

# *An Essay on Relics*

*By Kyabje Zopa Rinpoche*

Generally speaking it is not that easy to produce relics. One has to make very strong and extensive prayers and preserve pure morality for many lifetimes in order to create the causes that produce relics. Relics will only be produced by practising to achieve the successive experiential realisations on the ground and path in a series of many noble rebirths in happy migratory realms.

The tantric teachings are expounded in four classes. Within these four classes of tantra, it is only the highest yoga tantra that enables one to achieve enlightenment in one lifetime with this one body, the others do not. Highest yoga tantra has two divisions: the generation stage and completion stage.practices. The generation stage is divided into two: gross and subtle; while the completion stage is divided into five stages.

It is said in the scriptural teachings that those who have achieved the realisation of mind isolation [in the completion stage of highest tantra] will produce relics. One who has achieved the realisation of mind isolation will definitely be able to attain enlightenment in that very lifetime. Likewise, we can also see the relics of arya Buddhas such as our own Teacher Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and Buddha Kasyapa, who achieved the two unmistakable paths of method and wisdom within their mental continuum thereby extinguishing the two obscurations and attaining Buddhahood. In order to produce these relics, they first practised the bodhisattva's conduct of the six perfections, the five paths, ten grounds and so forth for three countless great aeons accumulating the two collections of merit and wisdom that lead to the actualisation of the Rupakaya and Dharmakaya of a Buddha. Relics emerged as a result of all this.

Generally, although a Buddha's body is unlike our gross body that is composed of flesh and blood, in order to help us sentient beings generate faith in our mindstreams as a cause to receive blessings, purify our negativities and accumulate merits, the Buddha emanated many kinds of relics out of compassion for us.

In the past, when Buddha was residing in India, many people saw his actual body. Nowadays, due to impure karma and lack of merit, we cannot see the actual body of Buddha nor hear his speech. We only have the fortune to see Buddha's relics. Therefore, the kind and compassionate Guru Shakyamuni Buddha emanated thousands of relics as an object of devotion for very many sentient beings. It is said in the sutras, such as Dode Kalsang, that King Asoka regarded the relics as the most sacred objects and placed them all in many stupas which he built for them. A lot of the relics can also be found in Sri Lanka. The emanated relics were spread throughout many other countries of the world, which inspired numberless beings to attain liberation and enlightenment-this is the sole purpose of producing relics.

Buddhas appear in the aspect of the Sambhogakaya to arya bodhisattvas, in the aspect of emanation bodies to ordinary bodhisattvas, and in the aspect of ordinary beings possessing a body of flesh and blood to those with karmic impurities.

In the same way, those who have reached very high levels of tantric realisation, like the late Geshe Lama Konchog for example who recently passed away, leave relics behind for the sake

of sentient beings who are tortured by suffering. This happens because they have developed high realisations within their mental continuum originating from the root of great compassion. Geshe Lama Konchog has inspired and introduced so many foreigners to the Dharma, planting the seed of good imprints in their minds.

At this time they are benefiting us by emanating relics, which enable us to accumulate merit and purify negativities, thereby leading us to liberation and enlightenment. Likewise, we should rejoice at the deeds and realisations of great tantric practitioners such as Geshe Lama Konchog and others. We should pray, by thinking, "May we too achieve realisation of the ground and path as you holy beings have done. May we be able to benefit migratory beings as extensively as you holy beings have benefited them." We should also rejoice at the virtue of all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, at all the qualities of their holy bodies, holy speech and holy minds, as well as at all their great activities for the teachings and for migratory beings. If one makes strong prayers in this way, then one will also be able to give great and extensive benefits to the teachings and migratory beings. As it says in the sutras, "All phenomena are like condition and well abide at the tip of the wish. Whoever makes even a single prayer, the result will arise in exactly the same way." As it says here, good and bad always depend upon the intention, so one should strive to generate good intentions.

As Lama Tsong Khapa said, "If one's practice is not conjoined with any of the three principles of the path, apart from a few exceptional cases, whatever one does will only become the cause of samsara." It is said that due to the power of holy objects, even if one makes offering, prostration and circumambulation to them with an impure motivation such as anger it still becomes only the cause for omniscience.

In order to generate realisations such as the mind isolation of the completion stage of highest yoga tantra, one must first realise the view of the Prasangika Madhyamika, which is unlike the views of the other philosophical schools. One must train in the stages of the common path by generating the pure mind of bodhicitta that renounces self and cherishes others. This is preceded by generating pure renunciation. The root of all of these is generating the faith that sees the Guru as the actual Buddha. This depends on the manner of correctly relying on the Guru with thought and action.

To be able to do this, one needs to have the base of preserving pure morality, assisted by the practice of generosity etc, sealed with pure stainless prayers and to accumulate merits and purify obscurations for many lifetimes, thus achieving realisations and experiences of the path and ground in a step by step manner. It is through such a practice that relics will come about.

This is the reason why relics are considered very holy and precious. The relics are manifested and remains are left behind due to the kindness of holy beings in order for us sentient beings to collect merits and purify obscurations.

*This was written by Kyabje Zopa Rinpoche at the most holy place of Bodh Gaya 29 January 2002 during the visit to receive the Kalachakra Initiation.*