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Namo Guru Bhya ~ Homage to the Master!

He is renowned as the Lama “All-Excellent one who Accomplishes all Good”¹,
He dwells in the Supreme Place of the “Garden of the Immutable Flourishing of the Karmapa's Doctrine”²,
He demonstrates the Dharma of the Supreme Path of the Indivisible Union of the two Truths,
The Enlightenment Mind, Creation and Completion, the Great Seal:
Before this Holy Master, in pure devotion, I prostrate eternally.



***Namo Guru Bhya* ~ Homage to the Master!**

In Sanskrit *Namo* means “I pay homage to, I bow before”.

Guru means “Master”, which is translated by Lama (*bla ma*) in Tibetan (*bla ma* being the contraction of *bla na med pa* which means “unsurpassable”).

The Lama is the unsurpassable master, the greatest, the best friend one can have in this life.

Bhya means the preposition “to” in “Homage **to** the Master”.

Namo Guru Bhya is the consecrated formula to begin any prayer of homage addressed to the Lama.

This is the expression of the deepest respect with which one bows, prostrates oneself and takes Refuge in the Lama.

One takes Refuge in the Three Jewels and in the Three Roots: the Lamas, the Yidams, and the Dakinis and Dharma Protectors, who are respectively the root of blessings, the root of accomplishments (*siddhi*) and the root of enlightened activities.

The Lama unites within himself the whole of the Three Jewels and the Three Roots. He alone is the ultimate and complete Refuge on the outer, inner, secret and absolute levels.

It is said in *Ārya Dūma Sūtra*, the Tree Sutra:

“Teaching us all that is best, the spiritual master is like a father;
protecting us from all that is bad, the spiritual master is like a mother;
dispelling the darkness of ignorance, the spiritual master is like a lamp;
lifting us out of the quagmire of negative emotions, the spiritual master is like a colossus.
That is why you should search for the spiritual master.”



1. Lama Tönzang = Lama Tön (tib. *don*) Drup (tib. *grub*) Zangpo (tib. *bzang po*) = Lama « The Excellent one (*bzang po*) who Accomplishes (*grub*) the Good (*don*) ».

2. Karma Migyur Ling - tib. *Karma Mi 'Gyur gLing* : Garden (tib. *gling*) Immutable (tib. *mi 'gyur*) of the Karmapa's doctrine (tib. *karma*).

He is renowned as the Lama “All-Excellent one who Accomplishes all Good”

Lama Tönzang’s common name is a diminutive of his complete name of Refuge “Töndrup Zangpo” (tib. *don grub bzang po*, skt. *Arthasiddhi Bhadra*).

We can translate *don grub bzang po* by “Excellent one (*bzang po*) who Accomplishes (*grub*) what is good (*don*)”.

Töndrup: He who accomplishes what is good.

We may broaden “what is good” (*don*) to “all that is good”³.

grub is the past tense of the intransitive verb *grub pa*, which means “to be fulfilled” or “to be accomplished”; *grub* therefore means “to have been fulfilled” or “to have been accomplished”.

Therefore “Teundroup” literally means “the one through whom all good things are accomplished”; more broadly, “the one through whom all good is accomplished in the three times” - past, present and future.

1) “All that is good”⁴, *don kun*, firstly means:

- The two welfares that are one's own welfare and the welfare of others.

By practicing the Holy Dharma, one accomplishes both one's own welfare and the welfare of others.

- One achieves one's own good by freeing oneself from the cycle of suffering of conditioned existences.

- One achieves the good of others by having prodigious powers once liberated from samsara, first as a Bodhisattva travelling through the ten lands of Enlightenment, and then finally as an utterly accomplished Buddha unfolding his enlightened activity.

- It also means the two goals which are accomplishing the happiness of sentient beings and ensuring the continuity of the Holy Dharma Doctrine.

The totality of our virtuous practice must ideally be directed solely towards the realization of these two goals in a purely altruistic attitude (which is indeed the case with Lama Tönzang):

- To accomplish the happiness of sentient beings on the greatest possible scale in this life and then in future lives.

