My I strive for the perfection of enlightenment.

Pabongka Rinpoche

Pabongka Rinpoche (Tibetan: རྒྱ་བོང་ཀ་; Wylie: Pha-bong-kha; also spelt Phabongkha), Jampa Tenzin Trinlay Gyatso, (1878-1941) was one of the great Gelug lamas of the modern era of Tibetan Buddhism. He attained his Geshe degree at Sera Monastic University, Lhasa, and became a highly influential teacher in Tibet, unusual for teaching a great number of lay people. He was the root Lama of both Kyabje Ling Rinpoche and Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche, the two tutors of the present Dalai Lama, and the teacher of most of the other Gelug Lamas who have been bringing the Dharma to the West since they fled Tibet in 1959. Pabongka was offered the regency of the present Dalai Lama but declined the request because "he strongly disliked political affairs."

Early life.

Pabongka Rinpoche was born in 1878, at a town called Tsawa Li in the Yeru Shang district of the state of Tsang, north of Lhasa in Tibet.

According to Ribur Rinpoche, one of Je Phabongkhapa's main disciples: "Lord Pabongka Vajradhara Dechen Nyingpo Pal Zangpo was born north of Lhasa in 1878. His father was a minor official but the family was not wealthy. Although the night was dark, a light shone in the room, and people outside the house had a vision of a protector on the roof.

As a child he was alleged to exhibit unusual qualities and in his seventh year was taken before Sharpa Chuje Lobsang Dargye, one of the leading religious figures of the day, who "felt sure that the boy must be a reincarnated saint" and foretold that if the child were placed in the Gyalrong House of Sera Mey Monastery, something "wonderful would happen with him in the future." Later on, he was found to be the reincarnation of the Changkya line, which included the well-known scholar Changkya Rolpay Dorje (1717-1786 AD). The Lamas of this line had done much teaching in the regions of Mongolia and China, including in the court of the Chinese emperor himself, and so the name "Changkya" had strong Chinese connotations. As the Tibetan government and people were..."
Pabongka received his formal spiritual education at Sera Mey Monastery. At first he was very poor and not famous. He studied hard to be a Geshe, meditated and gave empowerments. Pabongka studied with Jaba Sonpo Rinpoche; however his root Guru or Spiritual Guide was Dagpo Lama Rinpoche (sometimes spelt Tagpo or Thagpo).

Ribur Rinpoche described how Je Phabongkha met his root Guru: *“His root guru was Dagpo Lama Rinpoche Jampael Lhuendrub Gyatso, from Lhoka. He was definitely a bodhisattva, and Pabongka Rinpoche was his foremost disciple. He lived in a cave in Pasang and his main practice was bodhichitta; his main deity was Avalokiteshvara and he would recite 50,000 manis [the mantra, om mani padme hum] every night. When Kyabje Pabongka first met Dagpo Rinpoche at a tsog offering ceremony in Lhasa, he cried out of reverence from beginning to end."

Je Phabongkha was a keen teacher and emphasized Lamrim, Lojong and Mahamudra. When he had finished his studies at Sera Monastery, he visited Dagpo Lama Rinpoche in his cave and was sent into a Lamrim retreat nearby. According to Ribur Rinpoche: "Dagpo Lama Rinpoche would teach him a Lam-rim topic and then Pabongka Rinpoche would go away and meditate on it. Later he would return to explain what he had understood. If he had gained some realization, Dagpo Lama Rinpoche would teach him some more and Pabongka Rinpoche would go back and meditate on that. It went on like this for ten years.

Pabongka Rinpoche was a renunciate and eschewed worldly attainments and politics. His faithful attendant once demolished the small old building inhabited by Pabongka Rinpoche while he was on a long tour, and constructed in its place a large ornate residence rivaling the private quarters of the Dalai Lama. When Pabongka Rinpoche returned he was not pleased and said, "I am only a minor hermit Lama and you should not have built something like this for me. I am not famous and the essence of what I teach is renunciation of the worldly life. Therefore I am embarrassed by rooms like these."

