaneously appearing Guru Padma Gyalpo opens us up to the panoramic vision of the true nature. In order to break our habitual pattern of gradually taking birth through conception in a womb, he demonstrated the freedom of taking birth instantly. He reveals a new door: the primordial condition of great openness.

The king of Oddiyana was an extraordinary man named Indrabhuti. He was very kind, compassionate and generous. During a time of great famine, he gave away the contents of the royal treasury to feed his subjects, yet still more was needed. In ancient times, it was common to sail the ocean in search of jewels and treasure. So King Indrabhuti took to sea with his ministers and found gems on a distant island. On the way home, the king had many beautiful dreams. In one, he saw a five-pointed golden vajra, radiating golden light in every direction. It came so close that he was able to hold it in his hand. At the same time, he dreamed that the sun and moon were both rising in the eastern sky. The very next day after these wonderful omens appeared, Indrabhuti encountered Padma Gyalpo.

As the boat approached the shore, the crew saw beautiful rainbows arch across the heavens. A great host of birds hovered in the sky, singing delightful songs. Celestial fragrances pervaded the air. The moment they saw these signs, everyone felt blissful. The king was moved to relate his dreams to the ministers. After getting into a smaller boat, they immediately set sail toward the source of the rainbow display. As they got closer, they beheld a magnificent lotus. None of them had ever seen a blossom like this before. It was an uncommonly large and brilliant flower, but more than that, there seated upon the pollen bed was a beautiful, sublime eight year old boy, glowing and radiating rainbow light while seated in the vajra posture. The king was completely astonished.

Although Guru Rinpoche appeared as a human being, he demonstrates something here which is totally beyond our dualistic conceptions and regimented views by coming into this world in the center of a lotus. He did not come through biological parents. This signifies that Guru Padmasambhava is free from both attachment and anger. He is not accompanied by any negative emotions. Instead, he subdues and transforms all anger and attachment into their corresponding wisdoms, as symbolized by this glorious lotus. This means that practitioners who follow the path of Guru Padmasambhava or Buddha Shakyamuni must cut through and transform anger, aggression and neurotic desire.

Up until that moment, Indrabhuti had been blind in one eye. Now he was healed. He was awed by this miraculous display and immediately asked five questions of the young child. These were, "Where do you come from? What is your father's name? What is your mother's name? What do you do? And what do you eat?" Guru Padmasambhava answered, "I come from the unborn Dharmadhatu, my father's name is Kuntuzangpo, and my mother's name is Kuntuzangmo." Kuntuzangpo means, "always good" in Tibetan. This is goodness that never changes. It is always good. Yesterday it was good, today it is good and tomorrow it will still be good. To the question, "What do you do?" the child replied, "I am here to help all sentient beings of the six realms." This is a permanent job. Guru Padmasambhava will never be unemployed! As for food, the child said, "I eat dualistic conceptions and my words benefit all beings." Being a Buddhist, King Indrabhuti was very much pleased with these answers. Of course, he was already quite excited by such a brilliant and extraordinary display, but hearing the child give these answers really touched him.

The radiance of his body and speech penetrated the king's heart at a deep level. Greatly moved by all of this and with no son of his own, the King asked, "Will you come to my palace and live with me?" The young Padma Gyalpo accepted this request, and went with the entourage to the palace.

King Indrabhuti was a very kind and compassionate man. He had an extremely open mind and served all his subjects according to the dharma. Guru Padma Gyalpo was raised as a prince. He helped Indrabhuti rule the kingdom with bodhicitta and guide the people on the right path toward enlightenment. He taught them how to stay free of headaches and worries, so that harmony and peace reigned throughout the country. Guru Padma Gyalpo eventually married a beautiful lady known as Orchima, "She who radiates light." Then one day Buddha Vajrasattva appeared to Guru Padmasambhava telling him to leave Oddiyana in order to benefit sentient beings in a more active way. Heeding these instructions, Guru Padmasambhava departed Oddiyana at about age thirty.

He left the palace on foot and wandered many places. But even the most basic aspects of his journey were not ordinary. For instance, he would arrive wherever he set out for instantly. Time had no effect on Guru Rinpoche's activities. He travelled throughout India frequenting the most powerful and frightening cemeteries, known as the eight charnel grounds. He subdued the eight classes of spirits and directed them onto the path of bodhicitta, the unified state of loving-kindness, compassion and wisdom.

In the conventional sense, Guru Padmasambhava brought all the subjects of Oddiyana into harmony on the path of enlightenment so that they excelled in the practice of peace, love, and compassion. On the inner level, he subdued the eight classes of negative spirits and bound them in service to the practice of bodhicitta. Surrounded by both dakas and dakinis, Guru Rinpoche displayed the splendor of his wisdom which spontaneously overcomes the most powerful of visible and invisible beings so that they regard him as their supreme monarch or king. This is the real victory of Padma Gyalpo, the Lotus King, a very special emanation of Guru Padmasambhava who magnetizes perception and conception beyond ego-clinging and negative emotions while actively increasing our joy, peace and spiritual realization.

We should understand what is meant by magnetizing. It doesn't mean bringing an external object, such as another sentient being, under your control.

To magnetize one's perception is to overpower the mind of mundane habits. If you don't have that ability within yourself, you cannot magnetize or help other sentient beings. Since you are still a little wild and crazy, how can you tame others? To help other beings, you can't be crazy yourself. Once we are able to overpower dualistic perceptions and mental habits, we magnetize others naturally. Practice and meditation on Guru Rinpoche as Padma Gyalpo outshines mundane views and deluding emotions and enriches our accumulations of merit and wisdom.

Guru Padma Gyalpo openly exhibits the splendor and magnificence of the Padma family wisdom. He is surrounded by a glorious retinue of dakas and dakinis who receive his teachings. Through the lavish display of this gathering, he is offering the same wealth to all beings. That is the external way to understand this emanation.

On the inner level, Guru Padma Gyalpo is saying that those who follow this path must control their senses, study perceptions, subdue ego-clinging, and transcend their emotions. If you cut through ego-clinging, you are a great sovereign; you have mastered your relationship with everything you see and hear. In perfect command of your feelings and responses, you have the power and dignity of a splendrous king or queen. Having subdued ego-clinging and attachment to negative emotions, you are truly victorious.

In Tibet, to have overcome all negativity is known as having attained the heroic state. One has become a conqueror or universal monarch. According to ancient Buddhist cosmography, a universal monarch or Chakravarti, is one whose kingdom includes all four continents of a world system. To relinquish ego-clinging and be free of neurosis is to fully awaken to the enlightenment of all the victorious ones as your very own. In brief, that is the meaning of Guru Padma Gyalpo, the Lotus King or Padma Raja.

Padma Gyalpo's skin is pink or reddish, while his robes are sort of orange, and a little more red than yellow. He is visualized sitting on a lotus, upon sun and moon discs, relaxing in the royal posture with one face, two arms, and two legs. He is semi-wrathful, so some teachings say to visualize him with four arms. His long hair is pulled up into a knot and wrapped in a white cloth that has a small gathering of red material emerging from the top. This same red silk is flowing out, as if carried by a gentle breeze, behind his head. He also wears a tiara of five jewels.

In his right hand is a small damaru and in his left, he is holding a mirror and a hook. The mirror symbolizes wisdom. Through wisdom, everything appears as it is, although nothing truly exists. Phenomena arise and pass like forms in a mirror, a mirage that suddenly appears and just as quickly dissolves. The mirror also suggests unceasing manifestation, free of clinging and attachment to concrete objects. There are other sadhanas on Guru Padma Gyalpo, some of which describe the left hand as holding a bell and hook and others, a ritual arrow. The hook symbolizes great compassion. This is to rescue all sentient beings who are trapped in the experience of samsara. This is the form to visualize when meditating on Guru Padmasambhava as Padma Gyalpo.

The notions which constitute samsara are no other than one's own thoughts and conceptions; what you experience is largely defined by your own dream-like perceptions. It has no true basis and does not refer to real entities or solid objects. This is a dream or perhaps a nightmare. A nightmare is not recognized by the person who is suffering within it. It is really not a substantial or determinate reality, yet the dreamer's understanding of his experience suggests that it is. Generate great compassion for all sentient beings as they are temporarily caught up in this illusion and gently lead them to liberation. Never give up or lose compassion. Press on and guide all beings to unsurpassed, great enlightenment.

As in any practice, begin by taking refuge and generating bodhicitta. Feel love and compassion for all sentient beings and do a little meditation. Then imagine a small circle of red light in the space before you which instantly transforms into Guru Padma Gyalpo. Recite the twelve syllable mantra as long as you can while holding the visualization. Finally, dissolve Guru Padma Gyalpo back into a red point of light which merges with your heart center, so that there is no difference between you and him. Meditate in this way for as long as you have time. When you are done, dedicate the merit and make aspirational prayers. This is a very powerful and special practice which will enrich your vision.

According to the commentary by Lama Mipham, the effects of practicing on Guru Padma Gyalpo depend upon your level of approach. If you are a leader, your leadership will become more stable and benign. If you are just a regular being, you will become more lovable. If you want to be loved and appreciated, practice on Guru Padma Gyalpo. The peace of mind and calming of the body soon experienced are a sure sign of effectively purifying negative emotions.

By going to the charnel grounds, Guru Padmasambhava is teaching us that in order to practice and meditate, we really have to be fearless. We must have courage beyond hope and fear and get beyond their endless implications. Having smashed expectations and doubts, you realize great equanimity and can act fearlessly. From the viewpoint of realization, evil spirits are no other than the display of one's own mental tendencies. But to the ordinary mind which clings to notions of subject and object, these energies may be viewed as the actions of naughty or mischievous beings who like to chase us around. As long as we hold to the notion of solid subjects and objects, there will be conceptual and experiential effects. Guru Padmasambhava actually brought these demons under control within his mind.

Q: Could you say briefly why we use the symbol of the lotus instead of another flower?

A: The lotus grows in muddy water. Because of this, it is always compared to bodhicitta and the bodhisattvas; those noble ones who take birth in samsara but are never affected by worldly conditioning. Similarly, the mud never affects the beauty of the lotus. It is always pure and beautiful. So "padma" means "lovely one." According to the Vajrayana this lovely one is no other than the truth of love and compassion, which is symbolized by a lotus..

Q: My question is about the symbolism of the color red.

A: In the Vajrayana all colors, implements and gestures are symbolic, with a wealth of meaning behind every attribute and gesture. In this context, red represents loving-kindness. This is called "great love beyond attachment." To move from attachment to loving-kindness beyond grasping is symbolized by the color red. Love is great detachment.

Q: Since we live in the dream state, how can we tell the difference between truth and illusion in our perceptions?

A: In equanimity, all are seen as equal, there is no distinction of good or bad; if it is true, it is all true, if it is untrue, it is all untrue. There is no relative up and down, no judgement day in equanimity. Therefore the ultimate dream, and the non-dream state, are understood to be exactly the same. But when you are obscured, you only see a little bit and judge aspects of dream experience as being more or less important. This is how sentient beings perceive the world.

Q: As we sit and look at you, are we seeing what you have emanated, or is it a reflection of our own perception?

A: It is both. When I look at you, you are giving me something and I am also giving something to you.

And when you look at me, I'm giving something to you and you are giving something to me. It is a mutual exchange. But regardless of what happens in the stock market, once you see whatever you see, it becomes a mental construct which is completely your own private understanding. All the input is brought back to your individual mind where it becomes your own personal business. Ordinary perception and communication suggest that there are two different things, private and public, but in the higher levels of equanimity, both are merged in a transcendent sameness.



Guru Loden Chokse

The Supreme Knowledge Holder Traditionally, the second of the eight manifestations of Guru Padmasambhava is Guru Nyima Özer whose name translates as "Ray of the Sun," however, I think it is more useful to skip ahead and introduce the third manifestation because it will help you understand the second. And in turn, the second will help explain the third.

This third emanation is called Guru Loden Chokse, which means "supreme knowledge holder." Guru Padmasambhava appeared in this world as a perfect buddha in order to benefit all beings. Even before he left the kingdom of Oddiyana, he was already totally enlightened. Guru Loden Chokse is the emanation of Guru Rinpoche who deals with the removal of ignorance and the accumulation of wisdom through contemplation.

Although he was already an awakened buddha, he demonstrated the way to approach profound knowledge through study and practice for the sake of sentient beings.

