


The
Swift
Path





By these virtues,
May all lineage gurus and holy teachers live long,
healthy and stable.

May all their enlightened activities be displayed in the
ten directions and the three times.

May the mere appearance of this book in any country,
area or dwelling immediately quell the three poisons
and swiftly bring about peace and harmony.

May you who see, hear, touch or read this book quickly
develop bodhicitta and immediately attain supreme
enlightenment for the benefit
of all sentient beings.



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I n t r o d u c t i o n



In this concise biography of the great Buddhist saint, Guru Rinpoche (also known as Padmasambhava or the Lotus-Born Guru), we shall be looking at the 12 deeds he manifested in his miraculous and sacred life which saw the flourishing of the buddhadharma around the eighth century in the Himalayan regions of India, Bhutan and Tibet.

Before we go on, it is worthwhile to state that the dates and historical details of this enlightened being's lifetime on earth are contradictory. For example, the exact date of birth of Guru Rinpoche after Buddha's final passing is inconsistent amongst historic records. Whatever the case may be, these historical accuracies are best left for historians and scholars, and I have no intent to confirm or deny any claim. My focus is on the teachings and inspirations that we can draw from, and I would like to humbly interpret these and articulate it such that readers can easily understand the wonder of Guru Rinpoche.

Due to the inconceivability and often far-reaching consequences of Guru Rinpoche's compassionate works for sentient beings, it is literally impossible for anyone at all to perceive the totality of his enlightened activities. Therefore, this humble attempt of mine should never be regarded as an ultimate depiction, but more as a sneak preview. Furthermore, the

original aspiration of this book was to introduce this great sage to people who have not heard of him, especially to those that reside in this part of Southeast Asia. Hence, for those who are keen to delve deeper, I recommend various sources listed at the end of this book that promise to provide further insights.

As explained, this great saint will manifest innumerable forms to suit sentient beings according to their karmic dispositions and needs. Consequently, one can find several biographies of Guru Rinpoche in which their contents are seemingly at variance with one another. So in order to bring about a digestible read, the factual information contained in this book has been selected as according to those that I have heard and learnt during my monastic studies in Nepal, plus a great deal of liberty taken in the narration of events so as to increase readability.

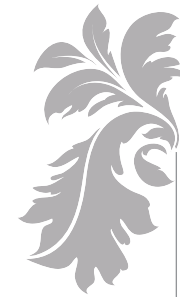
To sum it up, I remain hopeful that this book will serve as a source for more exposure of this relatively lesser known Buddha, and to contribute to the flourishing of his unique style of teachings (Vajrayana) in this land for the swift liberation of all sentient beings.

May it quickly come to pass!

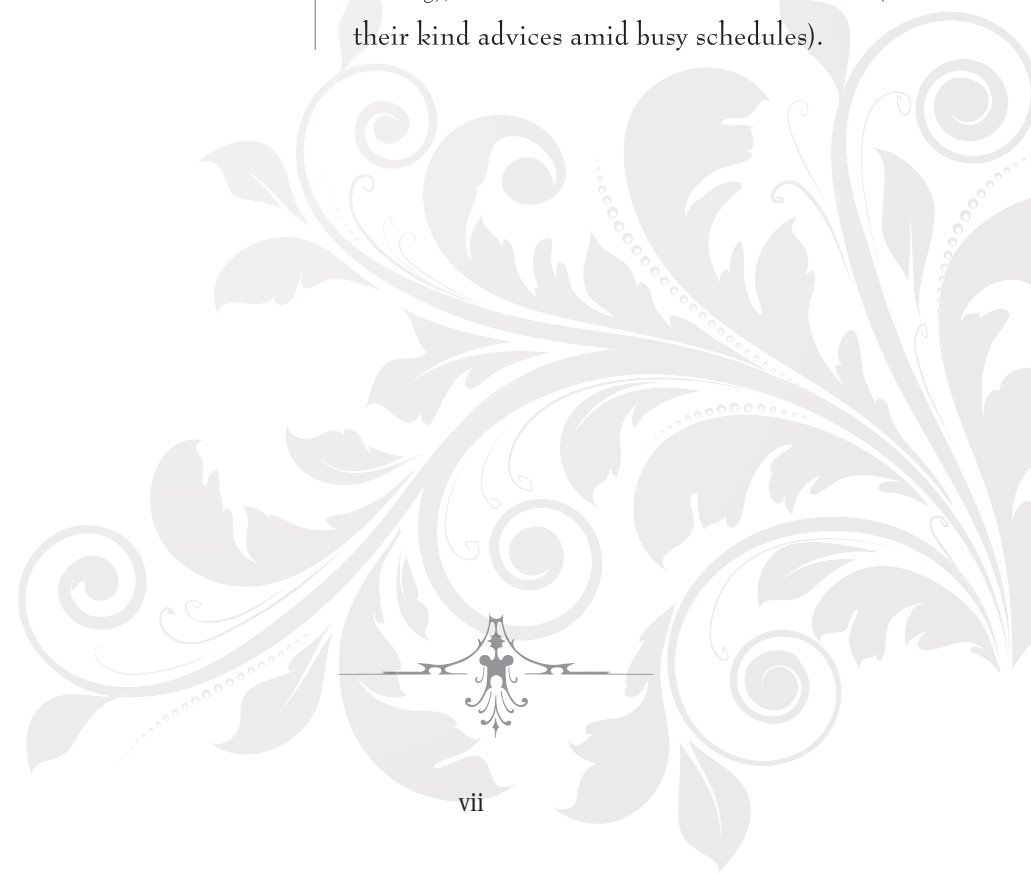
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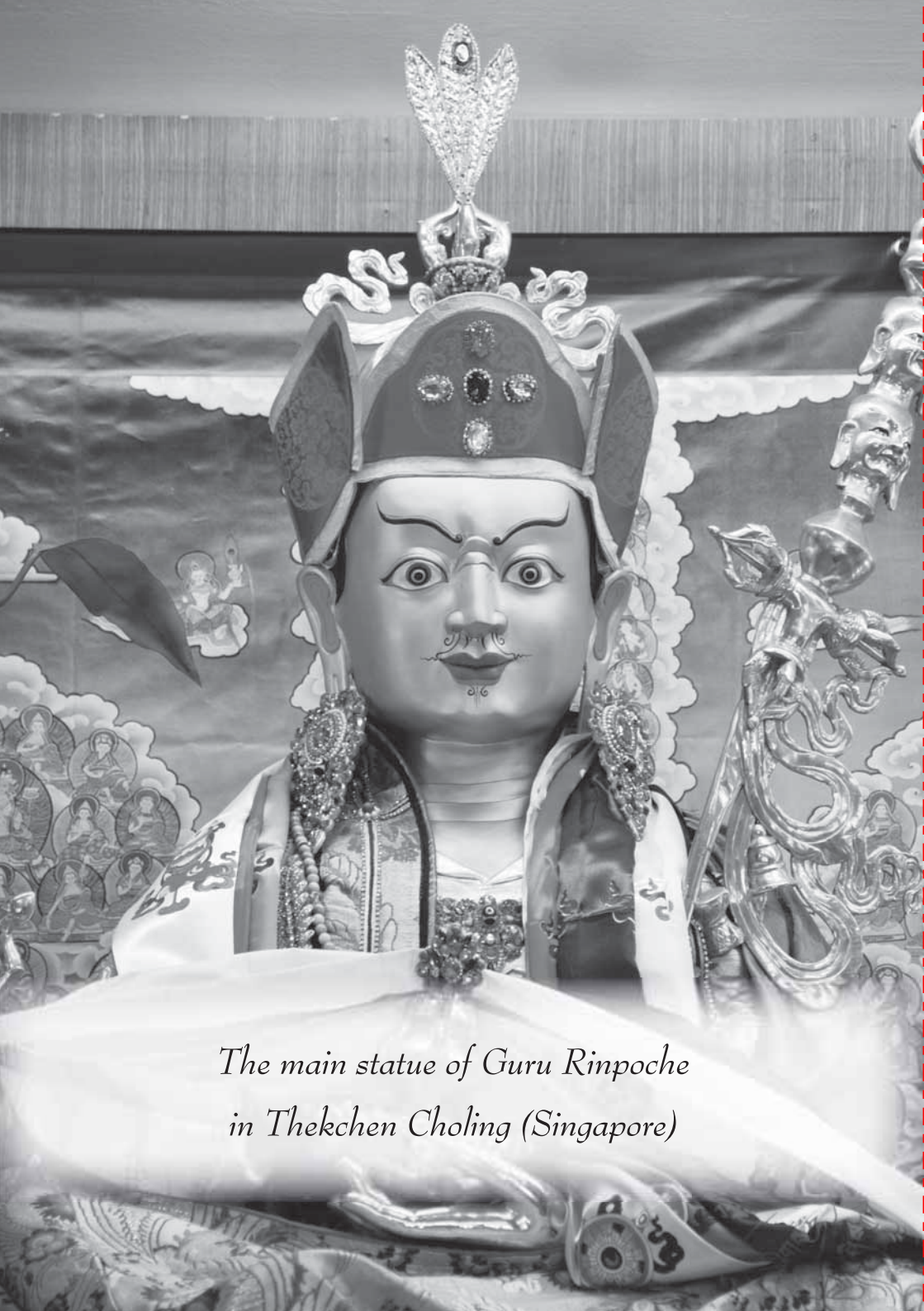
**(Spiritual Director of
Thekchen Choling Singapore)**

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*The main statue of Guru Rinpoche
in Thekchen Choling (Singapore)*



*Blessings of
Guru Rinpoche*



Blessings of Guru Rinpoche



From my personal spiritual accounts with Guru Rinpoche, one thing for sure is that he has never failed to manifest signs to those who have faith in him. He is truly like the father that will rush to his children upon hearing their cries of help. On several past occasions, I called out to him from my heart and each time he reassured me on his divine presence with miraculous signs. Therefore, there is no doubt – at least for me – that as long as one has faith and devotion to Guru Rinpoche, he will always be around to protect us with his divine blessings.