According to Ribur Rinpoche, Je Phabongkha was always gentle and never got angry: "Any anger had been completely pacified by his bodhichitta." Even when long lines of people were waiting for blessings, he would ask each one individually how they were and tap them on the head. Sometimes he dispensed medicine.

His two main spiritual qualities according to his disciples were, from the Tantric point of view, his realization and ability to present Heruka, and from the Sutra point of view, his ability to teach Lamrim. He attributed all his qualities to his own Spiritual Guide, showing him deference throughout his life. Whenever he visited his Spiritual Guide’s monastery, he would dismount as soon as it appeared in view and prostrate all the way to the door and when he left he would walk backwards until it was out of sight.

Pabongka Rinpoche’s full name was Kyabje Pabongkapa Jetsun Jampa Tenzin Trinley Gyatso Pel Sangpo, which translates as the Lord Protector, the one from Pabongka, the venerable and glorious Master whose name is the Loving One, Keeper of the Buddha’s Teachings, Ocean of the Mighty Deeds of the Buddha. He is also popularly known as his name means “Essence of Great Bliss” and refers to his mastery of the secret teachings of Buddhism.

As a Buddhist Teacher

After his graduation from Sera Mey with the attainment of a Geshe degree, Pabongka Rinpoche had great success in his teaching tours through the countryside outside the capital Lhasa, and his fame started to spread. With his great skill as a public teacher, he gradually began to build up a large following, his teachings bringing as many as 10,000 students. These included lay people from all over Tibet, which broke with the long-held tradition of only teaching to those ordained as monks.

Pabongka Rinpoche was the first Gelug teacher who taught lay persons outside the monasteries and became very influential. In his memoir of his root Guru, Ribur Rinpoche said:

When he taught he would sit for up to eight hours without moving. About two thousand people would come to his general discourses and initiations and fewer to special teachings, but when he gave Bodhisattva vows, up to ten thousand people would show up.

The Lharampa Geshe Khen Rinpoche described attending Pabongka Rinpoche’s teachings thus:

> His voice was incredibly powerful. On many occasions he would address gatherings of many thousands of people, yet everyone could hear him clearly (in those days in Tibet we had never heard of microphones or loudspeakers)... Pabongka Rinpoche had an uncanny ability to relate to his audience, and for this reason he became a teacher for the common man as well as for us monks. The Rinpoche’s great accomplishment was that he found a way to attract and lead listeners of every level. His most famous weapon was his humor. Public discourses in Tibet could sometimes go on for ten hours or more without a break, and only a great saint could keep his attention up so long. Inevitably part of the audience would start to nod, or fall into some reverie. Then Pabongka Rinpoche would suddenly relate an amusing story or joke with a useful moral, and send his listeners into peals of laughter. This would startle the day-dreamers, who were always looking around and asking their neighbors to repeat the joke to them.

In Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand, Trijang Rinpoche says he attempted to convey the “extraordinary” qualities of Je Phabongkha’s teachings, which he described:

Each part of the teaching was enriched by instructions taken from the confidential oral lineages. Each section was illustrated by analogies, conclusive formal logic, amazing stories, and trustworthy quotations. The teaching could easily be understood by beginners, and yet was tailored for all levels of intelligence. It was beneficial for the mind because it was an invasion. Sometimes we were moved to laughter, because wise people did not die, and
Je Pabongkhapa apparently had an ability to reach even those of the higher echelons of society who were not much interested in Dharma. For example, Dapon Tsago, a member of the nobility who held a powerful position equivalent to Minister of Defense, once attended a public teaching “not to hear the Dharma but rather to put in an appearance” as Jetsun Khen Rinpoche describes it:

So one day this great general marches in to the hall, decked out in silk, his long hair flowing in carefully tailored locks (this was considered manly and high fashion in old Tibet)... A great ceremonial sword hung from his belt, clanging importantly as he swaggered in. By the end of the first section of the teaching he was seen leaving the hall quietly, deep in thought... He had wrapped his weapon of war in a cloth to hide it, and was taking it home. Later on we could see he had actually trimmed off his warrior’s locks, and finally one day he threw himself before the Rinpoche and asked to be granted the special lifetime religious vows for laymen. Thereafter he always followed Pabongka Rinpoche around, to every public teaching he gave.