After leaving the palace, he wandered throughout the eight great charnel grounds of India. On the external level, he stayed in real cemeteries, eating the offerings to the dead and wearing whatever clothes were available there. In ancient times, the funerary tradition was to leave a year's supply of food and some colorful clothing along with the bodies. So there was usually something available, although it was not exactly gourmet fare. It was actually akin to garbage or spoiled food. While externally utilizing such materials, living in cemeteries, and practicing meditation, on the inner level he began to give elaborate instructions on the nine yantras to all classes of invisible beings. In particular, he gave extensive teachings on Dzogchen. This period of Guru Loden Chokse's wandering through all the great cemeteries of India shouldn't be taken to mean that he was over here today and in that one next week. He could project a different emanation in all eight cemeteries at once or appear with a multitude of emanations in all of the cemeteries at the same time.

Geographically, these eight great charnel grounds do not exist side by side. It could take a few weeks or even a month to walk from one to the other. According to the Vajrayana, they are located in eight special, secret spots which have natural power and geomantic energy. On the most secret level, these are the locations where the dakas and dakinis are always gathered, ceaselessly performing enlightened activities. In the Vajrayana, these eight great sites work together like a mystic or esoteric compass. They are very special places where awareness is magnified and the energy is naturally intensified. According to the inner tantras, these charnel grounds do not merely exist as places in India. Although reference is made to actual sites, some higher tantras indicate that these are not static locations but are spread throughout the world. The eight great cemeteries are the primary power spots available to help us awaken to our enlightened nature.

As well as giving teachings to invisible beings, Guru Loden Chokse instructed visible beings. In ancient India, certain people of very low caste had the job of bringing the dead to the cemeteries and making any other relevant arrangements. Loden Chokse started teaching these laborers. He also travelled to many other places such as Bodhgaya, where Buddha Shakyamuni was enlightened.

While demonstrating some of the extraordinary signs of his realization near the Mahabodhi Stupa in Bodhgaya, an old lady asked him, "Who is your teacher? To which lineage do you belong?" Guru Rinpoche replied, "I have no teacher and have no need of one. Neither do I belong to any particular lineage. I am a totally enlightened being, primordially aware." The old woman immediately responded by saying, "Oh, that's not right. Without the blessings of a teacher, you cannot be enlightened. You must have a connection with a master. Lacking that, no one will accept your words." He quickly understood the import of the old woman's statement in relation to making the teaching available to others. To demonstrate the supreme means of approaching the Dharma, "the Supreme Knowledge Holder" began to seek out lineage masters and followed teachings according to their instructions.

This indicates that even if you are already a highly enlightened being, it is still necessary to have lineage connections. In order to communicate this truth, Guru Loden Chokse proceeded to contact many great masters and receive their teachings. In ancient times, there was a traditional curriculum known as the ten sciences. One had to be knowledgeable about these to be considered an educated person. The five major sciences are language, art, logic, medicine and the science of mind and meditation.

Guru Loden Chokse went to Bengal in eastern India in order to begin studying. There he met a very old man, who was renowned as a scholar of language. With the exception of a little red in his mustache, his hair was all white. When asked about the extent of his knowledge, the old man said, "I know all the languages spoken across India, but I am especially expert on the dialects spoken in the areas of eastern India." After requesting instruction, the old man accepted Guru Loden Chokse as his student. At that time, there were four major language groups in India; Sanskrit, Prakrit, Apabhramsa and Paisacika, as well as 160 local dialects. Although generally familiar with all of these, Guru Rinpoche became a language expert to demonstrate how this knowledge which can be of immense benefit in serving sentient beings.

Those who are seeking enlightenment should not ignore the importance of such learning.

After this, he went to the country of Padmavati in western India, where he met a very famous physician who taught him all about medicine. Subsequently, he studied logic and reasoning, which are important subjects if we are trying to go beyond the state of direct perception. Analysis and inference are the keys that open knowledge beyond our immediate sense data. Through reasoning, we can discover many things which are not evident to the five senses. Guru Loden Chokse also studied esoteric astrology with Manjusri in China and art with Master Visvakarma. In Buddhism, aesthetic expression is divided into the arts of the body, the arts of speech and the arts of the mind. All the arts are contained within these categories.

The fifth science is known as the inner science, which mainly deals with the understanding, characteristics and identity of the mind. This science is the province of the Buddha's teachings. Guru Loden Chokse received ordination and instruction in the vinaya, sutra and abhidharma from Ananda, the cousin and attendant of Buddha Shakyamuni. He received outer tantra teachings and quickly actualized all the realizations as they are described in the texts. The renowned Master Gomadevi, daughter of King Jah was one of the human teachers who introduced Guru Loden Chokse to the Mahayoga teachings. He then received the entire Mahayoga teachings from Buddha Vajrasattva in the Akanistha, the Pure Land of Vajrasattva. Having manifested there in an instant, he heard Vajrasattva reciting. The moment he requested the Mahayoga tantras, also known as the eighteen great tantras, Vajrasattva transmitted them in their entirety. Guru Loden Chokse received the thirteen Anuyoga teachings in the All-pervading Blue pure land from Buddha Vajradhara. These are also known as the five great sutras and the eight great points.

The first human Dzogchen master, Garab Dorje, was Guru Loden Chokse's source for the Atiyoga teachings as well as the Buddha Samantabhadra, who resides in the pure land of the dharmadhatu realm, free from all complexity. Finally, to complete his studies, Guru Loden Chokse went to the famous Master Manjusrimitra, the direct disciple of Garab Dorje. After requesting instruction, Manjusrimitra told Guru Loden Chokse that he could not teach him.

Instead, he was directed to a dark and frightening charnel ground in the west where there lived a great dakini known as Laygyi Wangmo, the Dakini of Deeds. Manjusrimitra explained that she could give Atiyoga instructions.

Guru Loden Chokse eventually arrived in the terrifying charnel ground. Here he encountered a young lady carrying a crystal vase. He thought this might be the dakini from whom he should request teachings. So he asked, "What is your name?" But she did not answer.

"Would you be kind enough to give me teachings?" Still, she would not reply.

"Where is the great dakini, Laygyi Wangmo?" The girl did not say a word, but continued to carry water.

Guru Loden Chokse realized that she must be in service to someone, so when she came back down the hill with more water, he asked, "Would you help me find the wisdom dakini?" But the girl remained silent and kept carrying water.

She returned a third time, when he asked, "Would you please help me?" Still she refused to answer. So Guru Loden Chokse became annoyed at her unresponsiveness and through the power of his meditation, caused the crystal vase to adhere to the ground. When the girl attempted to lift it, she was unable to.

Realizing who had caused this, she addressed Guru Rinpoche; "I see you exhibit some power, but tell me what you think of this." At that moment, she pulled a small crystal knife from her belt and after cutting open her chest, she pulled back the skin and there, vividly displayed, was the entire mandala of the deities of the inner tantra.

All one hundred deities, forty-two peaceful and fifty-eight wrathful, emanated clearly from within her heart center.

Guru Loden Chokse bowed down and said, "Please excuse me and kindly guide me to the great dakini." This time the maiden said, "I will show you the way. Follow me," and she led him to a palace made of skulls.

When Guru Loden Chokse entered he could see that Laygyi Wangmo was not a peaceful dakini. Her expression was semi-wrathful.

She stood majestically on the sun and moon in a fierce posture, surrounded by a blaze of glory, while another sun and moon above her served as a luminous canopy. Holding a katvanga in her left hand, sparks of fire issued from her eyes and body. Guru Loden Chokse prostrated himself, circumambulated her throne three times and made mandala offerings before respectfully requesting the inner Vajrayana teachings including, initiations, transmissions and pith instructions. At that moment, she made the subjugation mudra with her right hand and in the space beyond her fingers, the entire mandala of the one hundred peaceful and wrathful deities appeared vividly.

"Now," she said, "You must take initiation from this mandala." Guru Loden Chokse immediately replied, "Oh no. This mandala is just your display. I want to take initiation from you, Master. You are the source, embodiment and Lord of this mandala. Let me have your initiation, transmission and pith instructions." The great dakini smiled gently and said. "So you know how to receive empowerment..." At that point, she intoned the syllable HUM and the entire mandala dissolved and merged back into her. Upon chanting another HUM, she transformed Guru Loden Chokse's body into a small HUM syllable and swallowed it, as we might swallow a nut.

In one of the biographies of Guru Padmasambhava it is said that she kept him for one week in each of her five chakras. So he spent a week in her crown chakra, and a week each in her speech, heart, navel and secret chakras. The four upper chakras are related to the four empowerments. Externally he received the empowerment of Buddha Amitayus, inwardly he received the empowerment of Avalokitesvara and on the most secret level, he gained the realization of Hayagriva. After he had completely received all the empowerments, transmissions, and pith instructions associated with the inner tantras, he emerged from Laygi Wangmo's secret center as her equal in realization. This is like saying he became something of a super-guru; a supreme knowledge holder of the lineage freely demonstrating his mastery of the teachings through actualizing the supreme realization. Subsequently, he travelled to many different places throughout the world to serve sentient beings.

Guru Loden Chokse also received the combined eight Heruka teachings from Laygi Wangmo which he transmitted to the eight great vidyadharas who were in India at that time: Vimalamitra, Humkara, Manjusrimitra, Nagarjuna, Dhanasamskrta, Rambuhyu-Devacandra and Santigarbha. Guru Padmasambhava himself is considered the eighth. On the human level, he actually received the eight Heruka teachings from these masters as well as from the wisdom dakini Laygi Wangmo. In turn, he transmitted what are known as the combined Eight Heruka teachings which he had received directly from Laygi Wangmo, back to these same Vidyadharas.

Guru Loden Chokse also received the Dzogchen teaching known as the Empowerment of Awareness from Master Sri Singh. This is a brief history of how Guru Rinpoche acquired teachings.

On the external level, he received many different instructions and mastered each one of them. This period of his life demonstrates how to follow a course of study and learn to develop our wisdom step by step. Even though Guru Rinpoche was already a direct emanation of Buddha Amitabha, and a reincarnation of Buddha Shakyamuni, this completely enlightened being lived his realization in a way that would help lead others toward wisdom.

The gradual aspects of the path are very important. We can't just ignore our karmic conditioning and jump to a higher level. We must be able to follow the entire message step by step and address our conditioning through appropriate practices in a progressive manner. This manifestation of the teacher emphasizes that we should all continue to develop and grow. Such an approach strengthens our understanding and deepens our realization. As Guru Loden Chokse, the Lotus-born one demonstrated his capacity to learn and became adept in many fields of knowledge.

Guru Loden Chokse is depicted with one face, two arms and two legs, seated upon a lotus with sun and moon discs. His skin is a very peaceful, rich, white color. He wears a white scarf and has ribbons wrapped around his head. His hair is decorated with a blue-green lotus which is known as an utpala flower. In his right hand is a damaru and in the left, a bowl which is patterned after a lotus.

Begin the practice on Guru Loden Chokse with the generation of love, compassion and bodhicitta for all sentient beings.

Then ease into meditation. Start the visualization with a small sphere of white light in the space before you. Concentrate on that for a moment and then transform the sphere into the transcendental rainbow body of Guru Loden Chokse, omnidirectionally radiating white light. Imagine the sound of the damaru echoing wisdom vibrations, awakening sentient beings from the darkness of ignorance and establishing them in the wisdom of enlightenment. Recite the twelve syllable mantra as long as you can, then dissolve the visualization into white light which mingles with your heart center and remain in meditation, abiding in the true nature for as long as you can.

Although he already had a perfect realization, the emanation of Guru Loden Chokse demonstrates the patient gathering of knowledge and wisdom teachings. He is a wisdom emanation of Guru Padmasambhava, and like the wisdom deity Buddha Manjusri, practice on the form of Guru Loden Chokse is particularly effective in dispelling the darkness of ignorance, mastering the arts and sciences and ultimately awakening to the reality of primordial wisdom.

Part Three



Guru Nyima Özer Ray of Sun

As I explained earlier, Guru Nyima Özer is usually considered the second emanation. Because Guru Nyima Özer is associated with crazy wisdom activities, I wanted to tell you about Guru Loden Chokse first so that you would be able to understand the guru's accomplishments as a student and tantric initiate. In this context, you should be able to appreciate the miraculous deeds of Guru Nyima Özer. Although incomprehensible to linear or chronological interpretations, all eight emanations can simultaneously appear together or in many different places unlimited by any dualistic system of understanding. On the level of common perception, Nyima Özer happened either right after or during the time of Loden Chokse. Guru Nyima Özer is a special buddha whose emanation serves to increase awareness of the great emptiness-bliss. He is the master of great joy and ecstatic states of awareness. Nyima Özer wandered across India, serving sentient beings in many different guises.