The first pilgrimage trip to Tibet was an eye-opener for me. We were paying respect at this mountain cave where Guru Rinpoche had done many retreats in the past before he left the Land of Snow. Right inside the cave, I fervently requested Guru Rinpoche repeatedly from my heart that for the benefit of the minds of his

students, could he please show us a sign of his miraculous rainbow body and to prove that this cave was indeed a blessed one. So the moment we walked out of that holy cave, there was this magnificent rainbow, very beautiful, appearing just above our heads! And the bright shiny sun was completely surrounded by this rainbow!

The rainbow sort of became the rays of the sun!

Prior to this, none of the students had the opportunity to chance upon such a sight. But after witnessing it for the first time, everyone was totally amazed and inspired by the spectacular display. The thin air around us also seemed to buzz with a very subtle liveliness that helped to rejuvenate the overall fatigue. And as we left that cave, all our eyes were sort of gleaming with an unspoken conviction of a palpable presence of celestial blessings. While it was safe to say that my prayers were answered that day, the underlying significance could have been taken as something far more outrageous and out of this world; yet at the same time, inspirational and heart-warming.

Yes, that's right.

We weren't alone...

On another time, we were celebrating the birthday of Guru Rinpoche and offering prayers at the temple grounds. I can still recall it was a hot and sunny morning. As we began to recite the prayers, the stifling heat was gradually replaced by cool breezes and a steady drizzle was formed. Just as the prayers were about

to end, the light rain stopped completely as if to coincide with our activity. Right after that, the rainbow-surrounding-the-sun phenomenon manifested again! And this time though, the miraculous sight was directly above Thekchen Choling temple! If one were to raise his head up from the temple grounds, the doughnut-shaped display was a straight line up to the sky.

It was as if the manifested rainbow was meant to inspire those that did not go for that pilgrimage trip in Tibet.

Well, at least I thought so.

The other account was the time when a group of my students came with me to Ladakh to offer some of Buddha's relics to Geshe Tsewang¹ on their Ladakhis' Vesak day. Before I was invited to give a speech to address the crowd at the monastery, I prayed to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and Guru Rinpoche to show us a sign, a miraculous sign, in order to dispel any doubts about the authenticity of these relics. Deep in my heart, I had complete faith over the relics but people from a foreign land might perceive otherwise.

Anyway, immediately after my request to Buddha and Guru Rinpoche, the unusual rainbow-surrounding-the-sun sight appeared, with fluffy snow started powdering the nearby mountainous regions. From our vantage point, we could see the mountaintops slowly dressing up in white shimmering hues all around us as if they were respectfully changing their clothes to match our solemn consecration ceremony. It was a spectacular


view to behold, to say the least. A cool breeze also arrived almost immediately to sweep away the previous heat that was plaguing us earlier. And all these could not have happened if it wasn't from the grace and compassion of Buddha and Guru Rinpoche.

Of this, I have no doubt.


I hope that by relating these humbling experiences of mine to the readers, it can somehow invoke the divine blessings of Guru Rinpoche for all of us to develop faith in him and the *Triple Gem*. If these true stories can blossom even a tiny fraction of devotion and conviction in any one of you, I deeply rejoice from the depths of my heart and pray that you be bestowed with unwavering faith and strength throughout your path to enlightenment.

May your spiritual journey be sprinkled with bountiful divine blessings at the beginning, the middle, and to the ultimate fruition.

May all be auspicious!



Lama Thubten Namdrol Dorje Tulku
(Spiritual Director of Thekchen Choling Singapore)



🌀 Seven-Line Prayer to Guru Rinpoche 🌀

Hung!

Ur-gyen Yul-Gyi Nup-Chang Tsam

In the North-West of the country of Uddiyana,

Pay-Ma Ke-Sar Dong-Po La

In the heart of a lotus flower,

Ya-Tsen Chok-Gi Ngo-Drup Nye

Endowed with the most marvelous attainments;

Pe-Ma Jung-Ne Shye-Su Drak

You are renowned as the 'Lotus Born',

Khor-Du Khan-Dro Mang-Po Kor

Surrounded by many hosts of Dakinis,

Khye-Gyi Je-Su Dag-Drup Gyi

Following in your footsteps,

Jin-Gyi Lap-Chir Shek-Su Sol

I pray to you to come and bless me with your grace!

Gu-Ru Pad-Ma Sid-Dhi Hung

O Lotus Born Guru, please grant accomplishments!

*This famous prayer is recited daily by Vajrayana Buddhists and is said to contain the most sacred and important teachings of "Dzogchen" – the primordial nature or the innermost essence of mind. It is most beneficial if you can recite this prayer daily and to sincerely request the holy blessings and guidance from Guru Rinpoche to help you in times of difficulties.

Short Mantra of Guru Rinpoche:

**Om Ah Hung Vajra
Guru Padma Siddhi Hung**

It is said that these twelve syllables encompass the essence of the eighty-four thousand teachings taught by Buddha. Therefore, by reciting it once is similar to reciting the entire teachings of Buddha. They also represent the antidotes to free us from the twelve links of dependent origination taught by Buddha, which bound us in the cyclic existence of birth and death: ignorance, karmic formations, consciousness, name and form, six sense organs, contact, sensation, craving, attachment, becoming, rebirth, old age and death. Through the immense power of this mantra, it purifies these twelve links that ensnare us in samsara and eventually gaining freedom or liberation.

*The Tibetan equivalent of the word
'Vajra' is 'Bendza' and is commonly pronounced
by Tibetan Buddhists.





*See me and you see all the buddhas,
Accomplish me and you accomplish all the buddhas,
For I am the gathering of all the sugatas.²
~ Guru Padmasambhava*



*The Dawn
of the Second
Buddha*



The Dawn of the Second Buddha



Before Shakyamuni Buddha was about to pass into final Nirvana, he had prophesized an appearance of a great being (Buddha's own manifestation) whom would be born some eight years later in the midst of an immaculately pure lake in the land of Uddiyana. This special being, fully endowed with great miraculous power and skillful means, was none other than the great saint, Guru Rinpoche – also known as Padmasambhava or the Lotus-Born Guru. The sole purpose of his birth on this world was to continue the spread of the buddhadharma; especially the vajrayana/tantric tradition.

When the time was ripe for Guru Rinpoche to liberate the worldly beings from suffering, on the tenth day of the sixth month of the Monkey year, a red syllable Hrih shone forth from the heart of Lord Amitabha Buddha and fell on top a ravishing thousand-petal lotus in a

milky lake filled with lotuses, which is currently known as Lake Danakosha – located on the Afghanistan-Pakistan frontier.

This red syllable Hrih then dissolved into light, and instantaneously, without depending on the causes and conditions of a father and mother in sexual union, Guru Rinpoche was thus born as an eight-year-old child adorned with the thirty-two major and eighty minor marks of an enlightened being.³ Immediately after his miraculous birth, scores of *dakinis* appeared in the sky and made exalted offerings and sang praises to him. Spotting a vajra and lotus on both hands, the youthful Guru Rinpoche began teaching the dharma on the spot to the *dakinis*, local gods, and spirits of that region.





The Young Prince
of Uddiyana



The Young Prince of Uddiyana



Around that time, there lived a ruler in that region by the name of king Indrabodhi. This king had been expecting to have an heir to carry on the rule of his kingdom, but for many years, all attempts to conceive a baby were futile. He then made many offerings to the Triple Gem and happened to instruct one of his court attendants to collect fresh flowers from the nearby region where Guru Rinpoche was born.

While going about his duties, the gardener chanced upon Guru Rinpoche and was most astonished. *How could this little unworldly child be sitting rather contentedly on top of a beautiful lotus, surrounded by the entire wilderness? How could he survive?* The gardener was thinking aloud. *This must be a miracle to begin with!*

Without hesitation, the gardener quickly reported this piece of amazing

news to the king. Piqued by the mysteriousness of the description from the gardener, king Indrabodhi decided to make the trip down to the lake where it was purported to have a young child residing on a gigantic lotus. Needless to say, the king was rendered speechless once he caught sight of this magical boy. With bated breath, the king quickly inquired about his birth parents, caste and name. In reply, the young child exclaimed:

*My father is the self-arisen Samantabhadra.
My mother is the sphere of reality, Samantabhadri.
My caste is the union of primordial wisdom and the
Dharmadhatu.*

And my name is the glorious Padmasambhava.

Assuming that this must be the birth of a *nirmanakaya* Buddha, king Indrabodhi immediately beseeched this young child to take residence in his palace and to be his spiritual guide. Intrigued by the prospect of further spreading the dharma, Guru Rinpoche graciously accepted the invitation of his first student from *samsara* and was brought to the lavish palace with much fanfare.

After being well treated into his early teens, king Indrabodhi later granted Guru Rinpoche the entire inheritance of his kingdom and gave him the title of Pema Gyalpo, the

lotus-born prince. A marriage was subsequently arranged and the young prince ruled the kingdom in accordance with the dharma. But soon enough, he came to realize that the political situations surrounding him were meaningless and contradictory to the fulfillment of his purpose of spreading the dharma and liberating sentient beings. After being declined the permission to leave the palace by the king, the young prince later did a mystical act of dancing on the palace roof with a scepter and vajra.

Having foreknowledge that a particular son of a wicked minister was supposed to take rebirth into a lower realm, out of great compassion, Guru Rinpoche enacted the mystifying deed of letting slipped one of the implements he was holding onto from the roof; the holy object fell and instantly took the son's life, while swiftly lifted his consciousness into the *dharmadhatu*. Instead of being born in an unfortunate realm, the son's evil karma was extinguished by the empathetic intervention of an enlightened being and was guided miraculously to a pure realm.



