May 4, 2016

To all Drikung Kagyu followers:

Recently, in order to express their faith and enthusiasm for their lineage and their root teachers, members of our lineage have had statues made of their lamas and created new thangka formats. However, this is not customary over the 837 years of Drikung Kagyu tradition. Kyopa Jigten Gonpo taught: “Until you have reached the state of Vajradhara, don’t have your disciples meditate on anyone except the previous lineage masters; do not let your circle meditate on you.” This is true. There is nothing lacking in the many Buddha-like past lineage masters, so there is no need for anything in addition to, or beyond them. For example, when you practice the name mantras of lineage masters in the Fivefold Path of Mahamudra, you are reciting the names of Vajradhara, Kyopa Jigten Sumgon, and your root lama. In the mantra OM AH GURU BENZRA DRIK RATNASHRI MAHAMUDRA SIDHI PALA HUNG, your root lama’s name is included within Kyopa Jigten Sumgon’s mantra. Should you feel a strong need to do so, you can add Vajradhara Drubwang Pachung Rinpoche’s name as “Ratna Karma.”

Also, in our tradition, while a lama is still alive, there is no custom of adding his name to ritual texts, much less of worshipping thangkas of him. Likewise, while a lama is still alive, it is not appropriate to place his clothing, hair, or nails, and the like, in statues or stupas. When such things are done, it harms the lama’s lifespan. For example, Drubwang Khyunga Rinpoche, though he was a lord of siddhas abiding on the great bhumis, left the following last instructions before he died: “Deposit my ashes in the Ganges River, and do not place them in a memorial stupa and so forth. If you do, it will become an obstacle to the attainment of the bhumis and the qualities of the paths.” There is a Tibetan saying that goes like this, “Do not eat everything you see; do not engage in every thought.” Since such important matters require a basis in tradition and principles, I hope all of you will please pay close attention to these words.

Drikung Kyabgon Chetsang

With the blessed name of Gyalwang Drikungpa