- To participate to the best of our abilities in the perpetuation of the Buddha-Dharma, and especially in the perpetuation of the lineage of Karma Kamtsang transmission, which is ours.

2) The Tibetan term *don* also means “meaning”.

don gnyis then means “the two meanings” expressed in the Buddha's teaching, the provisional meaning and the definitive meaning.

Lama Tönzang instructs us by skillfully using these two levels of teaching to guide us towards the realization of the Ultimate Meaning, the *Mahāmudrā*.

3. tib. *don kun grub pa*, skt. *siddharta*. We may note, by the way, that Siddharta is the name that was given to Buddha Shakyamuni just after his birth, when it was predicted that he would be a being “who will achieve all his goals”.

4. One of the meanings of the Tibetan word *don* is rather “what is meaningful” than “what is good”. Nevertheless, translating it into “what is good” in English will help convey the fact that, as explained, *don* as a single word has all these different meanings: welfare, aim, goal, meaning, meaningful, reality.

3) *don* also means “**aim**”.

This refers to the two aims of dissipating the negativities and sufferings of all beings on the one hand, and unfolding clouds of offerings that rejoice the Body, Word and Mind of all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in their pure fields in the ten directions on the other hand.

These two aims are accomplished during the creation phase of meditation by means of two sequences of light rays radiating from the heart of the divinity that we are (Chenrezig for example).

And if we speak of the Bodhisattva's aim, it is that of bringing the totality of beings, his former mothers, to the precious and unsurpassable state of Buddha's fully blossomed Enlightenment with the firm resolution to act for the good of others until the end of samsara.

4) Finally, *don* also means “**reality**” in *don dam*, absolute reality, *don dam bden pa*, the truth of absolute reality (with regard to *kun rdzob bden pa*, which is the subjective, fictional reality, the truth of relative reality).

This meaning of reality or truth can be applied more widely to all the truths stated on the level of absolute reality which we have to realize:

- The truth of dharmatā, the reality of phenomena: *chos nyid kyi don*
- The truth of emptiness: *stong pa nyid kyi don*
- ...

Thus, Lama Tönzang dedicates himself exclusively and without interruption to the fulfillment of all these goals through the different aspects of his activity; he achieves both aims through his continuous practice and the instructions he gives; he explains the two meanings of the Holy Dharma with discernment and in an appropriate manner through his teachings; finally, he introduces his disciples to the recognition of the absolute reality of the nature of mind, the *Mahāmudrā*.

He accomplishes beings' happiness by making appropriate use of the four types of enlightened activity.

To sum up *don grup* in one word, Lama Teundroup Zangpo is “The Beneficent one”.

Zangpo: The Excellent one.

One may develop *bzang po* into *kun tu bzang po*, Samantabhadra, which is the name of the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra (one of the eight great Bodhisattvas), and also that of the primordial Buddha Samantabhadra.

Samantabhadra means “Being of All-Excellence”⁵.

Lama Tönzang is Samantabhadra as “The Excellent one in All Things”, “The All-Good one”.

“All things”: to act for the welfare of others, to achieve one's goals of enlightened activity, to convey the truth in all aspects, and to realize/bring to realizing the ultimate reality of the mind and phenomena.

He is the one “*who accomplishes all things in the excellence of the purity of his vision of primordial wisdom*” (see footnote 5).

Moreover, how could one fail to notice that Tönzang simply means “common sense” (“*bon sens*” in French). Lama Tönzang is definitely the “Common Sense” Lama if there is one!

5. Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye gives the following explanation in his commentary on Vidyadhara Jigme Lingpa's “Aspiration Prayer of the Base, the Path and the Fruit”:

“Samantabhadra: He who experiences **all** things (skt. *samanta*) in the **excellence** (skt. *bhadra*) of the purity of his own perceptions as mandala of primordial wisdom.”

Homage to Lama Tönzang

He is the Common Sense Lama, who thinks with common sense, who advises others with common sense and in whatever he does he works with common sense.

