

The Successive Line of Kyabje Garchen Rinpoche's Manifestations

A Brief Historical Account of Gar Monastery

THE BUDDHA INFINITE ASPIRATION

Lord Jigten Sumgön said, “In a previous time, limitless eons ago, a powerful Wheel Turning king (*cakravartin*) whose name was Tsib-Kyi Mu-Khyü appeared in this world. This king, who was the father of a thousand fine princes, brought all living beings residing in his realm onto the path of the ten virtues. Later on, this king became a monk who attained enlightenment, and subsequently, became known as the thus gone one (*tathāgatha*), ‘Light of the Nāgas’. This buddha turned the Wheel of Dharma in an extensive manner and, thereby ripened and liberated countless living beings with and without form. His one thousand sons all became monks and they all gave rise to the mind of enlightenment (*bodhicitta*), except for the youngest, who was attached to his royal lifestyle. Their father gave a prophecy predicting the enlightenment of his sons, which buddha they would become, each one's [buddha] family, each one's name, and [in which] realm they would tame beings. As for establishing his youngest son on the path to enlightenment, the thus gone one emanated two monks and sent them off to find him. Chanting sweet songs to inspire renunciation, the monks arrived at the place where they found the prince enjoying sensory pleasures. Then, by the power of the Buddha's compassion, everything in the palace, and even the trees outside, began to resound with the sound of the Dharma. The prince experienced a change of heart and he gave rise to a mind of disenchantment with the world (*saṃsāra*). He then prepared golden parasols bedecked with jewels and offered one to his father, an enlightened one, and one to each of his brothers and, giving rise to the mind of enlightenment, he became ordained as a monk. The thus gone one, ‘Light of the Nāgas’, then gave a prophecy: that, in a future aeon, his one thousand sons would become the thousand buddhas of the fortunate aeon. The youngest son, the Buddha called, ‘Infinite Aspiration’, would be this aeon's last buddha and his enlightened activities would exceed those of all of the previous buddhas.”

GAR CHÖDINGPA

Then Lord Jigten Sumgön continued, "At that time I was the thus gone one 'Light of the Nāgas' and you, Gar Chödingpa, were my youngest son, the one attached to royal life." By the power of the past auspicious aspirations of the thus gone one 'Light of the Nāgas' and his son, they appeared together again and again as father and son; in India as Āchārya Nāgārjuna and his disciple Aryadeva, and in Tibet as Lord Jigten Sumgön and his disciple Gar Chödingpa. Furthermore, in the past, Garchen Rinpoche has manifested during the reign of the Dharma King Songtsen Gampo as his minister Gar Tongtsen; and as Chogro Lui Gyaltzen, the disciple of the second Buddha, Padmasambhava; and as Milarepa's heart-son Rechung Dorje Dragpa. Many of his emanations have also appeared in pure lands, such as the land of Uddiyāna, the Lion Island, Shambhala, and so forth, where he acted for the welfare of sentient beings.

When Gar Chödingpa was born as Gar Tongtsen, he escorted the Chinese King, Thangthai Dzung's daughter to Tibet to become the queen: the wife of King Songtsen Gampo. Together the minister Gar Tongtsen and the Chinese princess brought a special prayer wheel with them. Minister Gar preserved this wheel and, foreseeing future events, he concealed it at Sha'ug Tago and sealed it with the prayer that he would reveal and claim it again in the future. Later, Gar Chödingpa revealed the prayer wheel and installed it in a temple in Pumu Phulung, below Vajra Rock. Due to the installation of the prayer wheel, the Phulung monastery was established there. He thus preserved the welfare of beings for eight incarnations at that place.

Gar Chödingpa's eighth incarnation at Phalung Monastery was also his first incarnation at Gar Monastery, as Gar Tenzin Phüntso; the son of the king of Nangchen, Karma Rabten. Later, the 20th throne holder in the Drikung lineage succession relied upon the peerless Dharma King Tenzin Phüntso as his guru. Achi Chökyi Drölma prophesied to the sacred master: "Hide the precious prayer wheel in the North at a white rock in the shape of a lion leaping up into the sky." Following this prophecy of Achi, who knew that this master and the holy object would bring about the vast benefit of beings, he traveled

from Pumu to Nangchen. As the Sky Fortress of the Lion in Nangchen was consistent with the prophecy, and because he saw that that place was endowed with auspicious signs, he settled there. Thus, this was how the Gar Monastery, Sky Fortress of the Lion, was established.