There were actually many emanations of Guru Nyima Özer, not just the one commonly portrayed in thankas. Sometimes he appeared as a powerful master of meditation, but he also appeared as a weak-looking beggar as well as in various animal forms for the benefit of sentient beings. His activities are beyond conditional limitations. I want to tell you how he got his name which means "Ray of Sun." Guru Nyima Özer travelled widely, performing crazy wisdom activities while visiting the eight great charnel grounds, the thirty-two major power spots, wilderness areas and even cities. The extent of his wandering cannot be comprehended by ordinary conceptions. As it is historically recounted, when he left the kingdom of Oddiyana, he went to a famous cemetery known as Chilly Grove and practiced meditation there for five years. During this time, Guru Nyima Özer was inwardly subduing some of the wilder sentient beings.

At one point, he came to Varanasi. Today, this is a big city on the Ganges River, and it was already a busy place back in those days. There was a lady who served alcohol in Varanasi and Guru Rinpoche saw that through contact with her, he could draw hundreds of people toward enlightenment. The lady was named Vanessa.

Nyima Özer appeared at her shop in the style of a wild yogi, holding a katvanga in his right hand and asked this woman, "Do you have any beer?" "Of course," she answered.

"Good. How much do you have?" "Five hundred gallons," she replied.

"Great. I want it all." She poured him a large serving and when he had finished it, he asked for another. "Pay me for what you have already drunk," she said.

In ancient times, they used a certain sea shell, the cowrie, for currency. Nyima Özer did not actually have even one, but he reassured the woman that she would be paid, and she poured him another beer. They didn't have bottles back then, but rather large bowls or jars. When it was empty, he asked for a refill. And after that, another. He continued in this way until the woman said, "Look, I'm not going to give you any more beer until you pay for what you have already drunk." Guru Nyima Özer stuck his katvanga into the ground so that it threw a shadow across the table and said, "I'll pay you when this shadow moves." Vanessa agreed to this and gave him another bowl. He finished it and immediately asked for more. But the shadow did not move at all. It stayed right where it was. The sun continued to hover high above the horizon while Guru Rinpoche finished all five hundred gallons of beer and was still asking for more. He was not even near drunk yet, but people in the vicinity were becoming concerned because the sun had not moved for hours and the day was getting unusually long. Cocks were beginning to crow.

Upon learning of the situation at the tavern, everybody realized that this must be a very powerful yogi. The sun did not move across the sky, which meant that the earth was no longer turning. The matter was brought to the king's attention and his ministers were sent out to investigate. When they understood that this was all happening because some wild yogi didn't have any money to pay for the beer, they offered to foot his bill. Guru Nyima Özer thanked them and picked up his katvanga.

Immediately the sun turned a deep red and sunk below the horizon. A great shadow fell over the land and suddenly it was night.

This demonstration helped hundreds of sentient beings in that area to become enlightened. The name Nyima Özer or "Ray of Sun" was a result of this incident as people remembered the yogi who could stop the sun.

Vanesseca, the woman who owned the tavern, was among those who were deeply moved by this. After Guru Nyima Özer left Varanasi, she tried to get in touch with him.

Upon learning where he was meditating, she approached to request more teachings. Guru Nyima Özer gave her direct transmission of the Dzogchen teachings and Vanesseca immediately became a great yogini. When she began to share these special teachings, she attracted so many students that there came to be a Vanesseca lineage.

On the inner level, Guru Nyima Özer signifies a clear understanding of the structure of one's psycho-physical constitution. He is the Buddha associated with mystical experience and spiritual realization. That is the primary message communicated by the emanation Guru Nyima Özer. To know the secrets of the inner structure of one's physiology means that the discovery of primordial wisdom is very, very close. Therefore, it is important to become familiar with the subtle structures of the body. In the inner tantras, these are known as the residing channels (rtsa), the display of the winds (the movements in these channels or rlung), and the ornamentation of the essence elements of the body (thig-le). Our entire experience, the patterning of our conceptions, the displays of our visual and auditory systems, are all reflections of these three structures. To understand this well is to be in direct and deep communication with the energies of both the internal and external world.

All we see of earth, water, sun, clouds, wind, and fire is no other than a reflection of our own inner structures. More specifically, forms such as trees, grass, water and mountains are no other than reflections of the channels. Sound and echoes are a reflection of the movement of winds. Your external world mirrors your inner constitution. Inwardly, the primordial nature manifests as thig-le, the essential elements of the body. There are white and red forms of thig-le. Both are completely free from any formation or visibility, abiding in a cycle of complete equanimity. Thig-le are reflected externally in the planets, the sun, moon, and stars. Their brightness and clarity reveal a radiant openness. These are no other than reflections of the essence elements of the body. We think of the sun and moon as two unique things, but according to Buddha's teachings, there are billions of suns and innumerable moons and planets. All are reflections of the infinite reality of primordial wisdom, displayed in this form and appearing according to the needs of individuals.

To clearly comprehend the interrelated dynamics of all three aspects of the vajra body allows primordial wisdom to awaken very easily. The bright, clear light of primordial wisdom is the essential source of all these inner structures.

This must be understood. Revelations of these hidden dimensions of the body are often accompanied by great joy and happiness. This is also known as *bde-chen* or great blissfulness. Blissfulness is an inherent quality of primordial truth. By tuning in to one's own vajra structuring, insights and joyful experiences will arise, transcending all sense of hardship and difficulty. Full comprehension of the galaxy within corresponds to control of the external elements. This is why Nyima Özer had no difficulty controlling the sun or his lifespan. Through internal knowledge and discipline, he gained mastery over such things. He had realized a certain flexibility, a skillful means of exercising his will that is incomprehensible to our modern views. This is the external way to understand Guru Nyima Özer.

The inner way is to know your own internal structures to the point of great blissfulness, great equanimity and the full realization of primordial wisdom. When you become intimately familiar with the channel and wind systems, when you understand the cycles of the essence elements of the body, you will enjoy a clarity that will eventually lead to primordial wisdom. This is how to understand the inner meaning of Nyima Özer.

To practice on Guru Nyima Özer, meditate on love and compassion and feel into the deeper nature of the mind. Visualize him as he is usually depicted in *thangkas*. This form is known as *Sambhoga Nyima Özer*. He has one face, two arms, and two legs. His skin color is golden-red and his facial expression is semi-wrathful, with both eyes opened wide and bulging a little. He has long hair, some of which is tied up above a tiara of five skulls, while most is hanging loose over his shoulders. He has a moustache, beard and a few bone ornaments. He is bare-chested and wears a tiger-skin skirt. His left hand is making the subjugation mudra and he seems to be bringing sunlight down on to the tip of his finger. His right hand is holding a *katvanga* and he sits on a lotus with sun and moon discs, his left leg partially extended and his right drawn in.

When meditating on Guru Nyima Özer, see him as a wisdom form, a manifestation of love and compassion in a rainbow body, not as a solid entity. In this condition, recite the Vajra Guru Mantra while the radiance of Guru Nyima Özer shines on all sentient beings and even illuminates the pure land. The blessing power of the Buddha rains down on Guru Nyima Özer as he emanates a golden-red light. This light envelops you and in resonance with the wind and channel exercises, intensifies realization.

Dissolve Guru Nyima Özer into the golden-red light and absorb the light into your heart center where it mingles with the primordial nature of the mind. Relax in that state for as long as you can.

This is a very powerful practice for the actualization of beneficial activities. If you are beginning to practice love and compassion and value wisdom but are limited in your ability to embody your understanding, Guru Nyima Özer will help you actualize these qualities and bring them into relationship with sentient beings.

Remember that our visual and tactile perceptions of phenomena, the vibrations registered by our auditory system, and our experience of space or luminosity are all external displays of transformations happening in our channel and wind systems. When this is recognized, the essence elements are immediately transformed into great emptiness-bliss. To abide in this way frees one from all discomfort, hardship and difficulty. Everything is transformed into great blissfulness. This is how to practice Guru Nyima Özer.



Guru Padmasambhava, The Lotus-born

The fourth emanation is Guru Padmasambhava. He is part of the continuity of enlightened activities which happened after Nyima Özer and Loden Chokse. This emanation is about transforming negative energy into more peaceful and compassionate forms, developing the power, and expressing the inner urge of Guru Padmasambhava which is the heart of loving-kindness and compassion. There is no hint of suppression or repression in Guru Padmasambhava. His negativity transforming disposition helps us to grow ever stronger in compassion simply by coming into contact with the emotional reactivity of others. This is the particular purpose and power associated with this emanation of Guru Rinpoche.

The following story is a good example of the power of Guru Padmasambhava in transforming negative energy into more peaceful and loving forms. According to the biographies, there were at least four different occasions on which people tried to burn Guru Padmasambhava at the stake. The particular incident I am about to relate also introduces the wisdom dakini, Princess Mandarava.

Guru Padmasambhava was meditating on Vulture Peak, the place where Buddha Shakyamuni had delivered the Prajnaparamita teachings. Upon internally inquiring where he might be able to offer the most help to all beings, he had a vision of Zahor, a country northwest of Bodhgaya. He also saw a wisdom dakini in his vision. This was Mandarava, a perfectly enlightened being who happened to be the daughter of the king. Guru Padmasambhava realized that with her assistance, they could both achieve immortality or realize the state of deathlessness. For these two reasons he immediately manifested in the country of Zahor.

Geographically, the ancient border of Zahor would not be located far from present-day Dharamsala where his Holiness the Dalai Lama is living. There is a lake with lotuses there, called Tso-pema where Guru Rinpoche performed many miraculous activities.

King Arsadhara of Zahor was quite wealthy and powerful at that time. Although he had many queens, he had no sons and Mandarava was his only daughter.

Mandarava is a Sanskrit word, and the name of a type of flower which translates roughly into English as "to catch the mind" of others. During both her conception and birth there were many auspicious signs and omens indicating that this would be a remarkable child. After the little princess was born, she displayed all the major and minor marks of a realized being. Mandarava grew much faster than other children. It is said that she accomplished a year's growth in a week, quickly maturing into one of the most kind-hearted and beautiful girls in that whole region. Everybody loved and protected her. The young princess was popular throughout the kingdom.

In those days, marriages were usually pre-arranged by the families. Even today it is like this in many parts of India and Asia. Because she was so beautiful and well-known, there were many kings, ministers and rich people asking to marry Princess Mandarava. This worried the king because he thought, "If I had hundreds of Mandaravas, I could make friends and relations of them all, but unfortunately I only have one Mandarava. If I give her to one, all the others will be angry. Her husband might be happy, but everybody else will be upset." He fell into a dilemma and felt very confused as to a solution.

Finally, he decided to leave it up to Mandarava so that he could say it was her choice. When asked, the Princess said she didn't want any of her suitors; she just wanted to practice and meditate. She had made a decision and King Arsadhara was respectful of her choice. He had a beautiful convent built and arranged for five hundred girls to accompany Princess Mandarava in her quest for a spiritual life. They all lived like nuns in hermitage.

One day during an outdoor practice, a magnificent rainbow appeared high in the sky above the nunnery. In the center of this brilliant rainbow light, Guru Padmasambhava appeared. As soon as he began to speak, all the nuns felt a strong, intimate connection with him. They asked him to come down and give more extensive teachings. So he descended into the courtyard and was invited into the meditation hall where he began to instruct them in the practices of the inner tantras.

Now a cowherd was in search of a cow by the hermitage. He couldn't find the cow, but while he was looking around, he thought he saw a man being invited into the convent. Thinking that perhaps his eyes had deceived him, he quietly approached the wall and heard what was unmistakably a man's voice coming from inside the convent. So he went down to the village to tell everybody.

Well, people were quite upset. They didn't like the idea of the nuns having a man in their midst. If they wanted to study the Dharma and give up household life, why did they invite this man in? And what was his intention in being there? A few people decided to investigate for themselves and concluded that there was definitely a man in the royal convent. This was very shocking news and folks were not prepared to accept such a state of affairs. Rumors multiplied throughout the villages and by the time word got to the palace, it had become an incredible scandal. King Arsadhara was extremely angry.