We can say that he guides us with common sense in the right direction⁶!

One could endlessly discuss the meanings of this name, not to mention his personal qualities.

This name – “Common Sense”, “Excellent Good”, “Magisterial Truth”, “Admirable Project”, etc. – suits him perfectly, in all its senses and on all its levels.

He is the Lama, the Unsurpassable Master.



He dwells in the Supreme Place of the “Garden of the Immutable Flourishing of the Karmapa's Doctrine”

Karma Migyur Ling, “The Immutable Karma Garden” (tib. *karma mi 'gyur gling*).

This is the name of visionary inspiration that His Holiness the Sixteenth Karmapa Rangjung Rigpai Dorje gave to the place that was an old ruined farmhouse lost in the foothills of the Vercors mountain range in a place called Montchardon when he came to visit in 1977.

“Karma” indicates that the place is attached to the Karma Kamtsang lineage, the lineage of transmission of the Karmapas.

“Migyur” means “unchanging”.

“Ling” means “garden”.

Karma Migyur Ling is therefore “The Immutable Garden [of the lineage] Karma [Kamtsang]”.

This garden is immutable in its vocation, i.e. practicing, flourishing and spreading of the teachings of the Karma Kamtsang transmission lineage, the lineage of the Karmapas, as we are indeed witnessing.

Lama Tönzang particularly points out to us that, if there is a concrete achievement to be remembered from the forty-four years that have elapsed since the foundation of the centre in 1976, it is not so much the various external buildings such as the temple, the stupas, etc. that have been built, remarkable though they are, but above all it is the continuity of uninterrupted spiritual practice, in the spirit and form inherited directly from the tradition of his monastery at Tsurphu in Tibet, the tradition of the Karmapas.

Day after day, month after month, year after year, the three basic daily practices are performed without fail: the morning ritual (with the unavoidable “One Hundred Thousand Mantras”), the Mahakala ritual in the late afternoon and the Chenrezig meditation in the evening.

And this is without counting the thousand and one practices and rituals performed since then, the tens of thousands of *Nyung-nes*, the hundreds of millions of mantras recited, etc.

This is the true and great achievement of which he is deeply delighted, the one that is truly dear to his own heart.



6. This is a play on words with the French word “sens” which means both “sense” and “direction” (among other possible meanings).

**He demonstrates the Dharma of the Supreme Path of the Indivisible Union of the Two Truths,
The Enlightenment Mind, Creation and Completion, the Great Seal.**

Lama Tönzang has been teaching us tirelessly without respite for forty-four years all that is necessary to know and understand in order to practice the Holy Dharma, in order to be able to reach Enlightenment in this lifetime.

He thus instructs us in the authentic path shown by the Buddha, that of the practice of the Secret Mantra (*Vajrayāna*) within the framework of the Great Vehicle (*Mahāyāna*), by systematically referring to the treatises and instructions of the greatest realized masters of Tibet and explaining them to us word by word and sentence by sentence.

1) The indivisible union of the two truths

Lama Tönzang first of all explains to us what the right view is – the one that should be underlying our whole practice – and the minimum we need to know and understand before engaging in the practice itself (the practice consisting precisely of realizing this view).

He allows us to understand what the purpose of the practice is and what the methods of the practice are.

The view that we need to adopt in order to practice the Dharma correctly and fruitfully is that of the relative and absolute “indivisible union of the two truths”⁷.

- Relative truth on the level of fictional reality
- Ultimate truth in terms of absolute reality

If our view is that of the inseparable union of these two truths - otherwise known as the union of means and wisdom - then our practice becomes truly fruitful, for it is endowed with what must constitute its heart: the union of compassion and emptiness.

2) The Enlightenment Mind: the two aspects of the precious Enlightenment Mind

“To become Buddha for the good of all beings!” is the motto embodied by Lama Tönzang.