Charnel Ground



Charnel Ground



Following the sudden loss of his son, the distraught father vociferously demanded king Indrabodhi to expel the lotus prince from the kingdom. Much to the reluctance of the king, the prince was eventually forced to exile to a charnel ground, which seemed to be the start of his role as the great tantric master, the unparalleled expounder of truth.

Unencumbered by the boundaries of the organized world, the prince was free to roam through the charnel ground of *Cool Grove* that was supposedly to be in the region of Bodhgaya in Southern India, and many others too. Besieged by rotting corpses and wild beasts, he observed that all compounded things of this world would eventually disintegrate and fall apart, as explicitly demonstrated by these decomposing bodies littering around. The constant play of living and dying was evident everywhere, not just

in charnel grounds, but also in every living situation. In fact, nothing is unchanging. All phenomena are subjected to the suffering of change. The young prince contemplated deeply about this inalterable truth and felt tremendous compassion for all sentient beings. Hence, the purpose of his life became ever more urgent and lucid, which further deepened the young prince's aspiration to free sentient beings from cyclic existence.

As a result, the prince in exile attained the common and uncommon *siddhis* while meditating on the truth of suffering and was known as Vajradhara – the Sanskrit name for 'the indestructible holder'.





The Ordination
of the Lotus
Prince



The Ordination of the Lotus Prince



After attaining supreme realizations in the charnel grounds, the young prince, and now as an accomplished *siddha*, had gone to the region of Bodhgaya (the place of enlightenment of Buddha Shakyamuni) and proclaimed to be a self-arising Buddha. However, contrary to what he'd thought, his public statement of enlightened qualities wasn't well-received by the commoners at all. No one could believe that this handsome young man was a Buddha, much less a Buddha that arose spontaneously. Instead, they jeered and taunted his arrogant declaration and totally ignored him. Seeing that his plan to teach the dharma had backfired, he knew he had to have weighty credentials to convince the confused minds. And one way to do so was to be affiliated with the actual Buddha himself.

Therefore, to further shape himself into an authentic spiritual teacher, a

learned master of the Buddhist tradition, Guru Rinpoche concluded the need to be ordained as a monk and to live the monastic way of life.



Venerable Ananda was one of Buddha's greatest disciples. Also the cousin of Buddha, he had a photographic memory and was able to remember all the Buddhist scriptures.

Photo: Joshua Tan

The ordination ceremony was later presided by Ananda – a disciple and close attendant of Buddha – and the fine-looking prince was given the ordained name of “Shakya Senge” in Tibetan, which means “Lion of the Shakya Tribe”.

Through the appearance of learning from great masters and teachers, by listening just once, Guru Rinpoche comprehended and accomplished the whole canon of the three baskets of *Vinaya*, *Sutra* and *Abhidharma*, as well as the teachings of the outer and inner secret mantra, oral transmissions, and the pith instructions of the highest and innermost tantra of *Atiyoga*. Because he was already endowed with full potential since birth, the knowledge of buddhadharma was awakened within him effortlessly. This should definitely not be mistaken as the usual learning process that normal beings go through, but rather, to be interpreted as a skillful manifestation of Guru Rinpoche’s part for the benefit of sentient beings.

And after acquiring necessary credentials and knowledge to work with the confused minds, the fulfillment of his purpose on earth was finally taking shape. The young siddha in the charnel ground, and now a credited Buddhist master from a pure lineage, was ever ready to teach the world and to liberate sentient beings from the misery of the cycle of birth and death.



Guru Rinpoche's
First Consort
Mandarava



Guru Rinpoche's First Consort Mandarava



Residing in the kingdom of Zahor was one princess with the name, Mandarava, who had been harboring a deep yearning at a young age to practice Buddhist teachings. As her natural affinity with the buddhadharma grew



A statue of Mandarava inside a cave located in Tso Pema.

Photo: Joshua Tan

with each passing day, the beautiful princess eventually admitted herself into a nunnery and officially became a *bikshuni*. Suffice to say, this rebellious move infuriated the king and the queen. But after coming to terms with their daughter's doggedness to live the monastic way, the king of Zahor decided to install five hundred women to ensure the fulfillment of their daughter's monastic discipline, as that would also appease suitors from other regions from questioning about her unyielding refusal to their marriage proposals.

On a fateful day, Guru Rinpoche - as the authentic Buddhist master - arrived at the nunnery. As he stepped into the compound, all the nuns were immediately transfixed by his remarkably perceptive appearance. After accepting Mandarava as his consort (as she was showing the marks and signs of a dakini), Guru Rinpoche later converted all the people in that assembly through the skillful means and eloquence of a learned teacher and began imparting the dharma on the throne. From then on, Guru Rinpoche embarked on the activity of turning the wheel of dharma to the *sangha* community in that particular nunnery.⁴

While the teacher was giving a discourse on the throne at a particular day, an attendant of the king of Zahor heard his voice coming out from the main hall. As no man was allowed in the sacred compound of a nunnery, the eavesdropper quickly reported this suspicious matter back to the king and a troop of guards was dispatched subsequently to apprehend the

perpetrator on the throne. Notwithstanding the outcry of the sangha community, the teacher was ultimately put under arrest and was situated on a pyre filled with sandalwood.

Guru Rinpoche had been instructed to be burnt alive!

Under normal circumstances, this style of fire execution could never have lasted up to a day, as most criminals would have been charred to bits after a few hours. As it turned out, this reality did not apply to the execution of this enlightened being after all.

After the pyre was torched on the first day, the mounting flame went on and on, which began to worry the observers. From the look of it, the scorching fire that was burning the accused was showing no signs of abating. To make matters worse, the smoke from the fire quickly began to shroud the entire vicinity. In next to no time, the whole area was literally being blanketed with thick choking smoke! And by then, the visibility level had gotten so poor that no one could even see a decent distance ahead, much less to make out what was happening in the middle of the charnel ground where the accused was burning.

As each day lingered on, it became the talk of the town as no one could guess the shape of things to come. Tongues began to wag that the criminal was either a black magician or an enlightened being; in any case, most believed that their days of reckoning were near, and people were starting to have serious misgivings about the strange phenomenon.

After what seemed like an eternity, something seemed to give at the dawn of the eighth day of execution. The thick ominous smoke began to disperse eventually. Everyone was getting somewhat relieved as they could see clearer and breathe better. Following this, complacency began to surface as the commoners ignorantly assumed that the worst had come to pass, and that the accused was after all just another ordinary person! But little did they know that something magical had already taken place, and through the skilful means of the teacher, these people were about to receive a rude awakening.

As the choking smoke finally drifted apart, what was once a charnel ground strewn with charred bits of human bodies had been transformed miraculously into a giant pond filled with enchanting lotuses! *Whoa! What happened?* Those that were present at the scene were completely shocked and stunned by this mind-boggling sleight of hand! As they looked back and forth, their eyes couldn't stop blinking, thinking that the joke was on them; but still, the pond wouldn't vanish. When these witnesses had yet to recover from their heart-stopping bewilderment, a panicky voice was heard in the crowd, "*Hey! Look!*"

All of them immediately zoomed into that direction and saw the accused, the one that was previously assumed to be an ordinary person, appearing in spiritual union with princess Mandarava atop a magnificent lotus! The alleged impostor had somehow survived the whole ordeal and was fully alive and meditating on a lotus!

Previously a charnel ground, Guru Rinpoche had transformed it into a beautiful lake and subsequently appeared on a lotus. Current name is Tso Pema or Rewalsar in the present-day Indian state of Himachal Pradesh.

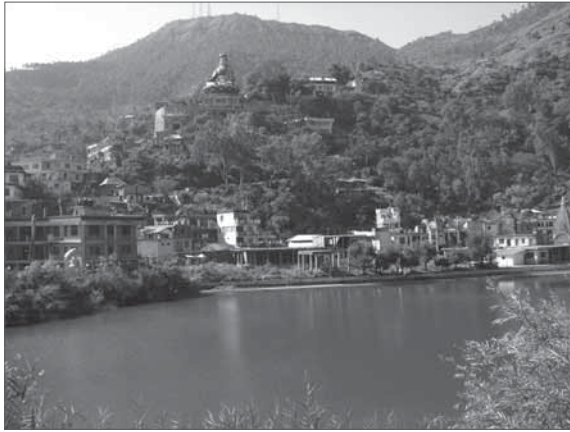


Photo: Ivy Lee

One of the guards quickly reported this unusual sight to the king. At first, the king was taken aback by the description from the wide-eye informant. As far as the king was concerned, it was totally preposterous. Nevertheless, he had to see it with his own eyes, he thought. He had to see it to believe it. Without further ado, the king immediately set forth to the location and saw that it had indeed being transformed into a pond. And when he laid his eyes on Guru Rinpoche and his consort sitting on top of a lotus in the midst of this beautiful pond, the king instantly knew that this must be a true master, a real guru before him. Without missing a beat, he quickly confessed his wrongdoings and foolishness and

repeatedly requested Guru Rinpoche to his palace.

To the king's pleads, Guru Rinpoche replied by saying, "*I shall not enter into the palace of a sinner – the palace of a wicked king who had wrongly perceived the true essence of spirituality!*"

But after much pleading for forgiveness from the king, Guru Rinpoche finally accepted his apologies and went to the kingdom of Zahor. He subsequently converted the king and commoners into Buddhists, further instilling the buddhadharma in the confused minds of sentient beings.





Guru Rinpoche's
Return to Uddiyana



Guru Rinpoche's Return to Uddiyana



After firmly establishing the teachings in the kingdom of Zahor, Guru Rinpoche decided to go back to his birth place with his consort to teach the dharma. Sensing that people might recognize him as the lotus prince in exile, he had no choice but to travel incognito to that land as a beggar asking for alms. In the beginning, everything went smoothly without much ado. The bogus beggar was able to whizz through the streets without detection. No one seemed to be able to differentiate him from the filthy rags and the fine clothing he had on the last time he was there. However, as luck would have it, the scrupulous masquerade was later exposed under the close scrutiny of several evil ministers and the great master was detained on the spot.