Even the queen mother was insulted. Emotionally, it was as if a volcano had erupted in the royal chambers. A group of ministers and soldiers were dispatched to check out the truth of the allegations, and if they were true, to kill the offender and to punish everyone else involved.

When the king's delegation arrived at the convent's meditation hall, Guru Padmasambhava was expounding the Dharma while sitting on a throne surrounded by all 500 nuns. Everybody was very calm and peaceful. It looked like they were having a good time. When the king's men began to get aggressive, the nuns drew closer around Guru Rinpoche and Mandarava. The Princess pleaded with them. "Please don't do this. This is our beloved teacher. He is helping guide us to enlightenment. Tell that to my father. There is nothing else going on here besides Dharma teachings." The men ignored her and Guru Padmasambhava was captured. His hands were bound and they led him off surrounded by hordes of people. They wanted to make sure that he did not try to run away. By royal decree, his punishment was to be burned at the stake. Mandarava was sentenced to prison for 25 years, while all 500 of her attendants were sentenced to ten years. All of this was the king's decision. A great quantity of wood was collected from the local households and soaked with sesame oil.

Guru Rinpoche was tied in the center and the pyre was lit. The king ordered that no one be allowed into the area for a week except those who were tending the fire.

Now while Guru Rinpoche was in the midst of the flames, the fire transformed into water, which soon became a lake encircled on its outer perimeter by a ditch sporting a halo of upside-down flames. In the center of this beautiful lake there was a wondrous lotus flower and above that,

Guru Padmasambhava was sitting in the posture of royal ease, even more glorious than before. The guards who were watching couldn't believe what was happening but they attempted to describe it in a message to the king. The king didn't believe it either and wanted it reconfirmed. The guards stuck by their story, so he decided to come see for himself.

King Arsadhara cautiously approached the miraculous lake. At first, he thought it was just a magical illusion, so he walked around the outer ditch, trying to detect whether it was real or not. He blinked and gazed hard, he rubbed his eyes and opened them wide as if there was something wrong with his vision, but every time he turned to look, he beheld the same incredible scene with Guru Padmasambhava gloriously sitting in the center of a beautiful lotus flower, looking more confident than ever. While the king was busy making his investigation, Guru Padmasambhava called out, "Welcome, oh ignorant king. You have such a narrow mind! Your judgements are insane! You cannot do anything to me. Having realized the great equanimity, my nature is like that of the sky which cannot be burned or destroyed. Oh deceitful and obscured one, how did you ever come to be king?" Upon hearing this the King immediately felt very sorry about what he had done. He fell on the ground and began doing prostrations saying, "Master, please forgive me, I am sorry for all my ignorant actions. I offer you my kingdom. Please come to the palace." Guru Padmasambhava answered "I don't need a kingdom or a palace." So the king requested teachings and Guru Padmasambhava accepted his invitation.

The king wanted to escort Guru Rinpoche in royal style, as he would welcome another great monarch. He sent ministers back to the palace to retrieve the royal vestments and presented Guru Padmasambhava with ceremonial robes. In place of horses, King Arsadhara himself pulled the Guru's chariot into Zahor.

Historically, Guru Padmasambhava's famous five-sided hat was a gift from the King of Zahor. It was the King's own coronation hat and was offered to Guru Rinpoche as a symbol of respect. I don't know if he was wearing it when he came to Tibet or whether it was just one of his favorites, but this five sided hat has become an auspicious symbol.

Mandarava and her 500 attendants were released from prison and Guru Padmasambhava stayed in Zahor for a long time giving Vajrayana teachings, specifically focusing on the combined instruction of all the inner tantras.

As a result, it is said that about 100.000 people, both men and women, reached the vidyadhara state. This is considered a very high realization on the Vajrayana path and Arsadhara, the king of Zahor, was among the fortunate ones.

The lake where they tried to burn Guru Padmasambhava is not far from Dharamsala. It is still a popular place of pilgrimage. Maybe some of you have gone there already or perhaps you will go in the future. It is one of the major Buddhist pilgrimage spots in India.

In the nearby Himalayan region is an area called Kashmir which was part of Tibet in ancient times. It is now part of India, but Kashmiri culture is very much like that of Tibet. They wear clothing very similar to the styles adopted by Tibetans and they practice Dharma. They say that when Guru Padmasambhava emerged from the lake surrounded by fire, the Kashmiri people were the first to offer him tea. Therefore, they have a special connection with Guru Rinpoche.

Many young girls and groups of old ladies come to the lake holding hands, and, while sitting on the shore of the lake, they chant and sing for hours at a time. There is a small island which floats on the lake called "The Lotus Stalk." It consists of a tangle of roots, some soil and a bit of bush. They say that whenever the women come and sing, that island moves, confirming their unique connection with Guru Rinpoche. We saw this ourselves. They start singing and the island begins moving. It is really kind of nice. It is not a very big island, but when the women chanted, the wind picked up and blew it toward them. Sometimes these women even throw gold rings and jeweled ornaments on to the island and when they leave, the island drifts back out toward the center. This actually happens in Tso-pema. We've seen it with our own eyes quite a few times.

After this, Guru Padmasambhava went to the Martika Cavern, which is renowned as the Cave of Immortality. There he practiced with Mandarava for three months on the Buddha Amitayus. At the end of this period, Buddha Amitayus appeared and initiated them into deathlessness. Guru Rinpoche and Mandarava realized immortality.

They had defeated Mara, the demon of death. As we have already said, Guru Padmasambhava is a totally enlightened being, prior to appearing in this or any world. He is a direct emanation of Buddha Amitabha and a reincarnation of Buddha Shakyamuni. This means he is free from both emotional and mental obscurations and is always transcendent to death and mortality. But on the relative level, he came to this realization in Martika Cave.

Guru Padmasambhava is the always present Buddha. His influence is still with us. His inspiration, his blessings, and his presence pervade Tibetan history. He did not merely appear in the eighth century and then disappear. In every century, the great masters of all four schools of Tibetan Buddhism have been guided by Guru Rinpoche directly or indirectly. His presence is always with us, which is why he has become known as the always living or present Buddha. This is another way of understanding the truth of Guru Rinpoche's immortality.

In historical terms, Guru Padmasambhava was born eight years after Buddha Shakyamuni's mahaparinirvana. Yet when he came to Tibet in the eighth century, he was still young. As I said earlier, we cannot comprehend enlightened activities within the limits of our ordinary conceptions. We cannot fathom these stories because our knowledge is very restricted and will not accept what the mind perceives as contradictory. For example, there are teachings which say that Guru Padmasambhava came to Tibet when he was 3000 years old. In ancient India they employed a system which counted the waxing moon as one month and the waning moon as another month.

That way, one year becomes two. But this still means he was at least 1500 years old when he came to Tibet. It is very difficult to fit this statement in with the rest of our knowledge. Occasionally you will see people over one hundred on television and invariably, they appear very old. It is often difficult for them to move. Most of us would be surprised if a 100 year old man could walk through the doorway of his house, never mind a 1500 year old man crossing the Himalayas! When Guru Padmasambhava became immortal, he completely transformed all the gross elements into their subtle wisdom forms. These wisdom elements are free from decay, decline and change. Liberation from these notions gave him the flexibility and openness to perform many incomprehensible activities. This also applies to wisdom dakini Mandarava. She too, is a totally enlightened, immortal being who has appeared again and again in many different forms.

Mandarava was only the first of these incarnations. The second is known among the Gelugpas, the Sakyas and Kagyus as the Queen of Accomplishment. In another incarnation, she is a famous long-life Buddha emanating from the Padma family. Around the tenth century there lived a great yogini named Machig Lapdron who was yet another emanation of the wisdom dakini Mandarava.

It is important to understand that all the activities of Guru Rinpoche are designed to break through the rigidity of dualistic concepts and conventions. He is beyond the limits of worldly views and traditions. In one sense, these conditional forms are very important and special, but in another way, they are just conceptual systems developed to solve certain problems, none of which apply to the realization of the true nature. Our view of things is a creation or product of our conceptualizing. Guru Padmasambhava's activities transcend these definitions and indicate that in order to become enlightened we have to go beyond mundane approaches.

Guru Rinpoche has appeared in the world in the guise of kings and queens, royal ministers, peasants, children, and even as animals. He continues to appear in many different ways in order to help beings break down the walls of dualistic conceptions which restrict understanding, liberating them into the vastness of equanimity. That is the focus of Guru Rinpoche's activity. As the embodiment of ultimate bodhicitta, he uses many different forms to communicate.

Bodhicitta is available to every sentient being all the time, throughout the day, from year to year throughout all our lifetimes and on into the future forever. It is something that is very special for every one of us. In developing bodhicitta, we don't have to make any particular effort to remove negative qualities, such as anger and jealousy. The generation of bodhicitta naturally removes these obstacles, just as darkness naturally disappears the moment the sun rises in the eastern sky. Compassion is one of the primary roots of spiritual practice. Every spiritual discipline must be based upon compassion and for that reason Guru Padmasambhava taught that if you don't have compassion, then the root of your spirituality will be rotten. It might even start to smell.

Everybody needs love and compassion all the time. There is nobody who will refuse the gift and benefits of love and compassion.

These qualities are well symbolized by the lotus flower or padma which is always fresh and lovely. Everyone can appreciate its beauty. Sambhava means essence or identity.

This means that the essence of all blessing and benefit for beings in samsara is bodhicitta. It is the essence of real spiritual practice and we should continually develop it in ourselves.

Practicing on Guru Padmasambhava will help us cultivate bodhicitta and transform negativity. So begin meditating with the bodhicitta attitude and then visualize a small sphere of white light which has a reddish glow. This transforms into the transcendental wisdom body of Guru Padmasambhava with one face, two arms and two legs.

His complexion is a rich white and his demeanour is very peaceful. He is wearing a red monk's hat. Sometimes I wear the same kind of hat when I give empowerments.

It is tall and pointed. He sits on a lotus surmounted by sun and moon discs. His right hand is making the protection mudra, while his left hand holds a skull-cup filled with amrita or long-life nectar. During the practice, imagine that the wisdom blessing of this nectar flows out to you and all sentient beings, purifying negative emotions, mental obscurations, diseases, external obstacles and so forth. Do this until you feel that everything has been completely transformed into the purity of the original sphere of primordial wisdom.

You can do this meditation anytime, but it is particularly effective when your mind feels disturbed, tired, and crowded with too many conceptions, over-busy with stressful thoughts and heavy attitudes. Of course, you can also do other practices at such times, but when you need to transform or regenerate your energy, it is especially good to meditate on Guru Padmasambhava. It will revitalize your life force and help balance the essence elements of the body. Feel deeply into his presence with love and compassion, and arouse bodhicitta. When you excel in the practice on bodhicitta, you are filling your whole body, your heart, all your channels and wind systems, with the energy of love, compassion and wisdom. This brings a calm and peaceful state of relaxation and helps create a nice atmosphere for other sentient beings, harmonizing both internal and external environments.

While clearly visualizing Guru Padmasambhava, begin reciting the Vajra Guru Mantra. Open your heart and mind until you are full of love, compassion and wisdom and chant in that mood for as long as you have time. When you are finished, dissolve the visualization into a sphere of white light with a reddish tinge around the edges and draw it into your heart center. Meditate for awhile in that non-dual disposition and then dedicate the merit to all sentient beings.

This completes four emanations, so we have four more to go.

Part Four



Guru Shakyasengé Lion of the Shakyas

The fifth emanation is Guru Shakyasengé, the form of Guru Rinpoche demonstrating the means of awakening within this lifetime through discipline and detachment.

This is a very simple and gentle approach, the gradual way of enlightenment. Shakyasengé wears monk's robes and embodies the principle of realization through the monastic path.

After Buddha Shakyamuni's mahaparinirvana, there were seven generations of regents, the first being Mahakashyapa and the second, Ananda. The third and fourth lineage holders, Sanavasika (T. Nimakungwa) and Upagupta, were originally Ananda's students. Guru Shakyasengé was ordained along with both of them by the Venerable Ananda on a small island in the Ganges River. There is a tradition of performing ordinations on such islands, which continues even today in Sri Lanka. Some schools don't ever give the full ordination on land. They'll go out on a river, a lake or the ocean and do it in a boat. It is said that when Guru Shakyasengé was ordained, the earth goddess offered him monk's robes and a begging bowl in the presence of the buddhas of the ten directions.