Lama Tönzang is a tireless teacher of what is at the heart of the path to Enlightenment, the Enlightenment Mind (tib. *byang chub kyi sems*, skt. *bodhicitta*), which he imparts mainly through the two teachings of “Training the mind” (Lojong, by Atisha) and the “Thirty-seven practices of the bodhisattvas” (by Thogme Zangpo) both of which he has transmitted to us dozens of times.

Above all, he is a living example of the combined practice of the two aspects of the precious Enlightenment Mind – Relative Enlightenment Mind and Absolute Enlightenment Mind – through the six Paramitas that he constantly cultivates, his Immutable Inner and Outer Gardens.

The six Paramitas, or the six transcendental virtues of the Bodhisattva path are: generosity, ethical discipline, patience, enthusiastic effort, meditative concentration and supreme knowledge.

The first three constitute the implementation of the Relative Enlightenment Mind.

The last two constitute the implementation of the Absolute Enlightenment Mind.

And the paramita of enthusiastic effort serves both.⁸

7. We may also mention the two so-called “superior” truths (tib. *lhag pa'i bden pa gnyis*). The great purity (tib. *dag pa nyid*), on the relative level, and the great equality (tib. *mnyam pa nyid*), on the absolute level, of all phenomena.

8. We can also say that the completeness of the six Paramitas unites the Means and Wisdom, or that it allows the perfect development of the two accumulations of Good and Wisdom.

Homage to Lama Tönzang

- Generosity: we cannot but recognize the immense generosity which Lama Tönzang shows all the time, as much on the material level as on the spiritual level: he keeps nothing, he gives everything away!

- Ethical discipline: he is a fully ordained monk without the slightest fault in the observance of his monastic vows ; he is an exemplary bodhisattva ; he is also perfectly honest in respecting his tantric commitments (samayas) both as a disciple towards the Karmapa and his other root lamas, and as a spiritual master towards his many disciples.

A “freshness” of perfect ethics (the Sanskrit *śīla* means freshness), literally and figuratively, emanates from him.

- Patience: throughout his life he has shown infinite patience that transcends time and ignores even the most trying of hazards (and Buddha knows that he has been through them!).

Patience is the central virtue evoked by the Sixteenth Karmapa when, in 1977, he confirmed to Lama Tönzang that this (wretched) place of Montchardon was indeed the right place to found a Dharma centre. He predicted that with patience it would become the place of flourishing spirituality that we now know.

He also exercises his patience towards the good side of things, never allowing himself to be diverted or distracted by comfort or good things when they occur.

His patience proceeds from his fundamental equanimity.

- Enthusiastic effort: working exclusively for the good of sentient beings and the continuation of the Karma Kamsang Doctrine, this effort has been uninterrupted over his entire life.

He is naturally persevering in everything he does: teaching, building work, filling statues, helping others, advising, performing rituals, practicing meditation, constantly improving everything, and even making us laugh and smile!

- Meditative Concentration: Lama Tönzang is an unshakeable rock in his meditative practice, immovable outside as well as inside, fully established in the samadhi of the union of calm-abiding and superior insight.

- Supreme Knowledge: he is an outstanding teacher, full of wisdom and common sense, in the vast and profound realm of the Prajñāparamita – the perfection of transcendental knowledge. He teaches us with the greatest clarity about what we need to understand in the theory of this “supreme knowledge” and how we can then integrate this understanding into our meditation practice and our conduct.

Moreover, Lama Tönzang actually practices the ten paramitas, as we can see in his demonstration of the four other cardinal virtues of means, aspiration prayers, strength and primordial wisdom.

- Means: he is – oh how much – a master gifted with skillful means, from which each of us has benefited. To his credit he has more than forty years of practice in guiding a multitude of disciples of the most diverse abilities and personalities, always in a right and appropriate manner.

His wisdom and common sense are always at work.

- Aspiration prayers: he is the embodiment of the practice and fulfillment of aspiration prayers.

He is the living proof of the power and effectiveness of aspiration prayers.

He constantly encourages us to practice and recite aspiration prayers, explaining the principles and meanings in details.

- Strength: if we start talking about Lama Tönzang's strength, then we will have to write a whole book.