As with the style of execution happening at that era, Guru Rinpoche was being put onto a pyre again after the fateful arrest.

In order to inspire faith and devotion among the dissenters, Guru Rinpoche and his consort later appeared unharmed in a beautiful lotus in the middle of a lake (much like the previous case in Zahor), but this time he was wearing a garland of human skulls to symbolize the liberation of sentient beings from samsara. Unsurprisingly, this display of supernatural power instantly cut through even the most cynical of minds and everyone, including the unconvinced king, were so moved from the unworldly appearance that they immediately supplicated before him.

Out of the pure intention to liberate all sentient beings from misery, Guru Rinpoche later agreed to become the king's teacher and stayed on for thirteen years. Meanwhile, he also managed to establish the whole kingdom in dharma practice. In the interim, many teachings and empowerment were given by the great master, through which the king and queen as well as destined ones accomplished the supreme *Vidyadhara* state.

As a result of his compassionate actions, the great master was later given the honorary title as *Padma Raja* – the Lotus King - in the land of Uddiyana.





Heretics Try to
Kill the Guru
with poisoned food



Heretics Try to Kill the Guru with poisoned food



As the story goes, Guru Rinpoche had at one point in his life manifested as a fully ordained monk called Indrasena to guide *King Ashoka* on the path to enlightenment. After developing indubitable faith toward the teachings



*One of the many
Ashoka pillars
found at Buddha's
birthplace Lumbini,
Nepal.*

Photo: Eile Goh

from this monk, with great compassion, the king initiated the constructions of ten million *stupas* containing precious Buddha's relics throughout the continent to inspire faith to this unparalleled truth. Many tall pillars were also strategically erected at blessed locations to inform future practitioners of their origins. These awe-inspiring pillars can still be found around the holy places of Bodhgaya.

According to history - if I do not recall wrongly - due to an invasion, the entire area surrounding the Bodhgaya temple where Buddha Shakyamuni attained enlightenment was completely



*The famous
Buddha statue inside
Mahabodhi Temple
in Bodhgaya - the
place where Buddha
Shakyamuni attained
enlightenment under
a bodhi tree.*

Photo: Joshua Tan

buried underground. Because of the meritorious act of King Ashoka, the exact location was later being pinpointed from the tip of a stupa protruding from the earth. Recovery was then made and the Bodhgaya temple has remained to this day to be the holiest place for pilgrims around the world to gather and pay homage to the historical Buddha at the actual place of enlightenment.

There were at that time many non-Buddhist kings who threatened the doctrine and Guru Rinpoche had to employ a variety of means to subdue them. In one particular case, a wicked king tried to poison him in the pretext of making food offerings to Guru Rinpoche. Due to his omniscience, the master knew right away that the offerings were contaminated. In order to arouse faith in disbelieving minds, Guru Rinpoche accepted the offerings and immediately transmuted the poison into nectar. After which, the blissful nectar emitted an unearthly glow that shone brightly on the faces of those around, including the wicked king, and a thought immediately crossed his mind: *"This must be the work of a realized being, a living Buddha!"*

Realizing his mistakes, the king quickly begged for forgiveness and promised to repent. Due to his compassion, the great master pardoned the ignorance of the king and converted him, as well as the rest of his entourage. Such was the skillful method of this great enlightened being that could manifest in different forms to benefit myriads of beings.



Trapped in a Copper
Vessel Bound
with Iron



Trapped in a Copper Vessel Bound with Iron



At a later stage in his life, a group of *tirthikas* was planning to eradicate the great saint once and for all. They managed to trap Guru Rinpoche inside a copper vessel bound with iron and throw him into the Ganges River, hoping that this would drown him. However, their devious plan was thwarted in the end by the magical prowess of this great enlightened being.

Soon after Guru Rinpoche was being left to perish inside the sacred river, the *tirthikas* thought they'd finally managed to end the master's life. But before they could congratulate themselves over the murderous act, the waters suddenly churned fiercely and flowed upstream. This sudden twist of event instantaneously stopped the group of *tirthikas* in their tracks. As they turned to face the upward flow of the waters, all of

them were astounded to see Guru Rinpoche breaking free from the iron-clad entrapment, who then performed a mystical dance in midair. After witnessing such a magical sight, the ashen-faced *tirthikas* were completely convinced of his enlightened qualities and supplicated before the great master.

And due to the magical display of levitation, Guru Rinpoche was known at that time as '*The Youth Who Soars in Space like a Garuda*'.

With his skillful methods in subduing the ordinary minds, Guru Rinpoche also assumed many physical forms and names thereafter: including the master Sarouha; Brahmin Saraha; Dombi Heruka; Virupa; and the great Krishnacharin; each and every one of these manifestations were necessary to tame the minds of different beings. As long as there were sentient beings seeking for the truth, the skillful one would appear in any form; as long as the manifestation would serve to benefit them. In this way, the great master had also appeared in various charnel grounds and taught the dakinis the secret mantras. Numerous harmful spirits were also being subdued along the way and the great master deftly installed them as guardians of the sacred doctrine.





Dealing with
Five Hundred
Heretics



Dealing with Five Hundred Heretics



At a tumultuous period of time, the Buddhist doctrine was facing an unprecedented challenge as scholars from renowned Buddhist monasteries continued to be defeated in a string of debates that were initiated by many intellectual Hindu academics. For that reason, throng after throng of stigmatized Buddhists gave up their practices and proceeded to embrace the heretical school of thought. It was a total disaster, to say the least. As for those who chose to remain albeit the disgrace, what was once an unwavering devotion to the truth was also unavoidably starting to give as the losing streak persisted with no hope of redemption.

On one occasion, these Hindu heretics arrived at yet another Buddhist monastery and ruthlessly shredded the tenuous argument put forth by a group of scholars in a debate. As with the case of

previous defeats, believers from that monastery started forsaking their faith and left for what seemed to be the representation of the ultimate truth of reality. Seeing that the only flicker of hope to turn the tide around was to invoke the presence of the great sage Guru Rinpoche, some of the faithful Buddhists in that monastery quickly made a feast offering and fervently recited the seven-line prayer.

In actuality, Guru Rinpoche already knew about this matter and was very concerned for the integrity of the doctrine. He also knew that all these scholars were matchless against the incisive heretics. And if no one could pull the plug any time soon, this trend of continuous defeat would certainly bring about the downfall of Buddhism in that era. Therefore, given the urgency of the matter, the great sage quickly arrived in that monastery to help salvage the whole situation.

Since the self-righteous heretics had no inkling as to who this youthful newcomer was, they haughtily challenged him to a debate. But before long, the newcomer was evidently manifesting the credentials of a truly erudite scholar. One by one, he cut through all of their assertions of heretical viewpoints with much ease. And once the heretics knew that they couldn't hold out much longer in this verbal battle, they began to retaliate by chanting destructive mantras.

Acting in accordance with the negative energies being churned by these harmful mantras, the fearless master then performed a mysterious act of pointing the tip of his trident

to the general direction of these heretics. From that symbolic act alone, all the destructive effects were reversed back like a mirror reflection: The harmful energies somehow created an earthquake that buried all the heretics and destroyed their ashram altogether. At the same time, the compassionate master also lifted their consciousness to a pure realm (they would have taken rebirth in the lower realms due to ignorance and ill intent) to prevent further destruction through the usage of spells and black magic.

Following this momentous episode, faith among devotees was restored and the banner of victory was raised to the skies. Those that had participated in the earlier exodus were also slowly trickling back to their respective monasteries after gaining trust in the indestructible doctrine.



The Cave of
Yanglesho in
Nepal (Pharbing)



The Cave of Yanglesho in Nepal (Pharping)



While travelling on the border of India and Nepal, Guru Rinpoche accepted the offer of Princess Shakyadevi, daughter of the Nepalese King Punyadhara, as his *sadhana* support in meditation practice. As he started meditating together with the princess in the cave of Yanglesho, many cannibal demons and powerful spirits willfully created obstacles to prevent them from having any fruitful spiritual consummation.

As if that wasn't enough, these wicked spirits also deprived the nearby villagers of rain for an agonizing period of three years. Famines and various diseases began to spread, thus causing much suffering to the citizens of nearby villages. With his clairvoyance, the master knew that these obstacles were caused by the local demons and quickly requested his teachers from India for instructions to overcome the impediments.

After receiving the request, his teachers immediately dispatched two messengers over with the transmission of *Kilaya* scriptures. And once these powerful scriptures appeared on that land, all these harmful hindrances immediately ceased to exist one after another! Villagers cheered on as the sought after rain mercifully gushed down in heavy sheets. Diseases began to heal automatically and the life-threatening famines stopped all at once. Normalcy was at last returned to the people and everyone was immensely grateful over this sudden reversal of events.

Gaining this experience, Guru Rinpoche realized that although the practice of *Vishuddha Heruka* alone conferred great accomplishment, it was like a travelling trader that was destined to meet with hindrances. Therefore, in order to obtain the optimal result, one had to combine both Herukas together as a whole. The master subsequently composed many *sadhanas* by combining these two practices and stressed upon their importance for the benefit of future practitioners.

In the end, both Guru Rinpoche and his *sadhana* support were able to attain supreme accomplishment and displayed the form of an awareness holder of the *Great Seal*.





*Earlier life of
Guru Rinpoche*



Earlier life of Guru Rinpoche



In one of his previous life, Guru Rinpoche had been born as a son to a herdsman. Together with his two brothers, the three of them had concertedly constructed the world-renowned “Wish-Fulfilling Bouddhanath Stupa” around 5th AD in Kathmandu, Nepal.



*The Wish-Fulfilling
Bouddhanath Stupa
in Kathmandu,
Nepal.*

Photo: Joshua Tan

After its completion, the three brothers knelt in supplication in front of the magical stupa and made many heartfelt prayers. Through their sincerity and dedication of merits, the three brothers were later being born as the Great

Abbot, Shantarakshita; the proponent of dharma, King Trisong Detsen; and lastly the Lotus Born, Guru Rinpoche.