EIGHT INCARNATIONS AT GAR MONASTERY

According to Guru Padmasambhava's prophecy in the excellent *Guhyasamāja Terma* revealed by Ratna Lingpa, Tenzin Phüntsook was an emanation of Avalokiteśvara. Furthermore, it states, "if the cycle of Guhyasamāja teachings and the sacred objects contained in the terma reached Tenzin Phüntsook's hands, he would bring vast benefit to the sentient beings of future generations in this world." As the instructions were clearly defined in the terma, Ratna Lingpa's son Tsewang Dragpa collected the terma objects and set out to travel from Central Tibet to the Eastern region of Kham, in search of Tenzin Phüntsook. When they met, he offered the terma objects into his hands. Tenzin Phüntsook was overjoyed and spoke, "It seems that Guru Padmasambhava's prophecy corresponds with my name, me an old man." He ate a small piece of the terma substances and his feet began to hover above the ground. Ever since, Guhyasamāja Drubchens have been practiced regularly at Gar Monastery, the Sky Fortress of the Lion, and the precious prayer wheel also began to spin there incessantly. Thus, signs that he would bring about vast benefit to sentient beings became apparent and the assembly grew enormously at this place. Gar Tenzin Phüntsook was appointed the main guru of the king of Nangchen, and from that time onwards every incarnation of Garchen Rinpoche became the main guru of the king of Nangchen.

The second incarnation, Gar Tenzin Dragpa, recognized by the omniscient Lord Chökyi Dragpa, was the incarnation of the previous Gar. Gar Tenzin Dragpa received and practiced all the profound Drikung teachings from the 24th throne holder in the Drikung succession, Je Trinlé Sangpo. According to the intention of Mahākāla, and because the assembly at the Upper Gar Monastery became too large, the Lower Monastery, Jangchubling, was established: it too flourished and prospered.

The third incarnation, Gar Chökyi Nyima, became the heart-disciple of the 2nd Kyabgön Chungtsang Döndrup Chögyal, the 25th throne holder in the Drikung succession. He reached high levels of attainment through reliance on the practice of Cakrasaṃvara. He displayed many signs of accomplishment, such as flying in the sky, hanging his robe on a sun-ray, leaving foot and hand-prints in rocks, and so forth. Although he remained exclusively in meditation retreat, he gathered a great assembly of disciples. The 27th throne holder in the Drikung succession, Kyabgön Chökyi Nyima, received his instructions of the ultimate lineage. Thus, he became the sublime lord of the family and his contributions to the Drikung Kagyü teachings were tremendous. His heart-disciples were Kyabgön Chökyi Nyima and the senior Lamas, Mingyur and Namröl. He had many more extraordinary disciples as well.

The fourth incarnation, Gar Tingdzin Jangchub Wangpo, received, studied, practiced and mastered many profound teachings, such as: the Fivefold Path of Mahāmudrā; the Six Yogas of Nāropa, according to the Drikung lineage; the Yangzab and Yamāntaka cycles from Tendzin Chökyi Gyaltsen, the 4th Kyabgön Chungtsang Rinpoche and 29th throne holder in the Drikung succession, and, Hlo Chökyi Gyaltsen. Then, he offered many profound Drikung teachings to Chönyi Norbu, the 5th Kyabgön Chungtsang Rinpoche and 30th throne holder in the Drikung succession. Thus, his virtuous activities were extensive.

The fifth incarnation, Garchen Tenpé Dzegyen, also called Tenpé Gyaltsen, was ordained in the presence of Dilyag Datrül. He received, studied, and practiced many empowerments and teachings of the Drikung lineage, in particular the Yangzab cycle, from the 31st throne holder in the Drikung succession, Kyabgön Thugjé Nyima. He was a great monk and maintained the three sets of vows without contradiction. Bestowing Bodhisattva Vows and most empowerments and teachings of the Drikung lineage to the great Tertön Hlo Bongtrül Nüden Dorje, he became the lord of the Drikung lineage.

The sixth incarnation, Garchen Pemé Gyaltsen, was recognized as the incarnation of the previous Gar incarnation by the 31st throne holder in the Drikung succession,

Kyabgön Thugjé Nyima. However, he passed away shortly after his recognition. The seventh incarnation, Garchen Trinlé Yongkhyab, was recognized by the 32nd throne holder in the Drikung succession: Kyabgön Chökyi Lodrö. He received most of the empowerments and teachings of the Drikung lineage from Hlo Bongtrül Nüden Dorje, as well as empowerments and transmissions from several of this tertön's terma teachings. From Gar Ajin, he received the Fivefold Path of Mahāmudrā and the Six Yogas of Nāropa. Garchen Trinlé Yongkhyab practiced and mastered these teachings and attained the state of accomplishment. He accepted Karzang Chödrön as his consort and his main disciple was the accomplished one (*siddha*), Chimé Dorje, and many other disciples from various places who also attained great accomplishment, such as: Palmé Khyentrül Künzang Drodül, Rathro Tertön Tashi Namgyal, and Drubwang Gejung. After accepting another consort, residing at the monastery became problematic, and thus, he had to relocate elsewhere. However, two years later, he was then invited back to live at the monastery once again.

