



TSOK PRACTICE ON SPECIAL DAYS

Teachings by Rigzin Chenpo Padma Wangchen Rinpoche, on Guru Day in Saga Dawa
1 June 2020, at Theg Chog Ling, Taizhong, Taiwan



Accumulating merits and repentance are two important practices that a Buddhist on the path must do daily. Here, the Rigzin Chenpo shows the skilful means of Tsok (Ganachakra) Practice on special days to enhance the two practices.

Saga Dawa

Today is the 10th of Saga Dawa. Saga is the star nearest to earth, and Dawa means month in Tibetan. This is considered as a special month as all three auspicious dates of the birth, enlightenment and parinirvana of the Buddha Sakyamuni fall in this month of the Tibetan calendar.

These are the three of eight auspicious dates inferred from calculations on the 28 constellations, taking reference from Buddhist records of sightings of the sun and the moon. Many accomplished ones including Tsewang Norbu had also carried out research on the dates related to the Buddha Sakyamuni. In his book on astrology, it is written that the three dates are in Saga Dawa. This further confirms that the dates have not been established to be in Saga Dawa by faith alone.

Astrology Systems

The great translator Hsuan Tsang wrote in his *Records of the Western Regions of the Great Tang Dynasty* that, "there were different astrological methods in India at that time, so each group had their own important dates of the Buddha Sakyamuni".

Although the methods to calculate the dates were different, what everyone had in common then were records of sightings of sun and moon eclipses, which were also the same information the Tibetans used to derive their findings.

Vesak Day that is celebrated by some as the birth date of the Buddha Sakyamuni was set by the United Nations who had adopted the dates established by the Theravada community.

In any case, the Buddha is around all the time, so we could also take it that every day is his birthday, so it really doesn't really matter which day it is.

Guru Day

The 10th day of the monthly Tibetan calendar is considered an auspicious day. Because it was on

the 10th that Guru Rinpoche accomplished his practice of benefiting sentient beings. The promise he made was : *Make offerings and pray to me on the 10th. I will bless you, remove external obstacles for you, and clear your inner obscurations. Also, if this is done consistently every month, you could arrive at the Copper Coloured Mountain of Glory (Guru Rinpoche's pureland).*

There are records that Guru Rinpoche had displayed supernatural powers on the 10th, and how he was caught and torched many times. One such record has it that the King of Oddiyana had arrested him and set him on fire. But the King wasn't successful in his attempt because Guru Rinpoche used his supernatural powers to turn the circle of fire into oceans of merits and amrita, and the ashes into lotuses. Other records in his biography tell us of how he had dissolved phenomena in Oddiyana.

Obstacles in Path

The definition of a wrong view is your mistrust (even if it is just a little), and defamation of the Triple Gem, doubting the truth of cause and effect, defaming your own lineage, doubting Buddhist practices etc. To cleanse yourselves from this misdeed, you may pray as such : *Due to cyclic existence, may I transform and purify wrong views, especially those still in my mind-stream that have now become karmic debts.*

Amongst us might be some who had started on our path having faith in the Buddhadharma, and without first having a good grasp of what the dharma is about. Afterwards, this faith wavers, and we start to refute the truth of the dharma just for the sake of opposing. What this is, is mistrusting the Triple Gem, guru, or even vajra siblings. This is an example of having a wrong view. However, when a beginning buddhist asks questions about the dharma to get a better understanding of it, is not deemed as having a wrong view. So the reason and attitude for questioning is important.

What we all need to be aware of is that the presence of a wrong view is the greatest obstacle in our path to enlightenment. As such, it should be uprooted quickly to clear the way for practice. And today being the 10th in Saga Dawa is the best day to do so.

What happens is a wrong view immediately cuts you off from your path. There is totally no regard for

the stage of practice you are at, whether your mind of loving kindness and compassion have been aroused, how close you are already to the stage of attaining clarity, or if you have attained vision of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Your connection to the Victorious Ones just gets cut off instantaneously when you have a wrong view.

It is the same for practices of the Avalokitesvara's compassion, Manjushri's wisdom, or Guru Rinpoche's outer and inner attainments to remove obstacles. So we should all be very careful and watch our minds so that they do not develop wrong views. [Wrong views are caused by a lack of understanding of all compound - the five aggregates].

10th & 25th

Tsok is a good practice to accumulate merits, and to purify negative karma through repentance. It also clears bad energy due to negative karma, which causes you to suffer.

We should really top up our twice or four times a day practice, with the Tsok Practice on the special days of the Victorious Ones. These are their birth dates, dates they made aspirations, and the dates they gained enlightenment.

For the dakas and the dakinis, the dates are respectively the 10th and 25th each month. Both the dakas and dakinis had made a pact amongst themselves to gather on designated dates, to help sentient beings and propagate the dharma. Unlike us, they don't gather to repent.

If you perform Tsok Practice on the 10th and 25th, you will be joined by bodhisattvas from the three thousandfold worlds, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas from the 10 directions, and dakas and dakinis.

Another reason why the two dates are good for practice is related to our prajna, central channel and bindu. These are the elements affecting the arousal of bodhicitta, and the dissolution of phenomena. How these elements function can be better explained with the five siddhis in yoga meditation in Tantrayana, the three main siddhis, and other dharma practices.

Note however that you should not just rely on the Tsok Practice on special days because cleansing of body, speech and mind from obscurations and sufferings should be a daily routine.

