



## About the Amitabha Initiation in Nepal

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Interview with Shamar Rinpoche on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July 2011, by Erik Curren, the author of *Buddha's Not Smiling*.

**Question:** Rinpoche, you conducted a ceremony at the first World Peace Monlam Chenmo in Nepal, on November 22, 2010 in Kathmandu, bestowing the Amitabha Initiation to a large group of followers – according to the number of blessing threads distributed to attendees, 120,000 people. Adherents came mostly from distant hill areas to receive the initiation. Were you satisfied with this unusual event?

**Shamar Rinpoche:** No, I was not satisfied. For this event, Buddhist people in the hill areas were informed, and as they have a great amount of devotion, they took impressive hardships upon themselves to come and attend the event. Many people walked for several days to reach the bus station, and then they had to take the bus for many hours to reach Kathmandu. Some were nauseated from the bus ride, and car sickness caused them to vomit. Once they reached the capital, the difficulties continued. They needed to find lodging and food which was affordable for them. Then, when receiving the initiation, they had to stand in line for hours. Some people fainted because of the heat. When they finally reached me, a pot decorated in silver and gold touched their head for two seconds. That was all.

**Q.:** Does it mean that the silver pot which you use during the initiation is just a symbolic object?

**Rinpoche:** Touching the head with a silver pot is just a Tibetan

tradition. People believe that there is a blessing power in that act, but there is a lot of superstition involved. I recited the long dharani of Buddha Amitayus constantly. That had certainly more blessing than the pot I put on people's head. Dharani has more power. But Maha Siddhas (great yogis) who could perform (empower) by the object existed during the time of Mila Repa or at the most during the Thantong Gyalpo in Tibet. Nowadays it's almost not possible.

**Q.:** Will you conduct the same ceremony again?

**Rinpoche:** Yes in November, this year, I have been requested by the Newari Buddhist community of Patan to give another initiation. Fifty thousand people are announced to come, but I won't be surprised if again more than 100,000 come to attend.

**Q.:** You stated on your website that you are not interested in encouraging young people to become monks or nuns. Can you say some more about your reasoning here?

**Rinpoche:** Concerning the youth, instead of making children nuns and monks at a young age, there should be a school where subject on *Basic Buddhism* should be taught to all young girls and boys. In this way, the younger generation will learn about Buddhism throughout their school years, and by the time they are ready to graduate and look for a job, they will have a good basic knowledge of Buddhism. If some of them should decide to enter the Dharma in a committed way, such as entering a monastery, they will be able to make their decision on the basis of an already acquired knowledge of the Dharma. It will then be very easy for them to absorb the Dharma in a profound way. The lamas who teach in the villages should do so without sectarian politics, without any regard to the lineage in which they have been trained in. They should simply teach the Dharma.

**Q.:** So, just to make sure it's clear, you were not satisfied with the ceremony you held in November 2010. Is this correct?

**Rinpoche:** I have to add that despite the objections that I have pronounced here in regard to big initiation events, there has been one great pleasure and satisfaction upon coming to Nepal last year, and that was seeing the unification of all the indigenous Buddhists in the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Peoples. I do believe that such a Federation of unified Buddhists can contribute an important part to re-establishing peace and prosperity in this country.