

o THE VIDYADHARA'S TIME CAPSULE PROJECT o

"We could take part in making history – in the future."

– *The Vidyadhara, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche*

Just as Padmasambhava instructed his students to bury his teachings for the benefit of beings of future generations, the Vidyadhara himself directed us in the same way. In 1975 when I was an officer of Vajradhatu in charge of Special Projects, the Vidyadhara, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche requested that a time capsule be constructed to conceal his teachings in the same spirit as Padmasambhava's and that it be designed to last for 5,000 years. This project has received the direct blessings from Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, His Holiness the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa, the 3rd Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche, His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, and His Holiness the 16th Gyalwang Karmapa.

A most powerful reminder of the Vidyadhara's request to all of us occurred during "The Embodiment of All Siddhas" seminar, a commentary on the Sadhana of Mahamudra taught by Rinpoche at Karne Choling in 1975. What follows are excerpts of a passage of the Vidyadhara's from this seminar comprising both terma and commentary:

Terma:

HUM HUM HUM

In the cave of Taktsang Sengge Samdrup

He who has subdued the evil forces

And buried treasure in rocks and snow mountains in holy places of Tibet

Shows kindness to the people of the future dark age.

I supplicate you, Dorje Trolo,

I supplicate you, Ugyen Padmakara.

Commentary: "That verse was composed by Guru Rinpoche, Padmasambhava. ...He was a very visionary person; when he came to Tibet, he buried scriptures. Those buried scriptures were the equivalent of the time capsule. He constructed containers in which sacred scriptures and various ritual objects and various household articles could be stored, and he buried them in certain places, so that future people can appreciate and emulate those things, so that people of the golden age culture can appreciate that kind of quality and wisdom. That was one of the most powerful things that Padmasambhava did. He had a real concern for people who would be born several centuries after him; therefore he buried lots of scriptures and texts, like the "Tibetan Book of the Dead", which many of you have. ...The people who discovered such texts later on are actually connected with a spiritual discipline of the Nyingma tradition. They would have a vision and some kind of sense or feeling, and so they would begin to excavate in certain areas and dig up these treasures. We were actually thinking of doing a similar thing ourselves. I asked Steve Roth to look into whether we could buy a time capsule; that would be the twentieth century style of burying terma. We could collect instructions on how to meditate; we could write them quite simply. Maybe we could include some kind of zafu and zabuton and we could bury them somewhere. As we go further, as students go through further development, we could do similar things at a more advanced level. Further instructions could be buried that actually might be helpful to somebody in the future. That's a possibility. But it turns out that the company which builds time capsules went bankrupt, so we have to find another company. We will do more work on that project at some point. ...In that way, we could take part in making history – in the future." (end of portion of commentary)

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS

Research as to how this could be accomplished started with discovering who might already have attempted a project of this magnitude. There have been only four major contemporary 5,000 year preservation

attempts, each costing many millions of dollars to complete. Communications began with a chief scientist from Westinghouse Corporation who, along with a group of scientists, had completed two 5,000 year time capsules. These were buried during the two New York World Fairs held in 1938 and 1964. Unfortunately, further investigation on the Westinghouse time capsules revealed technical problems. The contained items will eventually react with each other and decay long before 5,000 years. This shortened life span was also evident in the 1970 Japanese World Expo Time Capsule initiated and funded by Panasonic, which was buried in front of the Castle Tower of Osaka Castle in Japan. The fourth time capsule project was installed at Oglethorpe University in 1940. A brief conversation with their project director about fifteen years ago revealed that he was quite frustrated about this costly and time consuming attempt at long term preservation; it had been determined that certain items in their capsule were already showing signs of oxidation.

TECHNOLOGICAL BREAKTHROUGH

I began to realize that what the Vidyadhara had originally said, "that the company which builds time capsules went bankrupt," was hauntingly clairvoyant. These four endeavors were "bankrupt" in their 5,000 year attempts. While this was cause for considerable doubt, it spurred further explorations with the Smithsonian Institute, the National Archives and Records Administration, and other organizations and scientists in an effort to construct a truly incorruptible 5,000-year time capsule.