Broken Samaya

People truly on the Buddhist path would have taken samaya (vows), in any yana. To mitigate broken samaya, in our daily practices, we should perform the four empowerments on ourselves. This serves to improve the quality of Buddhist wisdom in our alaya (universal soul) downgraded by broken samaya. Tsok Practice with repentance and the

accumulation of merits, is another way to repair broken samaya.

In summary, the 10th and 25th are good dates to repent, clear obscurations in our mind continuum, and to accumulate merits. We can perform Tsok Practice anytime, to develop a mind of compassion and renunciation, and one with a correct view of emptiness.

Tsok Practice is indeed profound. The liturgy is very comprehensive as it encompasses giving, repentance, clearing obstacles, removing obscurations, and the act of generosity of giving dana. If we were to explain it using people, it is a practice that rides on the collective efforts of people, by gathering the guru, vajra siblings, men, women, and all categories of friends and comrades, to practice. [Four Empowerments : Vase, Secret, Knowledge-wisdom, Precious-word]

Offerings

With regards to the items we offer, they should be those that can help us enhance our wisdom, and also the ones that we use daily. They could be food and beverages but they must be in abundance, and from a group of people. So don't just offer one item such as a fruit, or just a cup of water.

Let me reiterate that the merits that we can derive from the practice of Tsok is truly unimaginable. It doesn't only repair broken samaya, it also helps us accumulate merits, clear karmic debts, and remove obstacles.

There might be some people already blessed with enough merits that they don't face many obstacles in their lives. However, we need to understand that merits are impermanent by nature. So they might just last one, two, 10 or even 20 years only for some of us. Or they could also be totally gone after one life, or right after a major disaster.

For the people who understand that merits do remain in our mind continuum, which means they can flow from this life to the next, they would give freely, and repent rigorously and, continuously. So the people who did harm did not seem to face much obstacles in this life could really be drawing down from merit credits from their previous lives. But judgement will come at the stage of bardo. This is to say that we should not take our blessings for granted. Also, we should never ever think or have the intention that our practice of Dzambala or the accumulation of merits will be able to help us through in our lives to come.

Neither should we think that because of the practice of Dzambala, in the lives to come, we will continue to meet with the Buddhadharma, be able to benefit sentient beings, enjoy material benefits, will be healthy, still have plenty of resources, or even

be able to practice the dharma comfortably. Instead, we should pray that the merits remain in our mind continuum until we attain enlightenment. As such, any Dzambala practice is for us to accumulate merits to benefit all sentient beings, and not only ourselves.

With this spirit, for the Tsok Practice today, let us pray for the eradication of pandemics and disasters in this world. We hope that our collective efforts will be able to transform the collective karma that had caused the current pandemic.

Collective Karma

Guru Rinpoche had predicted about pandemics and calamities. Recorded are 300 kinds of illnesses, the characteristics, where they would happen, and also the impacts. Guru Rinpoche also said that we should all pray, accumulate merits, repent, recite the Guru mantra, and believe in him, in order to receive his blessings.

What we should also understand is the different degree of impact of phenomena caused by collective karma on different people. Some might be faced with more challenges than others. So we should all bind the power of faith of everyone together, and pray for world peace, stability in the country, blissful families, and harmony between vajra siblings. However, these prayers can only be effective if all of us maintain a pure vision, and a mind to be of benefit to sentient beings. In this way, our collective effort will then be able to transform phenomena such as the pandemic that the world is facing today.

Guru Rinpoche Practice

It is important to arise boundless bodhicitta in Buddhist practice. For Vajrayana practitioners, it is even more important to maintain a pure vision at all times. In addition, remember that all prayers should be dedicated to sentient beings in all six realms to attain the state of Buddhahood, and not just the seven billion people in this world.

Start by first visualising the place you are now at as a pureland, with yourself in it. In this way, you are in contact with the lineage practice of Guru Rinpoche and the Victorious Ones. By this way, that you will receive blessings from this pure and profound dharma of non-dualism, where there is no differentiation between the past and future. If you are able to remain in this state of ultimate true view, you will be able to attain the ultimate perfection of time. Next, arouse bodhicitta, and maintain pure vision.

Our practice today is titled *Spontaneous Attainment of the Solemn Wish-fulfilling Guru Rinpoche*. In this practice, you will visualise your body as the mandala of the 13th emanation of Guru Rinpoche. This



emanation is Guru of Great Bliss who also present different poses. In our visualisation practice of both the Wish-fulfilling Guru and Wish-fulfilling Jewel, we will visualise him in the standing posture.

Just for information, there are altogether 13 emanations of the Guru Rinpoche in which each has its own practice liturgy. There is another liturgy for the practice of embodiment of all 13 emanations. There are also liturgies for 500 emanations. Although each emanation has its own liturgy, common to all the liturgies is the main deity of Wish-fulfilling Guru Rinpoche, and all other deities are treated as the retinue.

Let us now get ready for practice. Relax, breathe normally, and clear away all thoughts that have been cluttering your minds. Be at peace, and think about the Triple Gem, Guru Rinpoche, sentient beings, and all in the six realms. Let us now pray for all sentient beings who were once our mother from beginning-less time. Then, in the space in front of you, visualise Guru Rinpoche as an embodiment of the Victorious Ones from the three thousandfold world. Maintain in this state of mind, and sincerely pray to Guru Rinpoche, and all lineage masters. Put your hands in prayer, and recite the Seven-Line Prayer.....

<source : FB EC 04062020/Video Theg Chog Ling 01062020>