After his ordination, Shakyasengé practiced according to the traditional system which involves study, contemplation, and meditation. For more than twenty years he studied with Ananda, primarily focusing on the Tripitaka, or the Three Baskets of teachings; the vinaya, sutra and abhidharma. Guru Shakyasengé mastered the Tripitaka as well as the outer and inner tantras and realized enlightenment.

After studying with Ananda, Guru Shakyasengé spent many years in Bodhgaya. He practiced and taught the vinaya, sutra and abhidharma, serving many who were particularly suited to these teachings. Then he went to Rajagrha or Vulture Peak, one of the most famous places in the world of Buddhism. Here he meditated on the Prajnaparamita Sutras. The Buddha said that Vulture Peak has a special power to pacify the mind so as to reveal its true nature. Shakyasengé went to meditate and contemplate the Prajnaparamita in all the places Buddha had originally given these teachings.

In Nepal, Guru Shakyasengé took up the Vajrayana. In particular, he practiced on Vajrakilaya, which is one of the eight heruka teachings. These are very secret transmissions, the innermost of the tantric sadhanas.

He practiced and meditated on Yangdag Heruka and Vajrakilaya for about three years. With this combination, he reached the highest Heruka level which is known as Mahamudra. Mahamudra is the understanding of great emptiness in which the entire universe is seen as great emptiness-bliss, within which everything manifests. According to historical accounts, Guru Rinpoche came to this realization in Nepal during the emanation time of Guru Shakyasengé.

Vajrakilaya is a very important deity of the inner tantras. He represents the power and activities of all the Buddhas of the three times and ten directions. So by achieving the same realization as Vajrakilaya, Guru Rinpoche gained the ability to subdue negative forces all over the world. He used his ability to heal an eruption of the dark forces of the earth and sky that was taking place in Nepal at the time. These were among the activities of Guru Shakyasengé, although he is mainly associated with discipline and gentleness.

In spite of his high realization, Guru Shakyasengé follows the simplest ways and skillfully makes use of ordinary forms. He represents authentic spiritual development which proceeds from the ground level. He is not passively absorbed in a high state but is working from the grassroots. Even though Guru Shakyasengé is fully realized, he makes appropriate use of worldly conventions. To be well aware of the law of karmic causation and to apply this knowledge in practice is the essential teaching of Guru Shakyasengé.

Guru Shakyasengé's activities had a profound influence on King Ashoka, the most famous and powerful monarch in all of Indian history. Ashoka was predicted by Buddha Shakyamuni in the following way; one day the Buddha was going to the city to beg for lunch. On the way, he passed a beach where a group of children were playing. They were building sand castles complete with structures for the king's court and treasure house. The children had even taken on positions such as king, queen, and ministers.

As the Buddha and his students approached, the little boy who was acting as the king saw them coming and was very happy. He picked up a handful of the sand and gravel which symbolized the royal treasure and ran toward the Buddha. When Ananda saw that the child was going to put sand in the Buddha's begging bowl, he was ready to turn the boy away, but the Buddha said, "Let me accept his offering. This is special." The Buddha lowered his bowl, but the child could not reach it.

So the boy called for one of his little ministers. The boy king asked his friend to get down on all fours and then stood on his back to put the offering in Buddha's begging bowl.

Ananda and the other students saw all this and were very amazed. They asked, "Who is this child?" And Buddha replied, "This boy is uncommon. Through his aspirations and this connection with me here today, he will become a very great king about two hundred and fifty years after my mahaparinirvana. He will help spread my Dharma and support the sangha. He will create as many monuments to the Buddha throughout the world as the grains of sand which he carries on his palms. This is a very special child and his companions who helped him today will continue to support this boy's activities in the future." Then the Buddha did a special dedication prayer and continued on into the city. That was his prophesy about King Ashoka.

As predicted, Ashoka appeared about two hundred years after Buddha's mahaparinirvana. He was the son of a very famous monarch, but he was not considered a prince because he wasn't born in the palace. The King had been with another woman outside the palace and Ashoka was her son. Everybody knew of this. Most of Ashoka's half-brothers lived within the palace walls. When the king died, the brothers all started fighting for the throne. It seems the only thing that they all agreed on was that Ashoka should not be king. But Ashoka wanted to be king, and in any case, he had to defend himself against the anger and jealousy of his half-brothers. The situation culminated in a terrible fight one day which involved many of the sons but finally, Ashoka emerged victorious. He had killed all the others to become king.

Soon he moved the palace from the original site to Pataliputra. Today this place is known as Patna. Having re-established his capital at Pataliputra, Ashoka, a very powerful and vigorous fighter, started conquering other kingdoms and became ruler of nearly all of central India.

Ashoka pursued military conquest for years and killed many people. He was a very violent and cruel king. In some accounts, it is said that he wouldn't even eat lunch before he killed someone. In those times there was a school centering on a wrathful female goddess. Ashoka was a follower of this sect and his master told him that if he executed 10,100 human beings and offered them to the goddess, his power would increase, but since this was a ritual, he was not to do it in the ordinary, military way.

So Ashoka had a ceremonial house built right at the central junction of Pataliputra. It had four doors, one in each of the four directions and whoever was unfortunate enough to step inside would be executed, according to the king's orders.

As Buddha Shakyamuni stated, Ashoka had a good, strong foundation for the Dharma but for the moment, his great motivations were obscured. In order to help dispel those obscurations, Guru Rinpoche came in the form of a simple monk and stepped inside the house of sacrifice. The executioner asked him to come forward and drew his sword.

The monk asked, "Why are you going to kill me?" The executioner replied, "Because these are the king's orders. It is part of a special ceremony." So the monk said, "Let me stay here for one week and after that you can kill me." The butcher agreed to this and the monk immediately started telling him about the six realms of existence, describing each one in detail. At the end, he pointed out that if he had already been killed, the butcher would never have heard this profound teaching. The monk meditated awhile and then gave more extensive teachings on the hell realms. He told the butcher about the karma of killing and hurting sentient beings, saying that this would lead to birth in various hell realms. He explained how certain negative thoughts and actions relate to specific forms of suffering.

Well, as it happened, the butcher thought, "Until now I only knew one way of killing, but this monk has taught me many more. When the week is over, I am going to boil him in a big pot and then roast him!" By the end of the week, the executioner had prepared everything just the way he wanted it. He had the monk thrown alive into a huge cauldron of boiling soup. Then he pulled out and roasted him for awhile, But then, in the midst of the fire, he saw Guru Shakyasengé sitting cross legged on a lotus. Thinking this rather extraordinary, he informed the king. Ashoka had to come see this for himself.

When Ashoka was entering the room, the executioner suddenly recalled his mandate to kill whoever came through the door. So he drew his sword, and the King, who never travelled without a weapon, drew his own and asked, "Why are you trying to kill me?" "Those were your orders," the executioner answered.

And the king said, "I don't remember giving you any orders to kill me!"

The butcher reminded him, "You ordered me to kill the first ten thousand people who come into this room. I still have a ways to go. Therefore I am under orders to kill you." So Ashoka said, "Well, if that is the case, you were in here first, so maybe I should kill you!" At that point, the monk effortlessly levitated up into the sky.

After performing the four activities of sitting, standing, laying down and walking in space, he began giving teachings. They were still having quite an argument while the monk was performing these miraculous activities in the sky above them.

Soon, Guru Shakyasengé began to talk to them about how bad the karma is for taking the lives of other sentient beings. "These are terrible actions," he said. "This is not the Dharma, which is a positive path. Stop all this violence. Since the king is unwilling to give his own life in this ceremony, how can he take the lives of others? You have been told about the evils of killing, so you should not take the lives of others anymore." The monk warned, "By taking advantage of your power and using it for selfish ends, you will end up suffering far more than your victims." Upon hearing this, both King and executioner dropped their swords and became blissfully aware of the Guru who continued giving teachings. Ashoka himself destroyed the sacrificial house and then took refuge in the Three Jewels.

Historical records relate that after this episode, Ashoka vowed that he would never again touch a sword with violent or negative thoughts. It is said that he became the most gentle and peaceful king of all time. Even without making war, Ashoka's loving-kindness and compassionate attitude insured that his domain grew even bigger and more prosperous until his kingdom covered a large part of southern Asia. It spread from Afghanistan on the west to Burma and Cambodia in the east and south to Sri Lanka. Ashoka visited the pilgrimage places of the Buddha and erected many stone pillars, inscription stelae, pyramid-shaped monuments and one million stupas containing Buddha relics throughout these lands. In Nepal, there are four or five stupas near Kathmandu that were built by Ashoka and there are many others all over India.

Previously, he had been known as Ashoka the Cruel, but since he'd become a follower of Dharma his name was changed to Dharmashoka. He is one of the greatest examples of a religious monarch in the history of the world.

In the guise of a simple monk, Guru Padmasambhava helped bring Ashoka to the Dharma.

That was the external version of the story concerning Guru Shakyasengé's activities in Pataliputra. The inner meaning is that bodhicitta is the absolute state of Guru Shakyasengé.

This supremely beneficial thought arising from the expanse of infinite love and immeasurable compassion is always co emergent with wisdom. Wisdom matures the expression of love and compassion so that they become pure and true. These qualities are not externally existing, as if you would have to acquire them from anywhere outside yourself. They are all naturally inherent within you. Love and compassion are already yours to share. Look into your mind and discover that it has a wondrous array of original attributes. Loving-kindness and compassion are supreme among these primordial qualities.

The precious bodhicitta is radiating all the time, guiding us through all our difficulties even though we are hardly aware of it. Love and compassion inspire us to communicate and make friends with each other. They are completely based in primordial wisdom and inseparable from the nature of ordinary awareness. Therefore, when we start to actively develop bodhicitta, negative emotions, such as anger, hatred, jealousy, and violent thoughts, naturally dissolve and vanish. When you begin to cultivate genuine loving-kindness and compassion, ego-clinging and obstructions naturally disappear. At the same time, you feel great joy, peace and happiness which can be shared and appreciated by your friends and others. We should grow strong in the practice of friendliness and compassion toward all beings.

The absolute way to understand Guru Shakyasengé is as detachment and simplicity; to find satisfaction, joy and happiness in following the middle path between asceticism and luxury. This principle is well represented in the serene mood and transcendent discipline expressed in artistic representations of Guru Shakyasengé.

The Sambhoga Guru Shakyasengé portrayed on thangkas looks a lot like Buddha Shakyamuni in a monk's robe with one face, two arms, two legs and a top knot or unishaka on his crown chakra. In Tibetan, this feature is called tsuma which is nothing other than a dark blue concentration of wisdom light. His skin is golden and his robes are red. He holds a begging bowl in the palm of his left hand while sitting on a lotus with sun and moon discs.

Whereas Buddha Shakyamuni stretches his right hand down in the earth touching mudra, Guru Shakya Sengé holds a five-pointed vajra. Like all the other emanations, his body is luminous and transparent, being completely of the nature of a wisdom-rainbow body.

As in all the previous meditations, begin with the supreme thought to benefit others. Visualize a small sphere of golden light which transforms into Guru Shakya Sengé.

Recite the Vajra Guru mantra for as long as you'd like before absorbing the golden wisdom-essence into your heart. Remain in non-dual meditation for a while and then dedicate the merit to all sentient beings.

Among the six paramitas, Guru Shakya Sengé is associated with sila. By making us more calm and peaceful, practice on Guru Shakya Sengé will naturally develop moral strength, discipline and perfect conduct, which leads to deeper concentration and contemplation. The middle path beyond asceticism and indulgence leads to great equanimity and a profound realization of the true nature. This is the main principle embodied in the emanation of Guru Shakya Sengé.



Guru Sengé Dradok, The Lion's Roar

The sixth manifestation of Padmasambhava is Guru Sengé Dradok. Sengé Dradok is the first of the two wrathful emanations of Guru Rinpoche, the other being Dorje Drollo. Wrathful deities are particularly useful in counteracting negative influences from black magic, curses and other disturbances, such as people who malign you for no good reason. Guru Sengé Dradok is very efficient in subduing or pacifying such obstacles.

Sengé Dradok emanated in India. Orissa, which is not far from Calcutta, was the site of a very famous stone lingam and yoni which symbolizes Shiva in union with his consort. Every day people would slaughter and burn many animals there in ceremonial sacrifices. Sengé Dradok went there and pointed his finger at this lingam until it cracked and burst. People took that as a sign and stopped making animal sacrifices in that area.

