

Chökyi Gyatso's Letter to Neten Choling

The Third Neten Choling Pema Gyurme was a great teacher and tertön—one of two incarnations of the great Chogyur Dechen Lingpa. He had several children, including Dzigar Kongtrül Rinpoche, and was a good friend of the Vidyadhara during the time they spent in India together near where Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche was raised. Neten Choling requested teachings from the Vidyadhara, and the Vidyadhara fulfilled that request in the form of the following letter. It was written while the Vidyadhara was living in England in the mid-1960's, presumably mailed to India, and received by Choling Rinpoche. His wife gave a copy of the text to Lady Könchok Paldrön and Lama Pejal, who saved it for many years and beautifully calligraphed and published the Tibetan edition we have.

Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche offered a spontaneous oral translation of this text during the final talk of his Pema Karpo vajrayana program in Halifax, just after Shambhala Day in 2005. This provided the catalyst for our translation, which was prepared with the kind assistance of Khenpo Sönam. The translation was later reviewed with Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche and Karma Senge Rinpoche.

You can read about the remarkable Neten Choling in The Life and Teaching of Chokgyur Lingpa by Orgyen Tobgyal and in Blazing Splendor by Erik Pema Kunsang and Marcia Binder Schmidt. In our annual newsletter we published excerpts from our current translation. Here, we are pleased to offer you the complete translation of the text.

THE SEAL OF PURE INTENTION A Spontaneous Song Sent from England in the West

NAMO GURU

Only father, incomparable Gangshar Wangpo,
Supreme leader, teacher of the effortless pinnacle of yantras,
Who dwells in the center of our heart:
Bring down a great rain of blessing spontaneously and universally throughout the four times.

In our lush land, cool and breath-taking, surrounded by snow mountains,
While experiencing a happiness that rivaled the joy of the gods,
Suddenly, we fell into a dense pit of dukkha
And experienced a suffering that was hell on earth.

With that, the hidden signs of the futility of samsara became apparent.
Even wealth is futile: it is like the riches of a dream.
Even good friends and family are futile: they are like a flame in the wind.
Even beauty is futile: it is like a flower at the end of autumn.

Even happiness is futile: it is like the sun darting in and out of the clouds.
Now see the nature of this futility.
When you see the reasons for not trusting anyone,
You know that even your loving parents will mislead you.

Now that I understand that I have been considering rainbows to be wealth,
My sadness never ends.
Although I express my innermost feelings to others, they hear them as sharp, hurtful words.
Although I care for others, they feel that I am angry with them.

Now, when I consider those who have turned their back on the dharma,
This seems like the darkest of dark ages.
If those who have even the mere appearance of a dharmic person have become as rare as a
star in the daytime,
Then those who practice the authentic dharma are like the horns of a rabbit.

When I consider the savages whose minds are possessed by demons,
Living in this mob of madmen is difficult.
Those who endure hardship for the sake of the dharma are extinct, except in name,
And there is not a single student who applies the meaning of the dharma to their being.

Nevertheless, thinking to fulfill the intention of the only father, the holy guru,
When a guru gathers disciples, this is the excellent activity of a noble.
Those born in this age, when the five degenerations rage, are tormented by suffering.
In particular, those who are parted from the land endowed with dharma, the country of
Tibet,

And who wander as beggars down stray paths, their merit exhausted,
Look upon them, the subjects of Tibet, as objects of your compassion and give them, bestow
on them, the dharma.

When my only father guru was alive,
There were many great learned and accomplished masters who promised to spread their
buddha activity widely.

But after that one of incomparable kindness departed to the buddhafiels,
And the heart of the supreme teachings of true meaning no longer even had a name,
Now, only a few with heartfelt caring can still be seen,
And so little Chökyi Gyatso has lost heart.

Crying doesn't help, as it only piles up more and more suffering;
Dying doesn't help, as it doesn't accomplish the wishes of the guru.
Thinking of how the heart teachings of the victorious ones are waning,
Day and night, crying and wailing, I am stuck in despair.