About eight years ago when the Smithsonian Institute was apprised of our project, they volunteered to advise us on its design. They offered free and unlimited consultation as it intrigued them that we wanted to construct something that would last 5,000 years. Our project also happened to coincide with their proposed project to re-encapsulate the US Constitution, the Bill of Rights and the Declaration of Independence. While their consultation was helpful, they were unable to come to an agreement as to exactly which materials would endure.

It was a month or two after this that I threw my hands up in the air in utter frustration. Then, as if by magic, my next-door neighbor, an engineer and scientist himself, introduced me to someone in Boulder. This person, John Marshall, III, a physics and engineering genius, also has a personal interest in long term preservation. Recognizing the inherent flaws in the four previous attempts, Marshall's design constitutes a technological breakthrough that is nothing short of awesome. He has come up with an ingenious, simple and economical way of preserving the many precious thousands of pages of the Vidyadhara's Buddhist, Shambhala teachings, terma, and calligraphies. John Marshall also was responsible for successfully designing and constructing a suitable long-term containment vessel for the skull relic of the Vidyadhara. In 2000, the Great Stupa of Dharmakaya received the Empowerment of Body when the skull relic of the Vidyadhara Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche was placed in the heart center of the seated Buddha. The molecular sieve that Marshall installed just beneath the skull relic will insure that all residual moisture from the relic will be absorbed so that the skull relic will remain as it is hundreds of years from now.

Many of you already know how keen the Vidyadhara was on encouraging us to make use of certain aspects of modern day science and technology in ways that are beneficial to others. The beneficiaries of the time capsule project will not be born for many generations. For this project, a relative worst case scenario will be assumed – that future humans, whether in 500 or 5000 years, will know nothing of the digital world.

Although the technology involved in this project is proprietary, this much can be shared: The time capsule's burial site will be within the Great Stupa of Dharmakaya. The text portion of the capsule's contents will be reduced in size with black letters on a white field. This process will be done on well over a hundred 4x4 square inch stone like tablets, which will look exactly the same in 5,000 years. Two ordinary quartz crystal magnifiers will be included so that the reduced text on each tablet can be read with relative ease. The tablets will be installed within a cylindrical vessel with an outer dimension of approximately 1' x 3'.

PROTECTING DHARMA

Unlike the four previous attempts that advertised their capsules, the Vidyadhara's Time Capsule will go undetected. This project is in-house, and in the spirit of terma will be revealed at the appropriate time. It should be noted that, historically, whenever one country is overtaken by another that sacred objects and monuments are invariably destroyed. For example, when Napoleon invaded Egypt in 1798, the popular story is that he ordered his soldiers to use the nose of the Great Sphinx for target practice. It is ironic that it was Napoleon's troops who discovered the Rosetta Stone in 1799. This allowed us to translate and understand

Egyptian culture from approximately 3100 BC to 400 AD. This discovery has a more positive tone to it than what all too often takes place when one country invades another. Yet, it is often the case that precious relics are discovered and excavated near or under various sites.

In 1972, at the Crazy Wisdom seminar in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, the Vidyadhara said, "When Dorje Trolo was teaching in Tibet, as a way of relating to future generations, he wrote down many teachings. He said, 'These words may not be important at this point, but I'm going to write them down and bury them in the mountains of Tibet.'...teachers nowadays think purely in terms of the effect they might have now, but they don't talk about how powerful it could be in the future. 'If an example of my teaching is left behind, even without seeing me as an example, just purely hearing my words alone could cause a spiritual atomic bomb to explode in a future time.' Such an idea was unheard of. It is a very powerful thing."

HOW TO HELP

Please express your personal connection through donation to the Vidyadhara's compassionate directive that "we could take part in making history in the future." A number of individuals have been helping to support this project. To date we have raised approximately \$125,000. With your active support we hope to complete the project by 2010.

DONATIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

United States donors, make check payable to: "The Great Stupa," and in the memo section write: "The Time Capsule." Please mail this U.S. tax deductible donation to:

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May all those who have benefited from the Guru's immeasurable kindness participate in his boundless vision so that beings of future generations may benefit immeasurably.

In service,

Steve Roth