

## Introduction au Phowa

The Drikung Kagyu Lineage is one of the lineages of Tibetan Buddhism. The founder, Kyobpa Jigten Sumgon (1143-1217) - thought of as the second Buddha - was the successor of Phagmo Drupa who was the chief lineage holder of Gampopa (1079-1153).

The Drikung Kagyu order of Tibetan Buddhism holds the precious teachings of all the yantras which Shakyamuni Buddha taught for the benefit of all sentient beings. This lineage also possesses the complete transmission of the meditative practices of the Five-Profound Paths of the Mahamudra and the Six Yogas of Naropa. The Drikung order is famous for its ability to successfully transfer the power of the Phowa meditation to initiated and devoted practitioners who practice it. Thus, the Phowa transmission given by the Drikung Lamas came to be known as the 'Drikung Phowa Ch'en-mo' - the Great Drikung Phowa. The Drikung Phowa became so powerful that it became a tradition in Tibet to have a Drikung Phowa Ch'en-mo ceremony every twelve years at Drongor Sum-dho at Drikung in central Tibet. The fame of this Phowa continued to spread as thousands of participants would experience the signs of the Phowa during the 'Lung' (Blessing Transmission) given by a head Lama of Drikung Kagyu. Due to the accumulated energy of the lineage and the blessing of the teaching itself, the qualified Lama is able to directly transfer the blessings of this practice to the pure and devoted disciples who can experience the signs very quickly. When one has received any of the signs of the Phowa meditation, then one is considered to be prepared to enter into the Buddha-field of Amitabha Buddha (Dewa-chen) at the time of death. It is taught that one does not return to the samsaric realms after having entered Dewa-chen and that one can quickly achieve Enlightenment. Because of all this, the Drikung Phowa is becoming particularly relevant in these times simply because in today's society we do not have the time nor the circumstances to walk the spiritual path of the Dharma as did our predecessors in the past. We desperately need a spiritual path that is simple, relevant, and direct, enabling us to transform the stresses and pace of modern life into a vital force that cuts through materialism and attachment to worldly phenomena, and awakens in us the realization of our Buddha-natures.

The Drikung Phowa meditation is simple and yet powerful. We have the same opportunity as did the thousands of people in Tibet to master the Phowa practice, enabling us to transform the experience of death, which is a certainty, into a passage of the realization of Dewa-chen (Blissful, Pure Land). Today, we have His Holiness the Drikung Kyabgon, the Vajra-regent of Lord Jigten Sumgon who is the incarnation of Chenrezig, imparting this teaching as well as other Drikung Lamas like H. E. Choeje K.C. Ayang Rinpoche who is travelling the world to impart these precious teachings to fortunate human beings. The "Phowa Jagtsug-ma Teaching" (The Standing Blade of Grass) through which one can attain Enlightenment without meditation. It is very difficult to attain the precious human body and having attained it one must utilize it to reach Buddhahood through the proper hearing, contemplation and meditation of the precious teachings. Even if one has attained human birth, it can suddenly end without warning. Because of the overwhelming power of laziness in the postponement of our practice, one's life ends without one even realizing it because life is so short and the galloping mara of death is so quick. When death comes we have no escape, we have to accept it and go on to the next life. At this time neither your accumulated wealth nor your dear ones nor your cherished body -- nothing can help except the precious teachings. In the precious teachings, Lord Shakyamuni Buddha taught the Dharma to suit the different levels of understanding and the different dispositions of all beings through Shrivakayana, Pratyekayana and Mahayana practices.

The Mahayana consists of Hetuyana (cause) and Phalayana (fruit). The Hetuyana or the Sutrayana consists of all the practices without the tantric initiations. In the Phalayana or the Vajrayana there are many means (paths) to attain enlightenment through the Arising and Completion processes but one must diligently practice over a period of time before one can realize one's Buddhahood.

In the Vajrayana, the Phowa practice is the most direct and the quickest path for one to achieve enlightenment. It is said that even the heaviest of sinners has a chance for enlightenment through the practice of the Phowa. "There are teachings for one to become enlightened, but I have a teaching (Phowa) that offers enlightenment without meditation", said Marpa, the great translator and the father of the Kagyu Lineage.

The Phowa "Jaktshukam" (the standing grass blade) Lineage is one of the precious phowa practices. In the eighth century, the Dharma king of Tibet, Chogyal Thri-song Deu-tsen invited the great Indian tantric master, Guru Padmasambhava, to Tibet and they built the Samye monastery. Guru Padmasambhava gave many tantric teachings to the King and his subjects. During this time Guru Padmasambhava was residing in Ch'im-phu cave in the vicinity of Samye when an important minister of the king, Nyima, had a tragedy. Nyima, who had two palaces and was in the process of moving from one to the other, was packing some belongings by the light of a lantern when a small spark caused a fire which instantly burned down the whole palace tragically killing thirteen people including his parents. All his horses, mules, cattle and other animals also perished in the fire. Minister Nyima, thinking of the love and respect that others show their parents felt that he had committed the heaviest of sins by causing the death of his parents and others.

The king desiring to end the suffering of his minister went to Ch'im-phu cave to request the help of Padmasambhava. Padmasambhava by miraculous power went to the Pure Land to see Amitabha Buddha. He told Buddha Amitabha about the suffering of Minister Nyima and of all sentient beings and asked Amitabha to give a special teaching to free them all from suffering.

Buddha Amitabha gave this Phowa teaching to Padmasambhava and instructed that it should only be given to Minister Nyima for the time being. Padmasambhava through miraculous power then came back to Ch'im-phu cave in Samye and gave this teaching to Minister Nyima who then gave up all worldly activities to practice the Phowa which he eventually actualized.

Through the path of Phowa, Minister Nyima's consciousness attained the Pure Land and when death came many different signs appeared like rainbows in the sky and relics from his body.

This text was hidden in the Black Mandala Lake which is at the backside of Dhaglhagampo Hill. The Naga king, Tsurana-Ratna, asked to be the guardian of this text and was told by Padmasambhava that the future incarnation of Minister Nyima would be Nyida Sang-gye and that he must give the text to him.

Padmasambhava then left to go to the land of the Rakshas. After more than 350 years the incarnation of Minister Nyima was born as the son of a shepherd. When Nyida Sang-gye was growing up he felt great compassion and wept tears of sorrow when the animals would die. In order to alleviate his great suffering, Buddha Amitabha appeared to him and gave him this Phowa teaching for the benefit of all sentient beings. Nyida Sang-gye then gave Phowa to all the dying animals and often many different signs appeared.

The Naga-king then came to Nyida Sang-gye and told him of the Hidden Text (Ter-ma) and Nyida Sang-gye took the Ter (hidden treasure) from the Black Mandala Lake and gave the teaching to the Nagas. Through this teaching many of the Nagas were reborn into a higher life. After this Nyida Sang-gye gave many teachings to human beings through which many reached liberation.

This transmission of the teaching is held by the Drikung Kagyudpa. The devoted practitioner who has no doubt in the qualified Lama and teachings can experience the sign of Phowa merely through receiving the Lung (Blessing Transmission). This has been experienced by many practitioners around the world.

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