Having cast aside "benefitting beings" just for fame,
Unite the oral instructions that mix your mind and the dharma
With the practice of the inner meaning that shuts the gate of lower rebirth.
Never leave these bound up in texts, but bestow them on disciples.

Thinking of beings who don't have even the slightest glimpse of liberation,
Who are accustomed to going against the dharma by violating the discipline of the ten
virtues,

Cast aside your own tiny bit of benefit, and with genuine compassion
Make the effort to encourage others to virtue throughout the day and night.

Through gathering the rivers of profound realization of sutra, tantra, and oral instructions
Into the ocean of supreme bodhichitta that benefits others,
Hold the view and action of love, especially for those who are downtrodden.
Free from pride, extend your friendship to those you haven't met.

For some, whose study and contemplation is like a mountain made with the effort of a hundred years,
Even though puffed up with the lion's mane of much learning,
And the perfect roar attached to the mere words, which have no power to pacify or tame,
They might fall down into the pit of the 100,000 sufferings of the lower realms.

Some stupid meditators dwell in the cave of darkness,
Although these crows caw the dry words of emptiness,
They are so terrified by the sunlight of the great perfection, beyond conceptual mind,
They do not see the supreme path just ahead that liberates the three poisons as they arise.

These days, while crazed with the poisonous water of the degenerate view,
Ranting on about "nonmeditation and the exhaustion of dharmata,"
Living a crazy life, which is a hundred times worse than an ordinary person's,
They have hoarded a mountain of their own faults as a hidden treasure.

Until you have attained the antidote of the vajra-like samadhi,
And there is the clear arising of the major and minor marks,
So long as there is the continuous darkness and confusion of the stains of the two obscurations,
It is necessary to take swift action through the stages of the path of what to accept and reject.

If you look at the basic nature, free of action and effort, beyond conceptual mind,
"Samsara" and "nirvana" are reduced down to the conventions of labels—just names.
Within the enlightened city of the path of liberation, graced with its elegant name,
If you cast hope and fear far away, then you will abide in vast openness.

Praising through the exaggeration of grasping onto thoughts of "deities" as good,
Blaming through the denigration of the mind that thinks of "demons" as bad,
The coarse clinging of this mind of hope and fear is cast into liberation as it arises.
Abide in this spacious, ultimate mandala of relaxation.

The inner radiance of coemergent appearance is the gateway to wisdom.
The waves of spontaneous awareness are the visual display of luminosity.
When you look at innate mind, your own nature free from confusion,
You see neither meditation nor postmeditation in the view of naturally abiding dharmakaya.

All-pervading great perfection is the jewel of your own mind.
When you have the confidence always to rest within yourself,
Do not hoard ordinary mind-made trinkets as treasures,
But rely on the precious jewel that arises through nonmeditation.

For the yogin, completely open and free from reference point,
Not seeing an object of meditation, the bonds of meditation are released;
Not seeing a meditator is the sphere of purity, equality, and great bliss.
This is the joyful celebration, free from activity, where meditation is exhausted.

For the aimless madman, intoxicated by the amrita of true meaning,
Apparent existence dawns as the sphere of great compassion.

This is the ultimate goal—the heart of emptiness and compassion,
Working for others' benefit without concern for body or life.

When yogins who have totally mastered dharmata
See how spontaneous, ultimate virtue exists
With the eye of prajña, for which myriads of virtuous and evil deeds do not exist,
Whatever actions they perform are free of kleshas.

In the effortless view of meditating on the great perfection,
Having gained the outstretched wings of excellent unfeigned devotion,
We are not separated from the authentic only father guru by either time or place.
Always seeing his happy face is the source of our happiness.