One only has to come to Montchardon, spend a few days with him, observe him, observe the place of Karma Migyur Ling as it is today, and then compare it with the old ruined farmhouse, without water supply and overgrown with brambles at the very beginning in 1976, to be convinced of this.

This is Lama Tönzang's “tour de force”.

- Primordial Wisdom: and even in the field of primordial wisdom, which is inexpressible, unspeakable, inconceivable, he manages to distill it for us through his everyday attitudes and words, his continuous presence at all daily practices in the temple, and through the instructions he gives us as an introduction to recognising by ourselves the true nature of mind, the *Mahāmudrā*.

3) Creation stage and Completion stage

Lama Tönzang gives us over and over again the accurate instructions needed for practicing the stage of creation and the stage of completion of many *Vajrayāna* practices.

He is the Secret Mantra Master who bestows on us the complete fourfold empowerment⁹ of the various *yidams* that we are practicing.

4) The Great Seal, *Mahāmudrā*

Lama Tönzang guides us directly on the path to realization of *Mahāmudrā*¹⁰ in the pure tradition of the lineage of the Karmapas' transmission.

Based on the treatise “The Ocean of the Ultimate Meaning” written by the Ninth Karmapa Wangchuk Dorje, he instructs us progressively, in time and on time:

- in reflecting on the four fundamental thoughts – the awareness of our precious human existence, the universal truth of impermanence and the inevitability of death, the infallibility of the principle of karmic causality, and the absolute necessity of liberation from the disastrous samsaric condition – systematically renewing these instructions in each of his teachings;
- in the practice of prostrations, then in the practice of Vajrasattva, then in the practice of mandala offering, and finally in the practice of Guru yoga;
- in the stages of mind pacification with *shine* meditation, calm-abiding;
- and in the development of *lhaktong* contemplation, the meditation of superior insight.

He then introduces us to recognising by ourselves the true nature of mind, the pure consciousness of “co-emerging primordial wisdom”, perfect union of luminosity and emptiness.

He is the Lama of *Mahāmudrā* when, on any occasion, he tells us with a slight smile:

— “*Yakpo du, yakpo du...*”, “Good, that's good...”

He thus offers us the possibility to reach this prodigious goal, which is the ultimate realization of *Mahāmudrā*, the Great Enlightenment, in this lifetime.

9. The Vase empowerment, which confers the power to meditate on the body of the deity; the Secret empowerment, which confers the power to recite the mantra of the deity; the Wisdom-Knowledge empowerment, which confers the power to practice the samadhi of the deity; and the Word empowerment, which confers the power to meditate on *Mahāmudrā*.

10. The Great Seal, tib. *phyag rgya chen po*, skt. *Mahāmudrā*.

The **seal** (*mudrā*) of *Mahāmudrā* is that which marks the absolute reality of the totality of phenomena for the whole of samsara and nirvana: the inseparable union of appearance-vacuity (tib. *snang stong*). This seal accordingly marks the absolute reality of the mind: the union of consciousness-emptiness (tib. *rig stong*). This seal is that of the ultimate threefold principle of the mind: its empty essence, its luminous nature and its unceasing and indomitable heart power (tib. *gag med thugs rje*). It is that of the matrix of Enlightenment (skt. *tathāgatagarbha*) that is uncreated, eternal, immutable, indestructible. Such an absolute seal transcends the dualistic and discursive mind.

- This **seal** is great (*mahā*) in the sense that it is the greatest, the highest, the deepest principle. It is the entity of all composed and uncomposed phenomena. It is the quiddity of the mind of every sentient being. It is the absolute seal.

Master Orgyenpa Rinchen Pel defines it as follows: “**Seal**: it is the creator of the totality of phenomena (dharma), all possible appearances (universe and beings) of the whole of samsara and nirvana, nothing escapes it. **Great**: nothing transcends it, there is no *dharmakāya* that would surpass it in excellence.”

Before this Holy Master, in pure devotion, I prostrate eternally.

“**Devotion**” is the key word that concludes this homage to the Spiritual Master.