Another story related to Guru Sengé Dradok took place north of Bodhgaya at Nalanda, the largest monastery in the history of Buddhism as well as the first great university on earth. As part of the contemplation practices at Nalanda, practitioners engaged in debates so as to refine their understanding of the Dharma. Everyday, there were lively exchanges expressing the viewpoints of the various schools within Buddhism as well as arguments in support of the tenets of some non-buddhist traditions. These contests still go on at some of the bigger monasteries.

In ancient times, it was expected that the loser of the debate would convert to the winner's viewpoint. It happened that a group of 500 powerful, non-Buddhist scholars came to Nalanda. For the most part, they were black magicians, so they requested a two-part competition, the normal scholarly debate, followed by a contest of magic.

Nalanda was full of scholars and it was easy to find five hundred qualified debaters, but no one at Nalanda was skilled in magic. They knew that this could cost them the debate and force them to convert, so they had a meeting to figure out what to do.

Suddenly a black lady appeared in the sky before them and said "Don't worry. My brother can help you." "Who is your brother?" they asked.

"His name is Padmavajra," she replied.

"Where is he?" they asked.

"He is now living in the darkness of the Frightful Charnel Ground. You must call on him to come." And they said, "We don't have his number. How should we invite him?" So the black lady taught them the secret hot-line code: the Seven Line Prayer. She told them Padmavajra would appear if they petitioned him in this way. As they chanted the prayer from the rooftops of Nalanda, Guru Rinpoche immediately appeared and agreed to help them.

Come the day of the debate, the Buddhists easily won the first half of the contest. The non-buddhist school then threatened them with by saying that after a week there would be plenty of signs. So Guru Rinpoche practiced on Singhamukha, the Lion-faced dakini, and she immediately gave him the appropriate teachings to actualize the completion stage. When a week had passed, a host of frightful omens like violent winds and thunder came. Guru Rinpoche transformed into the wrathful Sengé Dradok and with the freedom

and power of the lion's roar, he made the subjugation mudra and threw the thunderback at them.

They also conjured other minor forms of disturbing magic, like threatening entities hovering in the sky and other terrible things. Guru Sengé Dradok pointed the subjugation mudra and the dark shadows immediately fell to the ground. This was how he protected Nalanda University and helped meditative and contemplative activity continue flourishing there. All these extraordinary actions are associated with the energy of Guru Sengé Dradok.

The form of Guru Sengé Dradok is especially helpful in subduing the irrational energies of black magic as well as at dispelling bad omens and nightmares. If, unexpected obstacles suddenly arise, he has the power to neutralize both visible and invisible beings and to avert natural disasters. Guru Sengé Dradok can pacify all such threats. He is also a strong buddha for overcoming jealousy. When you stop being jealous, your attitude becomes one of love and compassion. There is nothing obstructing the free radiation of beautiful qualities.

Sengé Dradok is a wrathful emanation but his wrath is basically directed toward the destruction of jealousy and greed. It is not accompanied by attachment and clinging; there is nothing to win or lose. Rather, this wrath actively dispels lust and envy. There are many wrathful deities in the Vajrayana, but none of them are angry or emotionally negative. These forms express the intensity of true love and the fierceness of genuine compassion involved in dispelling attachment, ignorance and anger.

There is a line from a Vajrakilaya tantra which says, "The vajra wrath of bodhicitta cuts through and destroys anger." This is very important to understand. The wrathful nature of Guru Sengé Dradok is totally based upon love and compassion for all sentient beings.

The absolute way to meditate on Guru Sengé Dradok is to transcend jealousy and greed. This will instantly overcome black magic, curses, hexes, nightmares, and unexpected obstacles.

To practice on Guru Sengé Dradok, begin by cultivating a feeling of loving kindness and bodhicitta. Then visualize a dark blue sphere of light within a churning black cloud which transforms into the wisdom rainbow form of Guru Sengé Dradok.

His skin color is dark blue and he has one face, two arms and two legs. Wearing a tiger-skin and surrounded by wisdom fire, he stands upon a demon who embodies negative habit energy and black magic. All of this is happening above a lotus surmounted by sun and moon disks. A crown of five skulls sits on his head and his long reddish-yellow hair blows up into the sky. He has three glaring eyes looking upward and four fangs. His right hand holds a flaming, five-pointed vajra high in the air and his left hand makes the subjugation mudra toward the earth. Lightning bolts fly from the tips of his fingers and sometimes you will see eight-spoked iron wheels spinning amidst the flames. Imagine he is chanting with great power, the syllables HUM and PHAT! Like a lion's roar, the deep vibration of his voice shakes the entire world.

Visualize Sengé Dradrog and recite the Vajra Guru Mantra as much as you can while he radiates wisdom lights which dissolve all negativity, black magic, bad omens, nightmares, or anything in the environment that might seem a little strange or unusual. Feel that these obstacles are completely removed by his blessing. Finally, dissolve Sengé Dradok into a dark blue light which merges with your heart center. Remain in meditation as long as you can and then dedicate the merit to all beings.

Part Five



Guru Padma Jungné

The seventh emanation of Guru Rinpoche is called Guru Padma Jungné. According to Guru Rinpoche's biography, six emanations occurred outside of Tibet. Again, it is difficult to organize these stories into a linear time-frame because Guru Rinpoche's wisdom activities are not limited by time and space; but traditionally, this emanation and the last one I described, appeared within the borders of Tibet.

First, I would like to give you some background on the introduction of the Buddhadharma to Tibet. Buddhism originally came to Tibet around the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century. Tibetan histories recount that around that time, some Mahayana scriptures, a golden stupa and a tsa-tsa mold were found on the roof of the royal palace of Yum-bu bla-sgang

in Yarlung. Tsa-tsa molds are used to make small dough stupas, eight of which can be stacked together to make a bigger stupa.

Some accounts say that the twenty-eighth ancestral king of Tibet, lHa-tho-tho-ri was sixty years old and walking on the palace roof when these things descended from the sky. This was early in the fifth century and the palace is considered the first actual building in Tibet. Before that, most people lived in tents and caves. There is still a monument there, although the remaining ruins were completely destroyed during the Chinese cultural revolution. Recently, I heard it has been restored in the ancient style.



Another history states that an Indian monk brought these teachings to the twenty-eighth ancestral king and told him that in five generations they would be understood and that meanwhile, they should be kept safe. In the fourth century, Tibetans still didn't have a written language so neither the king nor anyone else could comprehend their meaning, but lHa-tho-tho-ri just knew they were something special and auspicious. So he guarded and venerated these precious treasures and as a result of his faith, his body was rejuvenated and his life was extended for sixty more years. After a long and prosperous reign, he died at one hundred and twenty without knowing anything more about these objects. This was the dawn of Dharma in Tibet.

Five generations later, in the sixth century, the thirty-third dynastic king was the renowned Srong-btsam sgan-gam-po, who is considered an emanation of Avalokitesvara. Srong-btsam sgan-gam-po built the city of Lhasa which has been the capital ever since. He also sent his minister Thon-mi Sambhota and a group of young Tibetans to study Sanskrit in India.

After returning, they created a systematic grammar and alphabet for the Tibetan language and began the translation and study of about twenty-one dharma texts from India, as well as other countries.

Besides his Tibetan queens, Srong-btsam sgan-gam-po was married to Wench'eng, a princess from Chinese T'ang dynasty as well as Bhrkuti, daughter of King Amsuvarman from Nepal. In those days, Tibet was expanding and intermarrying with these families helped consolidate his empire. The Buddhadharma was already well established in China and Nepal, so both of his foreign wives were devout Buddhists and brought a lot of Buddha's teachings and two famous statues to Tibet, but outside of the royal court and a few select Tibetans, there were hardly any practitioners.

The thirty-eighth king in the dynasty was Trisrong Deutsen, who was born around 740. At this time, Tibetan kings had grown powerful and extended their domain through military conquest, so Tibet was much larger than the area we now call Tibet. It stretched from the Bay of Bengal to Nepal, east to China, including Sikkim and Bhutan and then northwest up to Khotan. Trisrong Deutsen's father, Mes-ag-tshom, had died when the prince was only twelve. So young Trisrong Deutsen came to the throne at age thirteen and served as a military general, leading the Tibetan armies on various campaigns. For eight years he remained dedicated to waging war, although at seventeen his mind began to change and he was moved to look a little deeper. He already knew that his father and grandfathers had valued the Dharma but now it began to be meaningful to him. Although he continued to lead his troops into battle for four more years, he began reading a lot of Buddhist texts, and the happiness he felt in doing this made it clear to him that the Dharma was something very special. He was very inspired and moved by the Buddha's teachings.

Among his ministers there were some Buddhist practitioners who were more than happy to provide the king with Dharma texts. Historically, three are named; the Diamond Sutra, a text on moral conduct and the Grain of Rice Sutra. Buddha had originally given this last teaching to a farmer in a rice field. As a King, Trisrong Deutsen could appreciate the wisdom of the teaching on good conduct. Upon reading The Grain of Rice Sutra, he understood that good conduct was not simply an end in itself, but that it was even more valuable because it resulted in good contemplation.

By the time he'd finished reading the Diamond Sutra, he understood that the Buddha's teachings were not merely concerned with morality or contemplation, but that their wisdom went very, very deep, to the heart of things. Having comprehended some of the profundity and implications of these teachings, he resolved to take significant action to firmly establish Dharma in Tibet.

A group of younger, spiritually oriented ministers were instructed by the King to find out who was the most highly qualified Buddhist teacher in the world. Three groups were sent to three different places: to China, India and to an area which is now in Afghanistan. One minister travelled with three attendants to each destination, so altogether, twelve people embarked. Upon returning, they all agreed that the abbot of Nalanda University, an Indian monk named Shantarakshita, was widely considered to be the supreme teacher of his day. So the King decided to invite this great Khenpo to Tibet.

King Trisrong Deutsen sent a team of twelve messengers employing redundancy and other safeguards to insure that his invitation to Shantarakshita would get through.

When Shantarakshita received it, he was truly overjoyed and said, "I have waited for this opportunity for a long time. There is nothing preventing me from going so I will not delay. The time has arrived. I must depart immediately." Travel between Tibet and India was even more difficult and dangerous in those days than it is now. It is always nice and warm in the Indian lowlands, while Tibet is at a high altitude and gets very, very cold. While aware of these hardships, Shantarakshita did not hesitate. He made the journey to Tibet and stayed in the royal palace for four months. During that time, the King and Queen took refuge vows along with a small group of ministers. He gave teachings on the ten virtues, the twelve links of interdependent origination, and the eighteen dhatus. He taught in a very basic way during those four months.

Meanwhile, a number of natural disasters occurred. Tibetans were suffering from earthquakes, floods and the outbreak of an epidemic. Many people blamed these troubles on Shantarakshita's presence. They complained that his teachings were alien and blamed the King and Queen for inviting this strange person into the royal palace.

They said the old monk's teachings were at the root of all the current misfortune and that he should be sent back over the mountain where he came from.

In ancient Tibet, as in every country, the natives considered themselves to be the best of all people and to occupy the central land while the rest of the world was referred to as wild frontier or border regions. So they wanted to send the stranger who had brought these terrible disasters back across the border. They made a strong statement to the King that he would have to get rid of his foreign guest.

Trisrong Deutsen heard this but would not change his mind. He courageously held to his commitment to bring the Buddhadharma to Tibet. He was very sad to see all this happening, but his resolve was never shaken. One day he came to Shantarakshita and began crying. After explaining the nature of his problems, the King said, "I sincerely wish that I could bring the Buddhadharma to my country. How can we pacify this situation?" Shantarakshita said, "Don't worry about it. There are some natural imbalances and negative spirits in Tibet. They will not accept the Dharma easily and that is why these things have occurred. In order to subdue these negative forces you should invite the renowned teacher, Guru Padmasambhava. He is the greatest master on earth at this time and can easily pacify all of these obstacles." And then the King asked, "If I invite him, will he come?" Shantarakshita replied that Guru Padmasambhava would definitely come. "You see," he explained, "You and I and Guru Padmasambhava, the three of us together, have a special connection, a commitment from previous lives to bring the Buddhadharma to this land where there is no Buddhadharma. The time is right. If you invite him, you can be sure he will come. In the meantime, I will go to Nepal. When Guru Padmasambhava comes, I will return and we can all work together. We will make some good changes." And so the king sent Shantarakshita back across the border. When he was ready to leave, the King offered the abbot a big bowl of gold dust and Shantarakshita said, "I don't need all of this, but I will take a handful as a gift to the king of Nepal," and he gave the rest back. King Trisrong Deutsen sent three attendants to accompany Shantarakshita to Nepal, and at the same time he dispatched another twelve messengers to invite Guru Padmasambhava to Tibet. Now Guru Rinpoche, being totally omniscient, already knew the whole situation, so instead of staying in India to wait for them, he went to the Nepali-Tibetan frontier.