Daytime appearances are the nature of the guru, undistracted space.
Nighttime appearances are the nature of the guru, the luminosity of great bliss.
In either case, as they are the nature of the authentic guru,
Everything is a reminder of the blessings of the only father guru.

Although the child Chögyam has travelled to the far limits of the ocean,
The buddha activity of the only father guru shows no limit.
When apparent existence is perfected as the essence of the glorious guru,
The guru yoga of naturally settling arises without meditating.

For the yogin of space who has cut through inner doubt,
Not seeing a meditator or an object of meditation dawns as transparency.
Since that is not merely a blank emptiness, devoid of wandering thoughts or mindful
awareness,
This wild man, liberated from the perils of straying and misunderstanding, is happy.

Since I am empowered in the dharma treasury of peerless ati yoga,
I have no hope or fear in the wealth of vast teachings.
However, being free from the pride caused by the demon of self-centered view,
I follow the lower path of pacifying and taming and go about like a dog.

The sole ground is mahamudra, coemergent wisdom.
The sole path is great madhyamaka, the stairway free from intellect.
The result is great perfection, the goal of exhausting all dharmas.
However, ultimately these are only synonyms.

A ho! May our dharma brothers and sisters, whose karma and aspiration are in accord,
Ride the unsurpassable stallion of "knowing one liberates all."
Like the flight of the garuda, the king of birds,
May they effortlessly arrive at the buddha field of Akanishtha, the blazing mountain.

I, the little one Chökyi Gyatso, abide in a far distant land,
Yet still abide on the path, bound fast by the silk rope of pure samaya.
Never have I relaxed the excellent vow of benefitting others.

Mindful of the misery of beings of the rampant five degenerations—
Those racked by sickness, warfare, and famine—

And effortlessly benefitting everyone you meet, bestow the dharma gift
Of the profound path of the great perfection, the mind of Samantabhadra.

Ekajati, lady of mantra, queen who protects the teachings,
With your single eye of wisdom, you see without distraction.
With your single fang, you conquer the thought of appearances arising as enemies.
Please accomplish the special buddha activity entrusted to you.

The manifestation of the energy of awareness, not seen to be other than myself,
Is the ocean of prideful protectors of the teachings, who hold the samayas of the three
tantras.

Giving thought to the teachings of the profound path of the great perfection,
I entrust to you the buddha activity that you are bound to perform.

Thus, I wrote this little muddled song of whatever came to mind,
Inflated by having the various aspects of a real charlatan.
The level of my seeing, meditating, and realizing is shallow.
For a holy one like you, I'm not worthy of offering this advice,
But you were insistent with your imploring words, unrelentingly urging me.

From the soft white glacier, the source of the transmission of the guru,
In this composition, with its unsteady gait of a stupid, stubborn donkey,
If word or meaning are mistaken, please forgive me.

The teachings of the pinnacle of yantras spread throughout space.
Guru and disciples, vajra brothers and sisters, gather together,
Spreading a new celebration of peace and happiness throughout Jambudvīpa.
I request the final seal of dedication for our excellent continual aspirations
That everyone arrive at the state of liberation, the rainbow body, dharmakaya.

Thus, as requested by the supreme Pema Gyurme, the incarnation of the tamer of beings, the nirmanakaya tertön Chogyur Dechen Lingpa, while I was on the island of England, a land that is sustained by the four great maras—Devaputra-mara, Klesha-mara, Skandha-mara, and Mrityu-mara—which are sustained by foreign cities, I wrote whatever arose in my mind, keeping in mind the supreme holy one. Coming at the end of the line of disciples of the father and son [Shechen Kongtrül and Khenpo Gangshar], the effortless omniscient ones, this stupid one jaded in the dharma, the youth Chökyi Gyatso, aimless Abhaya ["Fearless"], wrote this. By this, may the excellent teachings of the supreme yana become all-pervasive like the boundless ocean, exalted like the tip of a victory banner, and completely victorious in all directions, like two lions dominating the environment.

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