Meanwhile, a diligent donkey was also helping the three brothers with the enormous task of building the magnificent stupa. At one moment, while toiling within earshot of the three brothers, she was greatly upset that throughout the entirety of their prayers, none of them spoke about her to the Triple Gem.



*Pilgrims
circumambulating
the stupa.*

Photo: Eile Goh

Feeling hurt and humiliated, she secretly made a vow to wipe Buddhism from the face of this earth. And because of that evil intent, this particular donkey was later being reincarnated as Langdharma, the 41st king of Tibet (merits earned from the construction of the stupa), and almost succeeded in the wish to obliterate the sacred dharma.

This stupa is currently the biggest in the world and is most revered by Buddhists from all around the globe. Many pilgrims and practitioners can be seen circumambulating this magnificent stupa everyday in a clockwise fashion with various sizes of *Mani wheels* and colourful prayer beads on hands. It is also the conviction of local worshippers that as long as one's wishes are made immediately upon laying eyes on this stupa, whatever one wishes *will* come true - not on a 100% but 200% guarantee. Whether one can receive twice the assurance is not the point; but just by this confidence alone is enough to show their immovable devotion to the extraordinary blessings of this stupa.



Sealing of
Terma in the
Land of Snow



Sealing of Termas in the Land of Snow



Earlier on when we discussed about the past life of Guru Rinpoche and his two brothers, the interesting part was that their paths were destined to intertwine once again from their strong karmic links. The reality of reincarnation can be baffling to some, but as we learn through this historical story, it happened nonetheless.

At the matured age of twenty-one, King Trisong Detsen – also an emanation of Buddha Manjushri – had very strong aspirations to spread the sacred teachings of Buddhism in Tibet. But because of the deep-seated *Bön* religious beliefs of its people, his well intention to introduce a foreign doctrine in that land was expectedly met with strong opposing forces; both from his court ministers and also commoners from around the regions. Unwilling to budge under the pressure from all sides, the king subsequently went

against all odds and contacted the great abbot, Shantarakshita, and invited him to impart his knowledge of dharma to the Tibetans. The abbot soon arrived and gave his first teaching on *dependent origination* and the *ten virtuous actions* in the king's palace.

Even though the abbot's teachings proved to be a bitter pill to swallow for the attendees, nevertheless, the propitious occasion marked a historical launch of the buddhadharma in the land of snow, and the young king was determined to see it through.

A year later, construction works for a huge monastery to further the establishment of buddhadharma was underway. But due to the disinclination of its people, the building process was often put in limbo by overt oppositions led by ministers and commoners. These demonstrators would apparently do anything to prevent the inception of a foreign religion to rival the existing one. Seizing the chance to add insult to injury, the local demons also threw a monkey wrench in the works by sneaking into the night to tear down whatever that was being completed by the builders during the day. Meanwhile, the king decided to consult the abbot about this dicey issue and was then told to send invitation for the great master Guru Rinpoche to come, as the abbot's prediction clearly stated that only the true master of this world could resolve this matter.

In the interim, Guru Rinpoche was already heading into that direction as he knew about the destructive forces and his

destiny to teach in the Land of Snow. En route to the central part of Tibet, he had bound many goddesses and powerful spirits under oath to protect the doctrine before finally meeting the king for the first time in the palace.

After subjugating these negative spirits that hampered the constructions of the temple, Guru Rinpoche commanded them to assist throughout the building process, which they did. In this way, the first Buddhist monastery in Tibet was swiftly erected within five years and was given the name, Samyé, which means inconceivable. During the consecration ceremony, many wondrous signs appeared in the skies which further arouse devotion and faith for the sacred dharma.



Samyé monastery was the first Buddhist monastery that was built in the 8th century in Tibet.

Photo: Joshua Tan

At that time, a statue of Guru Rinpoche was commissioned at Samyé. On seeing his own replica, the great saint gave this remark: “It looks like me...” and then he blessed it and said, “Now it is the same as me.” Therefore, Buddhist folklore has it that seeing this statue is equivalent to seeing Guru Rinpoche himself. This picture of the famous Guru Rinpoche statue is currently being widely circulated and is taken as a source of inspiration and direct connection by well-informed practitioners.



The original statue in Samyé monastery that was blessed by Guru Rinpoche in person.

Photo: Joshua Tan

In the beginning, the great Abbot Shantarakshita gave ordination vows to seven monks and a sangha community was tentatively formed. As most scriptures were inked in a foreign language, the king formed the wish to translate these ancient texts for the sake of its people. After going through the selection of young would-be translators, this fine group of Tibetan boys was then sent to India to learn the language. After undergoing the vigorous training and scrutiny of the finer points of olden scriptures, these translators finally returned to their homeland and embarked on what they were presupposed to do. Little by little, with the help of Guru Rinpoche and the Abbot, these intelligent translators gradually completed the painstaking task of translating all the Indian Buddhist scriptures of the sutras and tantras into Tibetan language.

At around that period, the young king also offered one of the princesses, Yeshe Tsogyal, to the master as his sadhana support. Seeing that she had the marks and signs of a dakini, Guru Rinpoche gladly accepted the king's offer and she soon became one of the master's heart disciples. Due to the steadfast devotion she had for her guru, Lady Yeshe Tsogyal's realizations in that lifetime is said to be on par with the master. She was also the one responsible in committing her guru's precious teachings into words and was concealed as sacred *termas*.

*Guru Rinpoche's
Tibetan consort,
Yeshe Tsogyal,
was one of the
great saint's heart
disciples.*

Photo: Joshua Tan



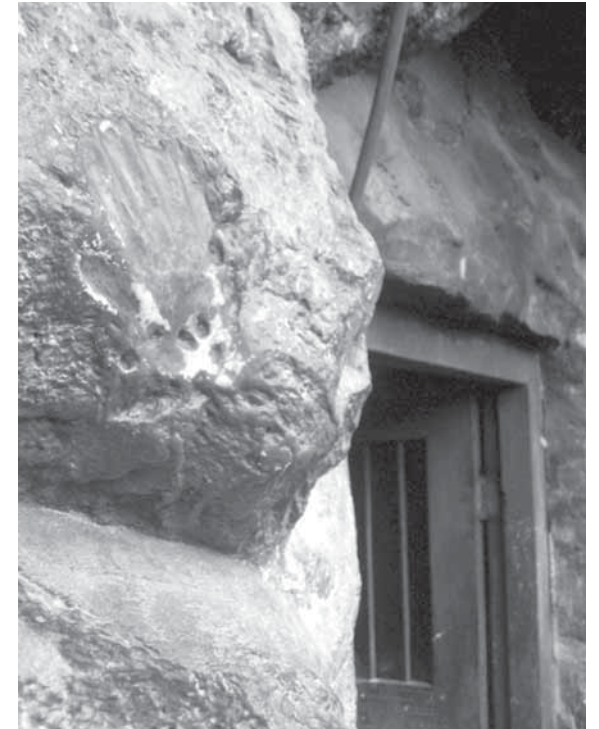
The king later requested for further empowerments and instructions from Guru Rinpoche and became one of the nine chief disciples. Each of them attained siddhis while practicing under the specific instructions given to them. Other profound teachings such as the three inner tantras were also given to the king, two sons, and twenty five disciples.

Having foreknowledge that a future descendant of the king would later try to decimate Buddhism, Guru

Rinpoche conferred with the king and close disciples to conceal terma teachings into several sacred places. The necessity for such termas to be concealed was also to prevent the corruption of Vajrayana and the misinterpretation of texts by intellectuals. A total of a hundred and eight *tertons* were later prophesized by Guru Rinpoche, together with the date and time for these termas to be revealed to the future generations. Some of these foretold tertons are still alive and have since revealed these concealed treasures according to the predicted time and date. The master had also personally gone through all the concealments of termas and bound many mundane spirits at each location to guard the precious teachings.

Due to his infinite compassion and kindness for future disciples, these terma teachings have since led countless beings to liberation and continue to be a source of inspiration to this present age. To inspire further faith, Guru Rinpoche had also left many imprints on mountain rocks around places of practice. These imprints can still be seen and are being

regarded as the closest one can get to this great enlightened being.



*A handprint left
by Guru Rinpoche
outside a cave at
Pharping.*

Photo: Joshua Tan

The day that Guru Rinpoche was to leave Tibet, many of his disciples, the king and the ministers tried to persuade him to stay. Seeing that the conditions for him to remain had exhausted - he had fully established buddhadharma in the Land of Snow - Guru Rinpoche gave extensive teachings for the last time to his students. Another cause of departure

was also because Guru Rinpoche could see with his wisdom eye that a class of malicious beings inhabiting the southwestern ocean was determined to destroy anything that was considered wholesome in this world. These beings were known as *rakshas*. He knew he had to go there to tame them before they could do any serious damage. And after vanquishing these rakshas and inspiring them to take refuge under the Triple Gem, Guru Rinpoche manifested a pure realm known as ‘The Copper-Coloured Mountain’ to many of his disciples and is believed to continue to live there.

As according to history, the great master was last seen leaving the Land of Snow riding on a horse and flew to the sky, accompanied by many dakinis making offerings to him in the wake. According to the short biography of Guru Rinpoche by Jamgon Kongtrul the First⁵, the great master remained in Tibet for fifty-five years and six months, forty-eight years while the king was alive and seven years and six months afterward. The king was twenty-one when Guru Rinpoche was invited and he passed away at the age of sixty-nine. He stayed on for a few years before leaving to tame the rakshas.

To reassure the students of future generations, Guru Rinpoche’s final parting words were his promise to come and listen without fail to whomever that calls upon him on the tenth and twenty-fifth days (dakini day) of each month. Based on this timeless assurance, monasteries from all over the world have continued to this time and age to make *tsog* offerings and perform extensive *pujas* on these two important days.