Uncontrived devotion combined with the luminosity of the awareness of the present moment allows all conceptual elaborations of space and time to vanish by themselves, thus rendering the homage unlimited and eternal.

This quality alone, devotion to the spiritual master, if it is pure, authentic, sincere and uncontrived (tib. *bcos min mos gus*), is enough to give the disciple the guarantee that he will reach the supreme achievement of the realization of *Mahāmudrā* in this lifetime.

This guarantee is granted to all his disciples by virtue of the power and authenticity of the blessings that emanate from the person of Lama Tönzang.

Within him is indeed present the Mind of the Sixteenth Karmapa, his Root Master, who conferred upon him the monastic ordination at Tsurphu Monastery (seat of the Karmapas in Tibet) in 1951, who later conferred upon him the entire transmission of the Karma Kamtsang lineage, and who sent him to France among us in 1976, with the incredible mission (impossible? ...Impossible is not Tönzang!) to establish and spread the Buddha's Dharma in this country, and in Europe more widely.

He entrusted this task to a Lama, of course, but, as Lama Tönzang defines himself, to a “small lama”, totally ignorant of the language and customs of the unknown country to which he was sent.

The Inconceivable Lama!



Let us conclude with this well-known prayer of invocation¹¹:

“From Akanishta, in the Palace of Dharmadhātu,
He is the essence of all Buddhas of the three times,
The one that shows me that my own mind is actually *dharmakāya*,
Before the Sublime Saint Lama, I prostrate myself.”

Let us be utterly convinced of the Lama's continual presence at the top of our head.

And this prayer of wishes¹²:

“In all my future lives, may I never be separated from the perfect Lama,
Always enjoying the splendors of Dharma,
And, totally completing the qualities of the *bhumis* and the *paths*,
Attain Vajradhara's Enlightenment State as soon as possible!”

Let us be utterly convinced that we will meet the Lama again in our future life, if not in Dewachen.

Speaking about him, His Holiness Karmapa Trinlay Thaye Dorje says: “He is a Milarepa of our time”¹³.



11. You will find these four verses at the very beginning of the *Mahāmudrā's* preliminary practice of Guru Yoga.

12. Which you will find in the preliminary prayers of the practice of Milarepa's Guru Yoga, or just following the “Dorje Chang Thungma” invocation prayer.

13. See the complete quote in the following appendix: “Message of the Karmapa about Lama Tönzang.”

Homage to Lama Tönzang

Lama Tönzang is my root master, this homage is a sincere token of my devotion to him.
It is true, it is right, it is so.

With light, with joy, and with infinite respect,

From the heart,

Christian, Karma Ngetön Tharchin

Homage to Lama Tönzang

Message of His Holiness Karmapa Trinlay Thaye Dorje about Lama Tönzang
(August 13th 2019)

“There isn’t much to do I’m afraid. Today is astrologically not very favorable. If he survives this evening it may be favorable.

The friends and students of Lama should instead focus on the courage he expressed for our lineage.

He will be fine whether he is able to fight this or not.

But it’s his friends’ and students’ undivided single-focused courage that will honor him.

Do not let drama ruin his legacy.

Life and death is part of life and he knows it only too well.

He is not afraid.

But honoring him would fulfill his wishes.

Otherwise it would be a great pity if you can’t keep the flame of courage.

I’ll be watching,

With both my eyes.

He is a Milarepa of our time.

No degree nor diploma are needed to recognize him.”



The Karmapa sent this message to Montchardon on August 13th 2019, the day Lama Tönzang was in intensive care with a life-threatening prognosis following a bleeding complication.

We then called him to ask if we could do something more to help Lama, as Green Tara practices were about to begin in Montchardon and elsewhere.

The Karmapa's response was this message.

Later on, when we met him in Kündröl Ling (Le Bost) on October 8th, His Holiness insisted that this message should be spread to all, telling us:

- “Every word of this message is thought out and reflected upon, and I wish it to be translated correctly and widely distributed so that it will be known to all.”

