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# **Empowerment, Oral Transmission, and Verbal Instruction in Vajrayāna Buddhism: An Opening Address**

*by Lopen Kinley*

Firstly, I would like to extend ‘Tashi Delek’ greetings to everyone gathered here on this auspicious occasion. I rejoice at the fact that all of you have spent precious time and effort in coming here to engage in the discussions on the Great Secret Vajrayāna – the pinnacle of all the Vehicles in the Buddhist teachings.

So, elucidators of the realization and scriptural teachings - your eminences, learned scholars and practitioners participating from different countries, expounders of the Dharma teachings - khenpos, lopens, and scholars within the country, I welcome you all!

I would also like to warmly welcome the President of the Centre for Bhutan Studies and GNH, Dasho Karma Ura, the staff of CBS, and the representatives of Central Monastic Body who have jointly organized this significant event.

To commence, I would like to very briefly touch upon the Secret Mantrayāna, the subject of today’s discussion, and how it was established and continues to flourish in this country.

Guru Padmasambhava, the second Buddha established the Secret Mantrayāna in Bhutan during his arrival in Bumthang in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Later, in the middle years, numerous lamas from both the Old and New translation schools

(the Nyingma and Sarma) as well as non-sectarian schools known as Rime, who were all adepts with great spiritual qualities such as clairvoyance and magic displaying abilities as well as with profound spiritual legacies, came and founded their respective monastic seats in this nation. The strong foundation of the Vajrayāna teachings was thus further strengthened unceasingly over time, up to this day, as the Wheel of Secret Mantrayāna continues to be turned through the mode of ripening empowerments and liberating instructions.

Bhutan is today revered as an auspicious and sacred nation-state that upholds Vajrayāna Buddhism. This auspicious legacy was instituted by our prophesied Guru of destiny, our ultimate source of refuge, the Glorious Palden Drukpa Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal who was a combined emanation of Avalokiteshvara and Guru Padmasambhava when he ‘turned his horse towards the south’ in 1616. This is an idiomatic way of saying that he arrived in the land of Bhutan by travelling southwards from Tibet.

Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal thereafter established the Sangha in Bhutan by instituting the central dzongs and a network of branch monasteries throughout the region.

Zhabdrung Rinpoche went on to introduce and lay the foundation of a Dharma nation by instituting the spiritual and secular affairs of a new nation state. In an idiomatic phrase— ‘Zhabdrung Rinpoche bequeathed law and order to the lawless southern land alike providing a handle to the handle-less pot.’

After thorough analysis and through realization of his wisdom mind, Zhabdrung Rinpoche proceeded to establish the Buddha Dharma in general and the tradition of conferring ripening empowerments, supporting oral transmissions and liberating instructions by placing special emphasis on ‘Pha chos’ and ‘Bu chos’, which are the quintessence of the Secret Mantrayāna teachings. “Pha chos” is the Dharma that is passed down from the lineage of Gurus and “Bu chos” is the Dharma that is transmitted by successive disciples. The Pha chos comprises *Dam-Ngag Dongpo Sumdril* or “The Three Interwoven Instructions” and the Bu chos comprises *Gar Thik Yang Sum* or the art of “Ritual dance, creation of Mandalas and Ritual Chants”.

With regards to empowerments, by the fortunate karma of being born in our sacred Vajrayāna land, I have received the empowerments on *Lama, Yidam, Khandro and Dharma Protectors* in their entirety through the unbroken line of successive lineage lamas till my most benevolent Root Guru. And I am contributing towards the transmission of all these empowerments in my humble ways.

If I may offer a brief explanation about the pith instructions, mainly on the *Nine Deity Generation Stage* practice and the *Five Secret and Profound Completion Stage* instructions, they are:

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Explanations on Mahamudra that explicitly teaches the View.

The Six Yogas of Naropa that explicitly deals with meditation.

The Six-Fold Cycle of Equal Taste that explicitly teaches the conduct

The Seven-Fold Teachings on Interdependence that explicitly teaches the fruition state.

And finally, the profound path of Guru Yoga and other related meditation instructions is the most essential instruction to all the practices.

All these transmissions and instructions are taught and practised in the twenty-seven retreat centres under the auspices of the Central Monastic Body.

Similarly, about the reading transmissions, I have received the transmission of the actual words of the Buddha endowed with the *Four Qualities of Purities* in addition to the *Shastras* written by the Indian Panditas that rectify and render protection. I have received the reading transmission that has come down to us all the way from two sublime seers—Tilopa and Naropa and all the collected writings of their successive lineage lamas. I have been imparting them to others to the best of my ability.

Finally, I would like to conclude by making a humble and earnest request to all the learned scholars and practitioners gathered here today. We are living in a time where there is rapid development of external resources and modern conveniences throughout the world. At the same time, the internal attitude and behaviour of people are degenerating, which is giving rise to more and more distractions towards the sensual pleasures, and thereby they are losing interest in the sacred Dharma. At this crucial point in time, I would like to request all of you to engage in discussions with the zeal of a Bodhisattva to bring about the restoration of the Vajrayāna teachings, if there are any lapses, and to continue to preserve and promote the already flourishing tradition of the Secret Mantrayāna tradition.

I would like to also convey my hopes and prayers that all of you will continue with your noble activities so that the teachings and practices of the Great Secret Vajrayāna flourish through space and time.