Conclusion



Conclusion



In this eventful story, Guru Rinpoche had not manifested passing away, which totally contradicts Buddha Shakyamuni's Mahaparinirvana. I'm sure the readers might find this discrepancy rather perplexing. "People die, right?" You may wonder. "Even after attaining the state of eternity, did it mean that Guru Rinpoche's body was not subjected to decay?" In order to spearhead this argument, one has to understand that this is not an ordinary person that we are talking about; but rather, someone that had an exceptional birth already in the beginning.

From the past, there were masters that had attained the "rainbow body". With this high realization, when the practitioner dies, his body will take about a period of seven days to shrink, leaving nothing but hair and nails in the end. In the process, rainbow-like rays would surround the dying person, thus the

coinage of the term. These true accounts can be found in *The Tibetan Book of the Living and Dying*.⁶ As far as I'm concerned, these supernatural feats are not uncommon. For example, both my late gurus had displayed miracles during their times and have left a wondrous array of relics behind. Their eyeballs have also remained intact even after burning at a high temperature during the cremation ceremonies!

As according to the logical minds, these amazing facts alone are already truly unbelievable!

The nature of reality can be such that no ordinary mind or conditioned mind could ever fathom through the use of human intellect. It is far more potent that what we can ever imagine. That was also the reason why after attaining complete enlightenment, Buddha Shakyamuni did not teach for a week. He knew that the truth He had learnt was extremely difficult for sentient beings to even comprehend a tiny portion. And perhaps the deathless myth of Guru Rinpoche can only be understood from an unworldly perspective, the *dharmakaya* realm of the mind. That is to say, only an enlightened mind can perceive the sum total of actual reality.

For ordinary beings like us, this is perhaps the only answer that we can get for a conundrum that will continue to defy the logic of science and to fascinate the world.

Truth be told, countless devotees have come to believe that Guru Rinpoche has never really departed from this earth. On the

contrary, many have said that the presence of this great master couldn't have been more alive and conspicuous than his first physical appearance on a lotus. Many accounts of his magical manifestations have been recounted and recorded throughout the centuries and a lot of practitioners have also had supreme realizations by doing his practices. If these can be an indication at all, we should take to heart that Guru Rinpoche has never forsaken us. Instead, he will always be around to grant blessings to all of his beloved children. And as long as we are willing to open our heart and reach out to this great master, it was his promise that he will never be far from us. His children will *always* be protected by his compassion.

*I am never far from those with faith,
Or even from those without it,
Though they do not see me.
My children will always,
Always,
Be protected by my compassion.²
~ Guru Padmasambhava*

And since it was a promise that came from the guru of all gurus, we can be assured that this can never go wrong.

Guru Rinpoche will continue to manifest in various forms to guide sentient beings, and one of these is through the form of a qualified spiritual teacher. At times when both my late gurus were still alive and well, they had exhibited the various aspects of this great saint, which is to me a testament to the timeless truth of the promise that he'd made. For that reason, I have no question in my mind that this enlightened being is always here among us, among the many qualified gurus; albeit in a totally unrecognizable, unexpected appearance.

Given that his manifestation is in the form of a spiritual guide, and that his teachings are still being widely practiced, it is perhaps not that far-fetched at all to say that the guru of all gurus has never left. In fact, his divine presence is evident among the many living saints and practitioners, those that truly embody his teachings and tradition. Hence, to connect with Guru Rinpoche, one needs to connect with a qualified spiritual guide that comes from his lineage, the vajrayana tradition.

In the next chapter, we should look into the details of a guru-disciple relationship that will certainly situate spiritual seekers on the right path.





The Spiritual
Guide in the
Buddhist Path



The Spiritual Guide in the Buddhist Path



As stated in pg135 of the book *Dakini Teachings*, Lady Yeshe Tsogyal had at one point requested instructions from Guru Rinpoche at the hermitage Pearl Crystal of Pamagong.⁷ Below was his reply:

The nirmanakaya master Padma said, "When practicing dharma from your heart, you need to have a qualified master that is authentic and trustworthy, a perfect spiritual teacher with the unbroken transmission from a pure lineage. If your teacher is fake, the instructions will be mistaken and all your training will be perverted. Since that would be extremely dangerous, it is essential to meet with a qualified master. Keep that in mind!"

Lady Tsogyal asked, "What is meant by unbroken transmission of the lineage?"

The nirmanakaya master replied, "One needs a lineage that is the unbroken transmission of enlightenment from

dharmakaya, sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya. The lineage of Master Padma is like that. Dharmakaya Samantabhadra transmitted to sambhogakaya Amitabha, who transmitted awareness through skillful means to nirmanakaya Padmakara. You, woman, have received the words of the nirmanakaya in person. You are endowed with the transmission of the lineage as well as its blessings.

Since we are discussing about Guru Rinpoche, I thought it was good to share this piece of precious information to the readers. These are the translated words from the guru of all gurus. It is certainly authentic and can be verified. For that reason, we should have no doubt about the utmost importance of a spiritual guide. Just like how Guru Rinpoche had affiliated himself with the lineage of Buddha and to receive all the direct transmissions from various masters, a qualified spiritual guide should also come with the unbroken transmission from a pure lineage.

For a poor student and disciple like me, it is my best fortune to have met and studied with two of my late root gurus (Khensur Rinpoche Lama Lhundrup and Geshe Lama Konchog) and also HH the Dalai Lama, the 5th Dorje Chang HE Dagri Rinpoche, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, HH Sakya Trizin, Tsikey Chokling Rinpoche, Jhado Rinpoche, and many other masters that I have come to regard as my precious gurus too. Therefore, I would like to share with you what it means to establish a guru-disciple relationship and how it can have an immense impact on your spiritual journey.

There are a total of ten qualities explained in *Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras* that you can observe from your guru:⁸

1. A mind controlled by pure morality.
2. A mind that is pacified and undistracted through the practice of concentration.
3. A mind completely pacified by discriminating wisdom.
4. Having greater knowledge than the disciple.
5. Having perseverance.
6. A wealth of scriptural knowledge.
7. Realization of suchness, the wisdom perceiving emptiness.
8. Skill in teaching the dharma.
9. Having love and compassion.
10. Having abandoned discouragement and laziness in teaching the dharma.

In the role of the spiritual guide on the hinayana level, the guru can be a spiritual friend, an elder, or someone that is being seen from your side as an experienced mentor. That is fine. It is at the budding stage when you are rather uncertain about the practices or somewhat doubtful about the credibility of your newly-acquainted spiritual teacher.

After establishing such a precious relationship with an authentic master, you need to open your heart further. This is

not easy for many people because there is always an element of fear that exists when communicating with such a guru. For instance, you might be afraid of being exposed. Nonetheless, you have to do it for any real transformation on the spiritual path to materialize. Otherwise, your practice will stagnate without a doubt.

A real guru is someone that has the ability to reflect you like a mirror. Even if you were to hide anything, your guru will know. Your guru will know anything and everything about you anyway. He is someone that can pierce through your heart with heart advice. It is in this kind of relationship that the teachings come alive, rather than being mere intellectual knowledge. Your guru needs to be on the physical level with you to guide you, to challenge and to *insult* you. Yes, you have not read it wrong; but he is not nitpicking on you per se, it is your ego, your fixated mind that he is dealing with. He has to mind your business, your way of life. This can be very courageous on your part. That is why the emphasis on the need of an authentic guru is very important on all paths.

There is a Tibetan expression that says the guru is like a fire; one gets burnt by being near and receives little warmth by being far.

It can't get any truer than this.

There are two ways of relating to your guru, which is absolutely necessary for any serious spiritual seeker. The first

one to begin with is sort of romanticizing about the idea of your guru as having every quality that you *don't* have. Your guru possesses all the experiences and spiritual attainments that you yearn or aspire to have. You want to become like him, to practice like your guru. This is in fact healthy and encouraging for any student to perceive the relationship in this way. To see your guru as a role model is to subconsciously follow in his footsteps, to emulate him to the point of wanting to be as learned as him.

This is the gist of it.

The next step is far more evolutionary and electrifying. It is to perceive your guru and yourself as being inseparable, or indivisible in terms of body, speech and mind. You and your guru are in oneness. This oneness does not mean that you have to eat whatever your guru enjoys, do whatever your guru takes delight in. Somehow, you still retain your personalities. But the basic premise is that your guru is purely being perceived as a *nirmanakaya* Buddha from your side that has manifested on this earth to impart the dharma to you; to lead you to Buddhahood so that you can liberate all beings in the future.

In this way, by visualizing yourself in oneness with your guru, you *will* become Buddha. Whether your guru *is* Buddha is not the point; but through pure perception, faith and devotion in your guru, it plants the irreversible cause to become enlightened.

Therefore, you will come to trust in your own innate wisdom, the *dharmakaya* realm of mind. This is the kind of

trust that you should cultivate if you yearn for real progress. You become Buddha right on the spot with divine pride. You instantly transformed into Buddha right at the time that you visualize as being in oneness with your guru, because your guru is seen as Buddha. Everything that you do in your daily activities, you visualize your guru as Buddha sitting in the center of your chest. You eat, sleep, walk, and think like a Buddha. Every action that comes out from you is pure action. Every word that you utter is perfect speech.

It is much more evident for one to have complete trust in one's guru on the tantric level. A complete faith and devotion at this stage is overtly required. This is the kind of guru-disciple relationship in the vajrayana path that will propel you to Buddhahood within one lifetime – the swift path. If you are able to steadfastly maintain an unwavering devotion to your guru, I have no doubt that your path to enlightenment is certainly on the right track. All the past masters had walked the same route and obtained results, including both my root gurus. And I have personally witnessed many practitioners achieved liberation through their strong devotion and faith in one's guru. If you are serious about your practice, my advice to you is that you should do the same.

May these teachings serve you well.

Sarwa Mangalam! (May all be auspicious!)

Glossary



Abhidharma (Skt.):

It means 'higher' for Abhi, and 'teachings' for dharma.