He was sitting right by the border when the Tibetans came walking along. They didn't know who he was, but the moment they saw him, they felt very calm and peaceful. Guru Padmasambhava asked them, "Where are you fellows going?" "To India," they answered. It was still a long way to India. His presence was overwhelming and glorious. They began to feel very happy and blissful. Their bodies began shaking.

"Why are you all going to India?" he asked.

"We have been sent by the King of Tibet to invite a very famous master known as Guru Padmasambhava to come and give teachings in our country." So Guru Padmasambhava asked, "I see. So what do you have to offer him?" In spite of the good feelings that they were having, this question made them nervous; who was this man and what were his intentions? One of them ventured to ask, "Well, are you Guru Padmasambhava?" He then began telling them the contents of their minds and thoughts in such detail that they all knew without a doubt that this was the very person they sought, Guru Padmasambhava. They did many full prostrations and offered him the king's gold along with a long letter.

Guru Padmasambhava looked at the gold and said, "This is a gift? But it is so tiny! What is this, a gift from the king of the hungry ghost realm? Don't you have anything else?" They went through the rest of their things and offered him all of their personal belongings. Guru Padmasambhava asked again, "Do you have anything else to offer me?" "We have nothing more to give than this gold from the King," they said, "but we sincerely offer you our bodies, speech and minds." Upon hearing this, Guru Padmasambhava was very pleased and said, "That is wonderful." By the devotion of these messengers he could see that Tibetans were ready to practice the Dharma, and in particular, the Vajrayana teachings. This heart-felt response communicated the basic attitude necessary for Vajrayana practice.

Then Guru Padmasambhava made a closer inspection of the primary offering. It was actually quite a big sack of gold. He looked at it for a moment and then said, "I don't need this!" and he began throwing gold dust into the air, scattering most of it in the direction of Tibet.

The messengers thought, "He shouldn't be doing this. This is precious gold." Guru Rinpoche immediately read their worried minds and told the messengers to hold out their chubas, the sash which is part their robes.

When they did this, he started picking up handfuls of dirt from the ground and threw it in their laps where it was instantly transformed into gold.

"Don't worry about gold," he said. "Keep what you have now and take it back with you. I will come to Tibet, but I will be traveling slowly and subduing negative forces on the way. We cannot travel together. You must go ahead of me. I will arrive in central Tibet in about three weeks. Tell your King I am coming." So the messengers returned to Tibet and told King Trisrong Deutsen what had happened on their journey. For the most part, the King was overjoyed, but a doubtful thought crossed his mind. He did not know whether to believe that Guru Padmasambhava would actually come.

Two days walk from Lhasa is a place called Todlung pleasure park. At the head of that valley is the place where the Karmapa's Monastery was eventually built. At this site they prepared a big reception to welcome the great teacher. The King sent five hundred cavalymen along with his ambassadors Lha-sang and Lupe Gyalpo to welcome Guru Padmasambhava. Lha-sang was the prime minister and the King's right hand man. Guru Padma Jungné arrived on foot, holding a walking stick.

I am sure you are all aware that Tibetans love to drink tea. It being customary to make tea for guests, the reception party was preparing to do just that when they discovered that there was no water available nearby. Guru Rinpoche walked up on this and saw what was happening. He poked his walking stick into the ground and instantly, water began to flow from that spot. This spring still exists and has become a popular place of pilgrimage. People still go there to drink the water or bathe.

As Guru Padma Jungné approached the castle which Trisrong Deutsen had built near the future site of Samyé monastery, he walked a path between the King, who was surrounded by a great gathering of Tibetan males, and the queens on the opposite side of the road, surrounded by a great host of Tibetan ladies. There were musicians and acrobats performing. It was quite an elaborate reception. As Padma Jungné approached the king, he could see that the young monarch was somewhat arrogant and proud.

Trisrong Deutsen was thinking, "The Guru should honor me with greetings before I acknowledge him.

After all, I am a powerful king, ruler of three fourths of the world," referring to Tibet's dominance over most of Asia at the time. The King had been spoiled by Shantarakshita when the Khenpo had originally arrived. The great abbot had humbly introduced himself and praised the King, who now expected Guru Padmasambhava to follow suit.

As the King stood there and hesitated, Guru Rinpoche read his mind and started singing. This is considered the first religious song in Tibet and it has around nineteen verses with lines like, "I am the great Guru Padmasambhava, I am King Padmasambhava, I am the Prince, Padmasambhava, I am the strong young man, I am the Princess Padmasambhava, I am the beautiful young girl, I am the great astrologer, I am the skilled physician," and so on. After each title, he gives a few lines saying something more about that aspect of himself. He begins his song saying, "Oh great King of Tibet listen to me now. In all six realms beings are subject to death. But I am one who has reached the immortal state free from both death and birth. I possess the secret instructions on immortality. I see this entire universe as a display of mind.

"Negative spirits and obstacles are my sport and faithful assistants. Everything is mine. I am king of the universe and have the ability to control all phenomena." When Padma Jungné moved to join his palms, wisdom flames shot out from his fingertips, scorching the royal robes. Trisrong Deutsen and his whole entourage immediately fell to the ground and began doing prostrations. The inner interpretation of this event has to do with establishing the appropriate relationship between student and teacher. Guru Pama Jugne's actions clearly defined the nature of this connection, so vital to the spread of Buddhism in Tibet.

Soon Master Shantarakshita returned. A few days later, Guru Padma Jungné climbed a small mountain above Samyé, sang a song to subdue negative energies associated with both visible and invisible beings, and performed consecration ceremonies for the land and monastery, at the end of which he levitated and danced across the sky.

This celestial Dharma dance contained the design or ground plan of Samyé Monastery and was the first religious dance in Tibet.

Of course, Guru Padma Jungné was quite an unusual person, so unlike the typical lama dance, this one was performed in the sky, not on the ground. This song was also the first song Guru Rinpoche sang to subdue disruptive forces.

Guru Rinpoche and many other realized beings love dancing in space. The vast openness of space is a wondrous place because all the elements are present and everything fits together perfectly, yet there is always room for a lot more. The four elements will never crowd space. And in more spacious states of mind, all sorts of conceptions can be accommodated; gods, demons and everything else can be directly experienced and understood. There is room to infinitely expand and deepen your exploration and appreciation of these special, open states.

The song to subdue negative spirits says, "Listen mighty demons of the world. I am Padma Jungné. And I came to this world miraculously. I am free from sickness, old-age and death. I have accomplished immortality. My body, speech and mind are completely enlightened. I have the power to subdue all demons and negativity.

Knowing all conceptions and thoughts to be nothing other than one's own mind, I am beyond hope and fear. Nothing can injure me, nobody can harm me. Clearly knowing that in the true nature of primordial openness there are no gods and no demons, what ever you might try to do can never affect my realization and understanding. You cannot change one atom. In trying to harm me, you only reveal that your mind is deluded." At this point, Guru Padma Jungné offered tormas. Again, this was the first time such a ceremony was performed in Tibet. He held up the tormas and said, "I am offering these tormas to the host of demons and malicious spirits. Though this is a small offering, I am multiplying it through the power of my meditation so that everyone of you will have a huge feast and can feel satisfied. In giving you this, I am offering you everything you desire, so you must all be very happy, and enjoy this supreme meal. By the power of my meditation and mantra, I offer you this gift. Please come, accept it and be content. Help promote peace and harmony throughout the land and help me bring the Dharma here. Bless this effort to use the land to build a monastery and accomplish the wishes of the King. Come together and join with us in this work. Don't ever ignore the speech of any tantric practitioner, such as my self. Hurry now, please bless this land! From then on, there were not too many obstacles to establishing the Dharma in Tibet.

It is said that during the construction of Samyé, human beings labored in the daytime and the local deities would work at night. Within five years, they completed all the buildings in the monastery.

In constructing Samyé there was a lot of discussion about how large to make it. King Trisrong Deutsen was a very strong man and a good archer. They say an arrow shot from his bow in Tibet could reach Nalanda University on the plains of India. The final decision was to delineate the boundaries by having the King shoot arrows from east to west and from north to south, and then build the wall for Samyé around these cardinal points.

Now some of the ministers who weren't too enthusiastic about this whole project and knew the King's strength, thought that rather than trying to argue against such a big plan, it would be easier to trick the King by weighting his arrows with mercury. That is how Samyé Monastery ended up being fairly large, but not quite as big as it would have been. Of course, King Trisrong Deutsen often had to deceive these same ministers because they did not welcome or value the Dharma and did not want any monastery at all! Like the mandalas of the inner tantras, the buildings at Samyé are laid out according to the configuration of four continents and eight sub-continents clustered around the central Mount Sumeru. The mandala was geomantically executed in architecture, reflecting the Buddhist cosmology symbolizing the inner structure of the universe.

After the creation of glorious Samyé, Trisrong Deutsen said, "We have finished building the monastery but this is not enough to fulfill my aspirations. The main purpose of all this work is to actually bring the Dharma here." King Trisrong Deutsen then asked Guru Padma Jungné and Khenpo Shantarakshita for their assistance. Both agreed to help and after discussing plans, the King personally selected a group of 108 young Tibetans from ages eight to seventeen to learn Sanskrit and other languages. Many of these youths became adept translators, rendering texts from India, China, Turkestan, Kashmir and many other places, into Tibetan. Working closely with other great Buddhist masters to insure a high standard for the quality of the translations, all of the Buddha's teachings, from the Hinayana to the Vajrayana, became available in Tibetan editions.

The Tibetan canon currently consists of 105 large volumes of the Buddha's teachings as well as another 253 volumes of commentaries written by the great Indian masters. Most of these were translated during the reign of Trisrong Deutsen. This is why he is remembered as the king who brought the Buddhadharma to Tibet.

He established thirteen Buddhist monastic colleges throughout the country and twelve major retreat centers, supporting these activities with his royal treasures.

Guru Padma Jungné journeyed all over Tibet, and it is said that there is not one square inch of Tibetan soil that he did not bless with his presence. With the help of wisdom dakini Yeshe Ts'ogyal and other students, Guru Rinpoche hid teachings throughout the land to be revealed to future generations at the appropriate moment. He remained in Tibet for a long time, giving inner tantra teachings to nine heart students and afterward to the 25 disciples, the 35 ngakpas, the 37 yoginis and others. Many of these people attained enlightenment within that life, some within a very short period of time. The whole Buddhadharma, from the Hinayana to Dzogchen, quickly became well established, illuminating the entire land of Tibet like bright sunshine. Thanks to the power and aspirational prayers of Guru Padma Jungné, Shantarakshita and the Dharma King Trisrong Deutsen, Tibet became the blessed home of thousands of highly realized beings.



The subduing of demons and negative forces obstructing the Dharma and the establishment of Samyé Monastery brought great blessings to all of Tibet. This was the external work of the emanation known as Guru Padma Jungné.

On the inner level, Padma Jungné is associated with the practice of meditation. The inner tantras describe two aspects of the path; the creation stage and the completion stage, also known as the visualization and perfection practices. Guru Padma Jungné confers special abilities to help us integrate these two stages and accomplish both the ordinary and extraordinary siddhis. The tantric refuge invokes the three roots of guru, deva and dakini. The root of blessings is Guru Padma Jungné. He fulfills all wishes and helps his devotees actualize and transcend all the stages of practice. The Buddha Padma Jungné removes ignorance and lets us discover primordial wisdom. This is very profound because there is no separation between wisdom and the skillful means of its realization. Guru Padma Jungné is a powerful symbol of the union of wisdom and skillful means. Through this technique we can approach enlightenment very quickly.