The eighth incarnation, Garchen Könchog Ngedön Tenpé Nyima, was born in 1937. At the age of six, at the order of the king of Nangchen, he was recognized by Kyabgön Shiwé Lodrö as the incarnation of Gar Trinlé Yongkhyab. At the age of ten, he stayed at Hlo Lungkar Monastery for one year where he received from Hlo Bongtrül Tendzin Drodül the empowerments and transmissions of his own lineage of dharma discourses. From the supreme emanation Thubten Nyingpo he received the great empowerment of the Gongdü (the Quintessential Sublime Vision) and the fifty [Drikung] empowerments. Furthermore, from the senior monk, Lama Tengyé, he received most of Ratna Lingpa's cycle of dharma teachings, all the empowerments and transmissions for the collected liturgical texts of the Drikung tradition, and many empowerments and transmissions for Yangzab, Yamāntaka and so forth. From the accomplished master Chime Dorjé he received the great empowerment of the Eight Herukas and from Drubwang Gejung, he received the Fivefold Path of Mahāmudrā and the Six Yogas of Nāropa, whereupon he entered the traditional three-year retreat. But he was abruptly forced to end his retreat due to the eruption of political turmoil. He was forced to engage in warfare, and finally he was arrested. He spent twenty years in prison, where he was forced to do hard labor

and was subjected to severe hardships. However, his mind remained pure and he never wavered from his altruistic wish to help others. He was liked by all his fellow prisoners and became an exemplary role model of an honorable man. During his time in prison, he secretly received teachings on Dzogchen from Khenpo Münsel, which he practiced with fierce determination, whereupon he became the heart-son upon whom Khenpo Münsel transferred his ultimate lineage.

RE-INSTALEMENT OF THE DHARMA IN TIBET AND BEYOND

In 1980 Rinpoche was released from prison. On his way to Pemagö to meet his mother, he gathered the holy objects that had been contained in the consecrated representations of enlightened body, speech, and mind that had been demolished in Central Tibet. Then he returned to his monastery, and together with Mingyur Rinpoche, he began to rebuild the monastery from the foundation up; thus they reinstated Gar Monastery again. Day and night he fulfilled the hopes and needs of faithful ones from far and wide. Completely forsaking his own well being, he devoted himself solely to the benefit of others. His renown as a great bodhisattva spread like the wind and the government of Qinghai province even granted him the honorary title of: "One Who Always Holds the Intention to Benefit the People."

From then onwards he has made efforts to help ease the suffering in the lives of others in many different ways. As his mind was always filled with the wisdom of perfect bodhicitta, he was even able to grant the gift of fearless refuge to wild animals. He also received various other honors due to his extraordinary accomplishments. Not only did he take on responsibility for his own monastery, he supported the entirety of the teachings and all beings in general: and in particular he helped to rebuild all the Drikung monasteries in the Kham region. He helped the monasteries extensively by offering Dharma and material help, directly, indirectly, and in many other ways. In addition to this, Mingyur Rinpoche kindly began to bestow the Getsül and Gelong monastic vows in various monasteries extensively.

When Rinpoche visited him in Drikung Thil, it was with great delight that Drubwang Pachung Rinpoche placed both his hands onto Garchen Rinpoche's crown and spoke, "As I am passing the ultimate lineage to you, you must serve the teachings of the Drikung lineage." Rinpoche then re-established Gar Monastery, starting from a mere cornerstone, and developed it into a thriving monastery that was even greater than it was before. He also reinstated the regular ceremonies that had gone into decline, and the practices flourished again.

In 1997 Rinpoche traveled to India and offered several empowerments and teachings to the supreme Drikung Kyabgön Chetsang Rinpoche. In addition, Rinpoche bestowed various empowerments and teachings according to the Drikung lineage at the main seat of Drikung, Jangchubling, in India, to assemblies of hundreds of disciples on two separate occasions. Furthermore, Rinpoche traveled around the world and turned the Wheel of Dharma for many faithful disciples according to their needs. So far Rinpoche has traveled to thirty-three countries so it is only possible to mention a fraction of his enlightened activities here. Rinpoche has opened more than twenty dharma centers around the world, and in Kham, Rinpoche continues to support the Drikung monasteries extensively; he has established a stable, steadfast and perfectly complete foundation for the teachings by rebuilding the Upper and Lower Gar Monasteries, as well as the nunnery. In addition to this, he has established a retreat center, a college, and a clinic. Furthermore, he founded schools at five places in Tibet which are administered in affiliation with him.

As there would be no end to a detailed account, here I have given merely a brief introduction to the successive line of Kyabjé Garchen Rinpoche's manifestations.

This account was composed by the disciple Ven. Lama Thubten Nyima, also called Ven. Gape Lama.

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