Amitabha (Skt.):

A Mahayana and tantric deity that associates particularly in the Pure Land schools of Buddhism. He resides in the western pure land, also known as Sukhavati.

Atiyoga (Skt. ~ Also 'Maha Ati'; Tib. ~ 'Dzogchen'):

Also the highest yana (a Tibetan expression for vehicle) of the nine yantras taught in Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism – the oldest among the four major sects. It is considered the ultimate teaching of the vajrayana path. The commonly used term is now Dzogchen.

Bhikshuni (Skt.):

A female ordained member of the Sangha. Bhikshu is the male ordained member.

Bön (Tib.):

The pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet.

Buddhadharma:

The teachings of the Buddha.

Buddha Manjushri:

The Buddha that embodies the transcendent wisdom of all Buddhas. He is generally portrayed as wielding a flaming sword in his right hand which symbolizes the cutting of ignorance and duality. The Prajnaparamita scripture supported by the lotus held in his left hand represents his ultimate realization of nonduality.

Dakinis (Skt.; Tib. ~ 'Khandro'):

The Tibetan equivalent means one who moves through the sky. It is also poetically coined as 'sky dancer' or 'sky walker'. In Tibetan Buddhism, a dakini is a tantric deity that is referred as the female embodiment of enlightened energy. There are also enlightened and unenlightened dakinis, including the different types which are the wisdom dakinis, activity dakinis and mundane dakinis. In this case, it is unsure of the type of dakinis that the saint was dealing with at the charnel grounds.

Dependent Origination:

One of the principal teachings taught by Buddha Shakyamuni that refers to the interdependence of phenomena. Simply put, all phenomena cannot exist

independently without the confluence of various causes and conditions.

Dharmadhatu (Skt.):

Realm of phenomena, or some might call it ‘one taste’. It is the essence of all phenomena, the totality of dharma or the very nature of the mind.

Dharmakaya (Skt.):

One of the three bodies (trikaya) of a Buddha which means ‘Truth Body’. This is the mind realm where all buddhas arise and dissolve. The other two are Sambhogakaya (enjoyment body) and Nirmanakaya (manifested body).

Great Seal:

It is referred in Sanskrit as ‘Mahamudra’, which is the highest attainment of anuttarayoga – the highest of the four tantric yantras.

Hinayana (Skt. ~ ‘lesser or small vehicle’):

Another name is Theravada; mostly found in Thai, Burmese and Sri Lankan traditions. It mainly consists of gaining insights into the four noble truths and the nature of phenomena. The ideal state of the Hinayana practitioner is the attainment of arhathood – liberation from cyclic existence.

Karma (Skt.):

Cosmic law of Cause and effect.

Kilaya (Skt.; Tib. ~ ‘Phur-Ba’):

A three-sided sacred ritual implement that is used in tantric rituals.

King Ashoka:

An Indian emperor of the Maurya Dynasty from ca. 269 BC to 232 BC. As a strong believer in non-violence, the exemplary ruler had played a critical role in spreading Buddhism during his time.

Kingdom of Zahor:

An ancient kingdom that is said to be located near the present-day Mandi in Himachal Pradesh, northern India.

Mahayana (Skt. ~ ‘Great Vehicle’):

Commonly found in Japan, Korea, China, Tibet and Mongolia Buddhism. This tradition is also taking root in the West. A practitioner in this tradition acknowledges the Buddha nature within, practices great compassion and shunyata meditation – emptiness. He or she engages in the path of bodhisattva (cultivation of relative and absolute bodhichitta – awakened mind or heart) and vows to

liberate all sentient beings through the attainment of buddhahood.

Mani wheels (Skt. ~ 'Jewel'):

Cylinders containing or inscribed with prayers or litanies that are revolved on its axis in devotions, especially by Tibetan Buddhists.

Nirmanakaya (Skt.):

Manifested body of a Buddha in a human form.

Padma (Skt. ~ 'Lotus'):

Another name or aspect of Guru Rinpoche in this context.

Padmakara (Skt. ~ 'Lotus-Born'):

See **Padma**.

Pujas (Skt.):

Religious rituals.

Pundit:

A learned scholar.

Rinpoche (Tib. ~ 'Precious One'):

An honorific title that is given to highly revered masters in Tibetan Buddhism.

Rakshas (Skt.):

A class of mythical evil demons or spirits.

Sadhanas (Skt.):

Spiritual practices that consist of pith instructions, guided meditations/visualizations and mantra recitations.

Samantabhadra (Skt.):

This deity is considered by vajrayana Buddhists in the Nyingma School as a primordial Buddha that is in indivisible *yab-yum* (communion) union with his consort Samantabhadri. He represents the skillful means aspect.

Samantabhadri (Skt.):

Also regarded as a primordial female Buddha that is the consort of Samantabhadra. She represents the wisdom aspect.

Samsara (Skt.):

The eternal cycle of birth and death (also cyclic existence) through the six realms of existence found in Buddhist scriptures: Gods, demi-gods, human beings, animals, hell beings, hungry ghost. In comparison, the human realm is said to have the most potential in attaining supreme awakening.

Sangha (Skt.):

A monastic community of ordained Buddhist monks and nuns.

Siddha (Skt.):

An enlightened master or guru, particularly in the Tantric tradition.

Siddhis (Skt.):

It can be translated as attainments or accomplishments.

Stupas (Skt.):

Dome-shaped monuments that are used to house precious relics of Buddha and past masters for veneration.

Sutras (Skt.; Pali. ~ 'Sutta'):

A broad term would be texts, and in this case, they are referring to Buddhist scriptures in particular.

Tantra (Skt. ~ 'Continuity'):

It is referred to the root texts of the vajrayana tradition.

Ten Virtuous Actions:

They involve the abandonment of 1) Killing of any living being 2) Stealing 3) Sexual misconduct 4)

Lying 5) Divisive speech 6) Harsh speech 7) Idle gossip 8) Covetousness 9) Malice 10) Wrong views

Tertons (Tib. ~ 'Treasure Revealers'):

Buddhist masters that are prophesized to retrieve the hidden terma teachings in their lifetimes. Tsikey Chokling Rinpoche (Vajra King of Ka-Nying Shedrub Ling monastery in Kathmandu, Nepal) and Sogyal Rinpoche (Founder and spiritual director of Rigpa) are among the notable ones in our recent time.

Tirthikas (Skt.):

Non-adherents to Buddhist philosophies or religions.

Triple Gem:

Also known as Three Jewels or Three Refuges, it is a collective term that refers to the Buddha (Historical Buddha Shakyamuni), Dharma (His teachings) and Sangha (Buddhist monastic community) that Buddhists take refuge in.

Tsog (Tib. ~ 'Tsok Kyi Khorlo'):

Literally means 'wheel of accumulation'. This practice helps to swiftly gather the two accumulations (merit and wisdom) and purification.

Vajrayana (Skt. ~ ‘Diamond’ or ‘Indestructible Vehicle’):

Also known as Tantric Buddhism. It is synonymous with tantra and is said to enable a practitioner to attain supreme enlightenment within one lifetime.

Vidyadhara (Skt.):

A title given to a vajrayana teacher, which also means a holder of wisdom or crazy-wisdom holder.

Vinaya (Skt. ~ ‘Discipline’ or ‘Education’):

The regulatory framework for the monastic community.

Vishuddha Heruka (Skt.):

A wrathful male tantric deity that represents the indivisible bliss and emptiness.

Yogi (Skt.):

A term for a practitioner of different classes of yoga in Buddhist and Hindu traditions.



Notes:



1. A highly accomplished Buddhist scholar, Geshe Lharam Tsewang Dorje is currently our temple’s Resident Geshe. He is also at the helm of the Ngari Institute of Buddhist Dialectics in Ladakh, India. The term ‘Geshe’ means ‘virtuous friend’ and is the modern equivalent of a PhD in Buddhist studies.
2. *A Great Treasure of Blessings: A Book of Prayers to Guru Rinpoche* (Published by Dharmakosha for Rigpa, 2004), pp.43, 414.
3. The thirty-two major marks are the physical attributes of a Buddha’s body, whereas the eighty minor marks are detailed descriptions of His bodily features. Although it is said that a Chakravartin king possesses these physical qualities (32 signs of a Great Man), the king is certainly unable to simultaneously emanate an infinite number of enlightening bodies as a fully enlightened Buddha does. For a detailed explanation, the readers can refer to the book by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey & Alexander Berzin, *An Anthology of Well-Spoken Advice, Vol. 1. Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, 1982.*

4. The wheel represents the teachings of Buddha; thus the act of turning it is to expound the dharma. It also signifies the endless cycle of samsara, which can only be released by means of the Buddha's teachings. The first turning of the wheel by Buddha happened at the Deer Park in Sarnath. The eight spokes of the wheel symbolize the Noble Eightfold Path: *Right View, Right Aspiration, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration.*
5. Jamgon Kongtrul the First, *A Short Biography of Padmasambhava* that was included in *Dakini Teachings*, p.xxii.
6. Sogyal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, 10th anniversary edition, eds. Patrick Gaffney & Andrew Harvey (Rider Publications 2002).
7. *Dakini Teachings: A Collection of Padmasambhava's Advice to the Dakini Yeshe Tsogyal*, tr. Erik Pema Kunsang (Rupa.Co. Publications, 2007), p.135.
8. Geshe Thubten Acharya Loden, *Path to Enlightenment in Tibetan Buddhism* (Tushita Publications), p.95.

Further Recommendations:



A Great Treasure of Blessings: A Book of Prayers to Guru Rinpoche (Published by Dharmakosha for Rigpa, 2004).

Ngawang Zangpo, *Guru Rinpoche: His Life and Times* (Snow Lion Publications).

Dakini Teachings: A Collection of Padmasambhava's Advice to the Dakini Yeshe Tsogyal, tr. Erik Pema Kunsang (Rupa.Co. Publications, 2007).

