

The Karmapa Mantra

Encouragement for the BMI first came from Venerable [Thrangu Rinpoche, who found merit in the idea and publicly encouraged participation](#). He explained that the Karmapa mantra was first introduced by the 8th Karmapa [Mikyo Dorje](#) (1507-1554) in the context of a teaching concerning the tradition of "Calling the Lama from afar."

Here is the mantra written in Tibetan:

ཀམ་པ་མཚན་ལོ།

< "Embodiment of the compassion of all Buddhas, take heed of me."

In Central Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan, it is pronounced *Karmapa Kyen-no* or *Karmapa khen-no*. In East Tibet, it is pronounced "Karmapa chenno." Naturally, if you are used to saying it like that, there is no need to change your pronunciation.

The potency of the Karmapa mantra as described by Lama Surya Das in *Auspicious Tales of HH the 16th Karmapa Rangjung Rigpe Dorje*:

One day the head of a nomadic household in desolate, windswept northern Tibet passed away. In such a sparsely inhabited region it was rare to find monasteries and lamas to perform Buddhist funeral rites, so the family wondered what to do. Then they happened to notice a ragged individual travelling on foot who appeared as if he could be either an itinerant yogi or a beggar, so they went to inquire.

The mendicant turned out to be, in fact, a lama. The grieving family requested his ministrations for the deceased, and he complied.

When he reached the man's deathbed and began his incantations, the family respectfully requested the lama to perform phowa (consciousness transference). The lama, however, said: "I am just a poor, unlettered practitioner of the Buddha's teachings; I have not mastered that esoteric practice. But I do have one positive quality, infinite faith in the living Buddha, named Lama Karmapa; he is like the great gate to Dewachen (a transcendent paradise from which evolution on the path of enlightenment is said to be more easily assured). His name is the magic password to that fabulous spiritual domain."

Then he began reciting again and again the powerful name-mantra, "*Karmapa Khyenno!*"

"Karmapa Khyenno, Karmapa Khyenno," he intoned loudly, again and again.

After each and every rosary of one hundred and eight fervent recitations, he would then hit the corpse with his mala, or prayer beads, commanding that, in the name of the Buddha Karmapa, the spirit of the deceased be reborn in Dewachen.

After some time, everyone noticed that the signs of successful consciousness transference began to appear. Hair fell from the top of the corpse's head, there was a pleasant fragrance in the air, and a large bump appeared at the crown aperture where the subtle consciousness of the deceased departed for the other world.

Everyone present rejoiced, and gratefully thanked the mendicant lama. All began to faithfully practice the mantra of the Karmapa, praying to realize the great freedom and bliss of Dewachen in this very lifetime.

The travelling lama soon continued on his journey. One day he heard that the omniscient Karmapa was

visiting south Tibet, so he determined to go and meet him and pay his respects.

Upon finally reaching his destination, the first thing the clairvoyant Karmapa said to him was: "That was a difficult phowa we performed up there in the north, wasn't it?" The Karmapa laughed, hitting the other lama with his mala.

Then the mendicant knew with unshakable certainty that the Karmapa is an omniscient living Buddha, who always keeps his disciples, wherever they are, in his heart and mind.

~ Lama Surya Das. ("Consciousness Transference," *Auspicious Tales of HH the 16th Karmapa Rangjung Rigpe Dorje* in "Insights & Outtakes," **Tricycle Magazine**, Winter 2004.)