

December 12th, 2008

Dear Sangha,

Warmest greetings from Orissa!

The Rinchen Terdzo, a precious collection of rediscovered teachings compiled and structured by Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye, being bestowed by His Eminence, the terton Namkha Drimed Rinpoche, got off to an auspicious start here at the new Ripa Monastery in Orissa on December 5th, the day of Medicine Buddha, a day of healing.

The Rinchen Terdzo consists of more than 100 volumes of empowerments, pointing-out instructions, and oral transmissions. These were originally authored by Guru Padmasambhava along with his famous disciple-consort, Lady Yeshe Tsogyal, and the twenty-five great highly accomplished students. Guru Rinpoche foresaw great difficulties in the future, times of confusion and conflict, and miraculously hid these precious teachings all over the country in the rocks, water, earth, sky, and in the advanced mind streams of individuals. These were then rediscovered at appropriate times by specific tertons and brought immeasurable benefit by becoming a fresh source of liberation during times of great distress.

To compile the Rinchen Terdzo, Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye (1813-1899) painstakingly went on the historic task of collecting these rediscovered teachings, some of whose transmission lineages were on the verge of collapse, from every corner of the land. Kongtrul and Khyentse Wangpo personally received all of the transmissions of materials from whatever remaining sources were available. Kongtrul is therefore credited for having rekindled and renewed the life-force of the terma teachings.

The Rinchen Terdzo is centered around the eight great herukas of the Nyingma tradition. These are divided into five classes of deities—guru, yidam, dakini, protector, and wealth gods. They are conferred on the levels of the *wang* (empowerment), which is ripening, the *tri* (pointing-out), which is liberating, and the *lung* (oral teaching or reading transmission), the historical background. It is through *wangs* that one enters the tantrayana; through the *tris* one accomplishes the deity; and the *lungs* help gain confidence in the practice. Samaya is what binds all three together in an individual and establishes close links to the vajra master, the heart and soul of the mandala. It is for this reason that the vajra master, terton Namkha Rinpoche, during the Vajrasattva abhisheka on the opening day, asked all recipients to promise to do one hundred thousand long Vajrasattva mantras and one hundred thousand Guru Rinpoche mantras, as a prerequisite to receiving the complete Rinchen Terdzo.

A vajrayana program of this scale doesn't happen too often and cannot be conferred by every lama. Many auspicious conditions must come together for such an event to take place. This is only the second time (and the first time outside of Tibet) that His Eminence is conferring the Rinchen Terdzo. Khyabje Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche made special requests for this transmission. The transmission lineage is very close to his heart because it was his father Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche who gave the transmission to my father. The lineage masters of this transmission lineage are Lodro Thaye (Jamgon Kongtrul), Gyurme Pema Namgyal (Shechen Gyaltzap), Pema Trime Oser (Shechen Kongtrul), and Chokyi Gyatso (Surmang Trungpa Rinpoche).

For general practitioners, the occasion of the Rinchen Terdzo is a means to receive enormous blessings and has the power of ripening one's body, speech, and mind. For eminent masters, the Rinchen Terdzo has a special significance as they are traditionally looked upon as the perfect recipients and guardians of such transmissions for the sake of future generations. Therefore, it is extremely important that they receive this transmission. Those here include Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche and my brother Lhuntrul Rinpoche—who is transmitting the *lungs*, and an assembly tulkus, khenpos, and lamas.

Orissa, a coastal region in the east of India, was known as Odibisha in the past and is mentioned in many tantric texts as one of the powerful places of tantra. Many siddhas of the past were from Odibisha. It is clear that Orissa played an important role in preserving and propagating the Buddhadharmas around the tenth and eleventh centuries. The mahayana and vajrayana forms of Buddhism flourished here. Emperor Ashoka embraced Buddhism here. Many of the mind termas of my father, terton Namkha Rinpoche, were revealed here. There is no doubt that Orissa is blessed with powerful energies. This coastal state is also

home to the Phuntsok Ling Tibetan community, resettled here after the 1959 tragedy of Tibet, as well as home to the Ripa family and community.

In 2003, the foundation stone for a sprawling five-storey monastery and one hundred and fifty room hostel for the monks was laid. Now, the new Rigon monastery is completed, as though it had been especially prepared as the auspicious venue for the Rinchen Terdzo abhishekas. Close to one thousand people, consisting of members of my family, tulkus, khenpos, lamas, and the ordained and general sanghas from the East and West, attends daily. I am indeed happy to see the place already serving its purpose. What better way to begin a new monastery than this? The wonderful gathering of guru, sanghas, and precious abhishekas being conferred, brings the whole place alive. It makes it feel like the monastery has been standing here for a long time.

I am grateful once again to the people who shared my vision and work, and supported it generously. I believe the merit and virtue coming out of such an endeavour will surely benefit many generations to come. Most importantly it helps to secure the precious Buddhadharma, a true source of help and happiness. In this time of great confusion and conflict, where so much fear and unhappiness prevail, not to mention all the destruction and devastation of nature, the Rinchen Terdzo is happening. It is a great source of encouragement, help, and healing for the world—for oneself as well as for nature.

I understand that due to unavoidable circumstances, many of you are not able to attend. However, you can always connect to the precious mandala of the Rinchen Terdzo from your home. His Eminence remarked during the opening day of the Rinchen Terdzo, “Since Guru Rinpoche, Padmasambhava, is the root source of the Rinchen Terdzo, and since all deities of tantra are united in him, we should recite one hundred-thousand mantras of Guru Rinpoche.” So I ask everyone to recite Guru Rinpoche mantra as much as possible during the period of the Rinchen Terdzo to stay connected.

Due to the sheer power and blessings of masters and students coming together in one place in the mandala of the Rinchen Terdzo, it is also beneficial to contribute materially in whatever way you can. Offering a candle, tsok, incense, or tea, goes directly to the service of buddha, dharma, and sangha. This is also the best time for requesting prayers of healing and liberation for those who’ve died recently or in the past, and for those who are still alive. The Rinchen Terdzo is scheduled to complete in two and a half months, but that is not definite.

The weather here is beautiful—misty in the morning and evening, but at least the people here seem to have clear heads. During the day there is a clear blue sky with temperatures around 20 Celsius. The air is filled with the smell of incense, chai, and people. The day begins at 5:30am, for some around 4:00am, depending on where you sleep, and goes late into the evening. I am happy for all that is happening here. This is our great fortune.

And if this letter seems long, you don’t know what really long means! Just come for a day. You get lots of sitting, a long sitting practically from 6:00am to 6:00pm. You actually float by the end of the day—not because you’ve attained rainbow body, but because you don’t feel your bottom half because it’s become completely numb. Welcome to ‘the floating mandala’. I finished writing this during the morning hours of oral transmission. I can feel I am just beginning to float.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year for 2009.

With best wishes and prayers,

Gyetrul Jigme Rinpoche
Rigon Thubten Mindroling, Orissa

P.S. Thought for the Week:

Noisy Tibetans
Bewildered Westerners
Sharing tea together
Is indeed the beautiful blessing of the Lama