Guru Padma Jungné is visualized with one face, two arms, and two legs, sitting in the posture of royal ease with a katvanga leaning on his left shoulder. He holds a vajra in his right hand and in his left, a skull bowl with a small vase in it. In another form, as Tso kyi Dorje, his skin is dark blue, he has three eyes and instead of a katvanga, he is embracing the wisdom dakini Yeshe Ts'ogyal.

Guru Padma Jungné is considered the simultaneous embodiment of all eight emanations and is therefore associated with the four actions of pacifying, increasing, magnetizing and subjugating. He is also a long-life Buddha and can help balance the elements of our physiology. The physical body consists of five elements; earth, water, fire, air, and space. When our vitality decreases it can bring imbalances causing us to get sick. Practicing on Guru Padma Jungné is a very effective technique to help you remove obstacles, recharge the life force and restore balance. In a more general sense, he is associated with accomplishing the four enlightened actions.

Begin by generating bodhicitta and visualizing a small sphere radiating light of five colors, white, blue, yellow, red and green. Concentrate on that for a moment and transform it into the transcendent wisdom body of Guru Padma Jungné.

Recite the Vajra Guru Mantra with devotion while the rainbow rays continue to stream out from his heart center in all directions. Then recollect the light as the luminous essence of all the elements, returning it back to the flask in Guru Jungné's skull cup, until it overflows and floats toward you. The light enters your crown chakra or heart center and dissolves, correcting any imbalances and returning us to the peace, clarity and freshness of perfect equanimity. Meditate like this for a short time and then dedicate the merit to all beings. That is the way to practice on Guru Padma Jungné, the seventh emanation.



Guru Dorje Drolo

The eighth emanation is another wrathful form, Guru Dorje Drolo. Guru Dorje Drolo is the crazy wrathful Buddha of the degenerate era. He has no regular pattern to his wrath. He is completely out of order! Guru Dorje Drolo emanated right before Guru Rinpoche's departure from Tibet as a way of

confirming his legacy of words and actions. Some historians say that Guru Rinpoche stayed in Tibet for fifty-five years. This emanation happened about five years before he left. During this time, he gave many teachings which wisdom dakini Yeshe Ts'ogyal transcribed. Following her guru's instructions, she hid many of these texts throughout the land. As he was preparing to leave to convert the rakshasas in the southwest, Guru Rinpoche again blessed the entire land of Tibet and multiplied the hidden Dharma treasures through his meditative powers.

In order to preserve the practice of Dharma in Tibet, and secure the commitment of the local spirits to extend their protection across generations, Guru Padmasambhava emanated as Guru Dorje Drolo. In this form, he reconfirmed the power of his realization and insured the support and submission of the invisible beings. Dorje Drolo is the Buddha dedicated to the awakening of all those who have appeared since Guru Rinpoche left Tibet. Also at this time, he made many prophecies and predictions for future generations of Tibetans and the world in general. These prophecies are very accurate and clear. Many of them are quite detailed and concern events at the level of counties or states. Their truth has been observed by the Tibetans from generation to generation across the centuries.

There are thirteen different caves in Tibet which are named "Tiger's Nest." Just before Guru Rinpoche's departure, he emanated thirteen Dorje Drolos, one in each of these thirteen caves, all at the same time. In Tibetan Buddhism, the number thirteen is associated with a list of thirteen habitual obstacles. It was in order to subdue and pacify these, that he did this. The original transformations happened in central Tibet and as they occurred, each emanation of Dorje Drolo would fly off to a different cave on the back of a tigress.

The most renowned Tiger's Nest of all was in southern Tibet in a place which is now in Bhutan. The cave is called Taktsang which means Tigers Nest. It is very beautiful.

Maybe you have seen photos of it. There is a big mountain with a steep rocky face that has a cave in it. I don't know how they did it, but they built a small monastery on the ledge out in front of that cave. Although it is very difficult to get to, many tourists go there. They have to be carried in one at a time by a local person because it is so steep and high that you can easily get dizzy. They say that nobody has ever fallen from there, but it looks frightening.



According to both Buddha and the Guru Padmasambhava, this degenerative era is characterized by strong forms of desire and anger. These are the major obstacles confronting practitioners nowadays. Dorje Drolo is the emanation related to the transformation of these situations. Of course anger and attachment existed in ancient times as well, but they pervade the modern world in a deeper way. People's minds are continually disturbed and upset due to their influence, which give rise to even more emotional problems. Dorje Drolo is the best practice for removing mental and emotional obstacles. Guru Rinpoche appeared in this form to liberate sentient beings from anger and attachment.

Anger and attachment are qualities of mind which make it difficult to relax. People can become so disturbed by clinging to these emotions that their own perceptions turn against them and they begin seeing enemies everywhere. Guru Padmasambhava taught that when there is doubt and hesitation, the mind can't relax and is plagued by worry and restlessness. The long-term result of this is that you become more and more afraid. This disturbs your sense of well being, which affects the channels and the winds. Of course when the subtle physics of life is disturbed, there will be imbalances experienced in the external situation as well. This pattern is typical of the neuroses and troubles which arise continually in this degenerative era.

Along these lines, Guru Rinpoche said that in the future, all Tibetan men would be influenced by a demonic force called Gyal-po, the Tibetan women would be possessed by a demon called Sen-mo, and all the young Tibetans would be affected by an evil spirit called Ti-mug. Gyal-po symbolizes anger and jealousy and Sen-mo represents attachment. Ti-mug is an unclear, confused mind, without the ability to focus, center or direct attention.

It mixes up everything. These three demons are metaphors. He didn't mean that only men or only Tibetans would be influenced by Gyal-po or women by Sen-mo, but that anger, jealousy and attachment usually arise together, and depend on each other, like a family. Dorje Drolo is a very special and powerful influence to help clear away and dispel complex loops of mental and emotional obstacles.

People who are aware of feeling mentally unstable or unhappy for no apparent reason would do well to practice on Dorje Drolo. Even though everything is together, sometimes the mind doesn't feel comfortable, relaxed or at peace. This is when such practice is really relevant.

When there are unsettled feelings, it is particularly useful to meditate on Dorje Drolo. This will help calm and balance the mind.

As with all the other emanations of Guru Rinpoche, Dorje Drolo is a wisdom form, a rainbow body, not a solid or concrete object. Transforming from a sphere of bright red light, he is visualized with one face, two arms and two legs. His body color is dark red. His right hand holds a nine-pointed vajra and his left a phurba, a mystic dagger made of meteoric iron or sky metal. Dorje Drolo is very wrathful, displaying fangs, an overbite and three eyes. He is wearing Tibetan boots, a chuba and monk's robes, two white conch shell earrings and a garland of severed heads. His hair is bright red and curly, giving off sparks. To show how truly crazy he is, he dances on the back of a tigress, surrounded by wisdom flames. The tigress is also dancing, so that everything is in motion.

The tigress is actually Tashi Kyedin, a student of Guru Padmasambhava and Yeshe Ts'ogyal, and one of the five wisdom dakinis. The five wisdom dakinis are no other than incarnations of the five female Buddhas representing the Vajra, Ratna, Padma, Karma and Buddha families. And these are no other than the pure form of the five elements. Along with Mandarava, Yeshe Ts'ogyal, Kalasiddhi and Shakyadevi, Tashi Kyedin helped Guru Rinpoche carry out his wisdom activities. When Guru Padmasambhava emanated as Dorje Drolo, she was immediately transformed into a tigress. Visualize male and female demons representing anger and attachment, being crushed under her paws as she stands on a lotus, moon and sun discs.

Visualize this scene either above your head or out in front of you. Recite the Vajra Guru Mantra and imagine Dorje Drolo's wisdom flames radiating through you, removing restlessness, confusion, stress and any emotional imbalances. When such troubles arise, practice on Guru Dorje Drolo. Feel the flames as powerful blessings which destroy all psychological problems. Relax as they consume you and all sentient beings as well. Finally, let Guru Dorje Drolo dissolve as a red light into your heart center and continue to meditate in the openness of the true nature without any discrimination or particular focus. Remain that way for as long as you have time. Then dedicate the merit to all sentient beings. That is how to practice on Guru Dorje Drolo.

CONCLUSION

These are the eight emanations of Guru Padmasambhava. Believe it or not. Look into the special meaning associated with each emanation. Understand them and follow in their footsteps. Of course, Guru Padmasambhava is totally enlightened and can dance in the sky, and you might not have the ability to do that just yet, but have courage as you walk on the ground. Remain firmly committed to this practice.

Meditate on the blessings and teachings of Guru Padmasambhava, on his active demonstrations for all sentient beings, and on his endless commitment to the performance of bodhicitta activities. All eight emanations can be summarized in one simple word: bodhicitta. All this activity we have been discussing is directed toward the realization of benefits for all sentient beings and awakening them to their true nature.

If you don't know any other way, simply express bodhicitta through acts of loving-kindness and compassion and practice meditation. This unites the activities of all eight emanations in one simple state. Loving-kindness and compassion are naturally arising qualities of the mind which become unceasing activities. Allow all ego-clinging, even holding to limited ideas of loving-kindness and compassion, to dissolve back into the expanse of the primordial nature, and the energy will reappear in wiser, more flexible and skillful forms. To meditate like this is a very simple and powerful practice.

From a conventional viewpoint, the eight emanations of Guru Padmasambhava are strange and incredible. You might think these are all just stories.

But if we realize equanimity and understand the truth of Madhyamika, Mahamudra or Dzogchen, the activities of Guru Padmasambhava are perfectly and completely natural. There is nothing odd or unusual about them. To understand the eight emanations, we should realize that they are given to us to break down our fixed conceptions and help rid us of habitual clinging to narrow categories of thought and feeling. That is the essential point of this whole teaching.

Everything we see is a display of wisdom, the luminosity aspect of the true nature. There is no need to cling or hold onto any particular thing or form. Everything reflects the true nature, so do not become fixed in your mind and attitude. Stay open. You will never realize the infinite nature if you attach to one way of seeing things.

In the *Diamond Sutra*, Buddha Shakyamuni said, "Whoever seeks the Buddha in form or sound is going in the wrong direction. They will never see the real Buddha." We must open our minds and realize equanimity. The ultimate Buddha is beyond mundane ideas and conceptions. This is known as the Dharmakaya Buddha.

In a Mahayana Sutra, the Buddha said, "From the day I was enlightened until I entered parinirvana, I never taught a single word of Dharma." If we hold tight to our position within the bounds of common perception, we would have to conclude that the Buddha was a big liar. But Buddha is speaking here on the absolute level, leading us beyond duality, drawing us into practice from the enlightened point of view. If the absolute truth of the teaching is beyond conception, there are no words existing in the infinite domain of the primordial nature.

In another Sutra, Buddha Shakyamuni explains how our universe, even though we think it is very big, occupies a space no bigger than an atom without the atom becoming bigger or the universe becoming smaller. The whole universe is contained in one particle. All discriminatory notions and contradictions are abstractions and only exist on the conceptual level. In reality, everything is free of such limitations. It is unbounded openness and in this sense, is known as the state of great equanimity.

The eight emanations demonstrate the marvelous flexibility of the true nature. There is room for everything to appear and ceaselessly transform, and no point in clinging to exclusive forms or dogmas.

All these emanations arise within the true nature which is known on the higher levels of the teaching as Dzogchen. The entire universe is within the Great Perfection of the Dzogchen state. Everything appears vividly here and is clearly illuminated within this awareness. Nothing exists apart from the transcendent qualities of the primordial nature. Therefore, everything is already in the clear light state. All movement is unimpeded and translucent. There are no obstacles or blockages to this freedom.

That is my teaching on the eight emanations of Guru Padmasambhava



Khenchen Palden Sherab Rinpoche, 1938 - 2010

COLOPHON

May the Guru remain in the world for a long time to come, may the light of His teachings pervade the sky of mind and bring happiness to all. In seeking to become better acquainted with the Ways and Means of the Lotus Born, I requested these teachings on the Eight Manifestations of Guru Padmasambhava from the compassionate brother Lamas, Khenchen Palden Sherab Rinpoche and Khenpo Tsewang Dongyal Rinpoche, who responded energetically with nearly eight hours of inspired talk. The tapes were transcribed by members of the Turtle Hill Sangha and edited by myself, Padma Shugchang. The teaching took place at Padma Gochen Ling in Monterey, Tennessee in the spring of 1992. May these efforts serve to awaken the absolute reality of Guru Padmasambhava in the hearts of all beings. Republished as a five-part series in February 2011 by Digital Tibetan Buddhist Altar.