Jamgon Mipham, *White Lotus: An Explanation of the Seven-Line Prayer to Guru Padmasambhava* (Shambhala Publications).



About the Author



Lama Thubten Namdrol Dorje Tulku began studying Buddhism at the age of seven to fourteen from a Thai monk, Venerable PhraMahathongkum. A year before Venerable PhraMahathongkum's death on 8th August 1988, he predicted that in this life, Lama's teachers would be monks in red robes. Back then, Tibetan Buddhism was not as widespread as it is today, and the idea of monks in red robes' was quite foreign. For the next two years, Lama studied Chinese Mahayana Buddhism in Ampang, Kuala Lumpur. During this time, he learnt the essence of Mahayana Buddhism as interpreted in different cultures.

In 1989, at the age of fifteen, a Buddhist master appeared in Lama's dreams and instructed him to fulfill the vows of his previous life which was to teach those who did not have teachers. Following the instructions in his dreams, he was brought to Nepal by Venerable Sangye Khandro. Upon his arrival, Lama first met Chobgye Trinchen Rinpoche in Swayambhunath (aka Monkey Temple) and made light offerings at the temple. At that time, Rinpoche said to him, "We have been waiting for you."

It was later revealed that the Buddhist master who had first appeared in Lama's dreams was in fact the great Buddhist saint, Guru Rinpoche.

At Kopan Monastery in Nepal, Lama met the late Khensur

Rinpoche Geshe Lama Lhundrup Rigsel (previous abbot of Kopan Monastery) and Geshe Lama Konchog, both of whom became his root gurus. Together with other monks in Kopan, Lama studied from Geshe Lama Lhundrup, who taught him philosophy and tenets of the Gelugpa tradition and Geshe Lama Konchog, who taught him tantric practices and impressed upon him the importance of actual dharma practice over rituals. Lama Zopa Rinpoche is also one of his teachers who kindly refer to Lama as "Rinpoche" even though he has no interests in being officially recognized as a tulku, or reincarnate Lama, instead preferring to focus his attention on propagating the Buddhadharma to benefit all sentient beings.

Earlier on, Lama was advised by his Gurus that he could benefit more people if he did not take monastic vows and remain as a lay practitioner. So he was ordained as a Ngakpa (lay) Lama and is now married. Trained as a chef and owner of a popular restaurant, Lama was advised by his Gurus in 1998 to give up the business and instead focus on spreading the dharma. Geshe Lama Konchog also entrusted him with the task of setting up a Tibetan lay monastery of the Gelugpa tradition with the mission to change the existing mindset of people – that one needs to be a monk or nun to practice Buddhism.

Heeding his Gurus' advice, Lama closed his restaurant business and in 2001, formally registered the temple "Thekchen Choling"; a name meaning Mahayana Buddhist Temple, which was bestowed by Geshe Lama Konchog.

As a lay Lama, his personal life experiences allow him to relate and offer incisive insights to those who seek his counsel for problems they encounter in their daily lives. Behind Lama's unassuming demeanor is a highly accomplished lay practitioner who is well-versed with the three vehicles of Buddhism – the Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana.

While remaining true to the traditional teachings of Buddhism, Lama is very modern in his outlook. He teaches the Buddhadharma in English and Chinese, not just by scholarly discourse but by turning everyday experiences into Dharma exercises, transforming minds and making this age-old spiritual tradition come alive. It remains his objective to educate all people who seek to study and practice with him on the dynamism of Buddhism and its relevance to modern day living.

Today, Lama serves as the resident Spiritual Director of Thekchen Choling (Singapore).

Also by Lama Thubten Namdrol Dorje Tulku

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*May the blessings of the Triple Gem
be with them always.*

About **Thekchen Choling (Singapore)** -The Paradise of Dharma

Vision: Connecting All With Divine Hearts

*Mission: Living the Buddhadharma for the enrichment
and fulfillment of self and others*

Singapore-born Lama Thubten Namdrol Dorje Tulku founded Thekchen Choling (Singapore) (TCCL) in 2001 as instructed by his late teacher H.E. Geshe Lama Konchog, who has reincarnated as Tulku Tenzin Phuntsok Rinpoche of Kopan Monastery, Nepal. Although we are of the Gelug tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, we practice non-sectarianism, embracing all schools of Buddhism as a reminder of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha's compassion and skilful means to reach out to all beings through his 84,000 teachings. As such, Lama Dorje strongly advocates students to have a strong foundation and understanding of Theravada teachings and practices even as they embark on the Mahayana path.

We are the first Vajrayana Buddhist temple in Singapore to open 24hrs everyday to allow easy access to all who seek refuge. The main hall is open to all who seek a place of quiet for prayers and meditation at any time of the day. Precious relics of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha, his disciples, and past teachers are also on display.

As a healing temple, we provide free TCM consultation services and medicine as well as alternative healing such as Reiki. We also provide social outreach programmes which includes free medicine distribution, free meals, and financial support for the poor and elderly as well as free tuition for children. In addition to the above, we have raised funds to help

the third world countries to build schools and hostels. This initiative is to provide education opportunities for the children to help them break out of the poverty cycle in hope of a better future.

In near future, Thekchen Choling hope to establish Paradise of Dharma overseas in order to let more people enjoy the flavour of Dharma!

Weekly Dharma Teachings

Regular weekly dharma teachings at 8pm in Mandarin and English (Thursdays and Fridays respectively), are conducted to help students apply and integrate Buddhism into their daily lives to achieve happiness for self and others. We also conduct regular weekly meditation classes, basic Buddhism Classes and so on.

Children and Youth - Dharma Education

For children, we conduct programmes that are holistic, fun and interesting. They learn universal humanitarian values so that they can grow into socially responsible and compassionate people. Our Youth development programmes groom youth to be courageous, caring and socially responsible. They are designed to help in the overall development of youth, targeting self-awareness development, social skills enhancement and community outreach participation.

Our Regular Events and Festivals

We celebrate five annual events, namely Lunar New Year, Qing Ming Festival, Vesak Day, Ullambana Festival and Healing Festival of Medicine

Buddha. During these events, we hold prayer sessions and rituals to enable auspicious conditions to arise for the living and the deceased. Purification practices are also held.

The following services are also available:

- 1) Blessings and prayers for individuals, home and the office in both Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhist and Chinese Mahayana traditions
- 2) Wedding solemnizations
- 3) Astrology services
- 4) Funeral services
- 5) Personal consultations with Lama Thubten Namdrol Dorje Tulku.

Community Outreach - Support Services for the Elderly and Needy

Project Maude is a ration distribution project held 3 times a year to help the elderly and needy during Lunar New Year, Vesak Day and Mid Autumn Festival. On each occasion we support more than 1,000 families island wide. This is made possible through the kindness of our sponsors and volunteers. At times, we extend a helping hand to those who suffer losses due to natural disasters in other countries.

Community Outreach – Tuition cum Education Services

“TEACH & REACH” is a free tuition programme that supports students from needy families in the Lavender and Jalan Besar neighbourhoods. Students not only receive tuition but also outdoor enrichment programmes, such as sporting events, museum visits to broaden their horizon.

Community Outreach - Healing Services

We are developing ways to provide effective health care services especially for the needy. Healing services consist of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), Acupuncture and Reiki Healing sessions held at the temple. Future plans include a western medical health clinic, mobile TCM clinics etc.

Dharma Propagation

Thekchen Choling makes Buddhadharma easily available in English and Mandarin, in a manner that is easily understood and highly applicable to daily life. We provide free dharma educational materials and sutras in various media forms such as printed books, audio books.

For more information, please contact:

Thekchen Choling (Singapore)

Address: No 2 Beatty Lane Singapore 209945

Tel: +65 6466 3720 Fax: +65 6465 6736

Email: contactus@thekchencholing.org

Website: www.thekchencholing.org



Calendar of Regular Programmes

Dharma Activities:

- Every Monday @ 8pm “Chinese Chanting Practice”
- Every 2nd Saturday of the month @ 5pm “Guru Puja”
- Every day @ 5:30pm Ceremonial Tea Offering to Dharma Protector Puja (For purifying obstacle & spirit harms)”
- Every 1st day of the lunar month @ 11am “Food Offering to Buddha & Recitation of Lotus Sutra (Chi)”
- Every 15th day of the lunar month @ 11am “Food Offering to Buddha & Recitation of Diamond Sutra(Chi)”

Dharma Teachings:

- Every Thursday @ 8pm (Mandarin)
- Every Friday @ 8pm (English)

1st & 15th day of the Lunar month , Buddha & Boddhisattva’s Birthday:

- Free Veg. Lunch @ 12:30pm

** Above activities are subject to changes.*

Community Outreach Services:

- Every Thursday & Every 2nd, 3rd, 4th & 5th Sunday @ 7:30pm
“Free TCM Consultation & Acupuncture Service”
- Every Sunday @ 2pm-4pm “Free Reiki Session”
- For “Consultation with Lama”, Please contact us at 6466 3720

**All community outreach services not available during the first 15 days of Chinese New Year.*



Donation Form

I, _____, wish to make an offering for
(please indicate amount against each item) .You can donate for
more than one item.

_____ Dharma Propagation (Printing of dharma text,
sutras, cards, prayers etc)

_____ Temple Operations

_____ Community Outreach Services

Donation Method:

*Please tick any of the below. Mail this form to us at Thekchen Choling
(Singapore), No. 2 Beatty Lane, Singapore 209945*

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Bank: OCBC

Account Number: 518-720909-001

Cheque* Amount: _____

Cheque No: _____

** Please make your cheque payable to
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Name : _____

Mailing Address: _____

Contact Number: _____

Email: _____

Are you on our mailing list?

Yes

No

Would you like to be on our mailing list?

Yes

No

For Office Use: _____

Receipt No: _____ Date: _____

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OUR SINCERE AND HEARTFELT THANKS

FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!

MAY ALL YOUR GOOD WISHES BE FULFILLED!