According to the Western monk Helmut Gassner, the Dalai Lama’s translator for 17 years:

It is said that when Pabongka Rinpoche gave Dharma discourses many in the audience gained profound insights into the failings of our worldly concerns to develop the lasting determination to exchange the constant quest for honor, praise, well-being and gain with sincere aspiration, kindness and concern for others. This unusual ability to teach is not an integral part of Tibetan culture. It is rather at the heart of the living transmission of the teachings of the historical Buddha from one great master to the next. It is, first and foremost, an oral transmission: the master teaches his gifted disciple continuously until the transmitted knowledge becomes the student’s second nature.

Due to his skill as a Buddhist master, the thirteenth Dalai Lama requested Kyabje Phabongka to give the yearly Lamrim teachings in 1925, instead of asking the Ganden throneholder (Ganden Tripa) as was customary. Usually these teachings lasted seven days, but these lasted for eleven days.

Je Pabongkhapa had a profound and far-reaching influence on the Gelug tradition:

Pabongka Rinpoche was probably the most influential Gelug lama of this century, holding all the important lineages of sutra and tantra and passing them on to most of the important Gelug lamas of the next two generations; the list of his oral discourses is vast in depth and breadth. He was also the root guru of the Kyabje Ling Rinpoche (1903-83), Senior Tutor of the Dalai Lama, Trijang Rinpoche, and many other highly respected teachers. His collected works occupy fifteen large volumes and over every aspect of Buddhism. If you have ever received a teaching from a Gelug lama, you have been influenced by Pabongka Rinpoche.

His foremost disciple, Trijang Rinpoche, praises his teacher highly in Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand, including:

> Our childish minds were unfit vessels for so vast an ocean of teachings, so precious a source of qualities. How sad if these teachings were forgotten!

In Geshe Ngawang Dhargeyey’s commentary to the Wheel of Sharp Weapons, he says:

> Likewise, Lama Trijang Dorje Chang, Junior Tutor to His Holiness the present Dalai Lama, folds his hands upon the crown of his head whenever he mentions Kyabje Pa-bongkha Rinpoche. He was such a great lama, unsurpassed by any, that hardly any lamas or geshes of the Three Pillars (the monasteries of Ganden, Sera and Drepung) had not been his disciples.

**As a Buddhist author**

In 1921 at Chuzang Hermitage near Lhasa, Pabongka Rinpoche gave a historic 24-day exposition on the Lam Rim, or “stages of the path,” that was attended by some seven hundred people. Many monks came from the three major monasteries in Lhasa, and many more travelled weeks from the Central Province, from Tsang, and from as far away as Amdo and Kham. This included about 30 lamas and reincarnations of lamas. There were also many lay people present.

The teachings covered every topic in the progressive stages to attain enlightenment. These teachings were transcribed and edited by one of his main students, Trijang Rinpoche, who later became the Junior Tutor of the 14th Dalai Lama. Trijang Rinpoche explains the good qualities of the Lamrim teachings given by his root Guru and then explains how the idea of the book came to him:

> How could I possibly convey all this on paper! Yet what a pity if all the key points contained in these inspiring instructions were lost. This thought gave me the courage to write this book. As my precious guru later advised me, “Some of the people present could not follow the teaching. I am afraid I do not trust all the notes people took during the classes. I therefore ask you to publish a book. Put in it anything you feel sure of.” In this book I have accurately recorded my lama’s teachings in the hope that this substitute for his speech will be beneficial to my friends who wish to succeed in their practice.

Published in Tibetan in 1958, these teachings were eventually translated into English and published as Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand (Tib. rNam grol lag bcangs) in 1991. This book forms the basis of most Gelug teachers’ Lam Rim presentations, including those of the FPMT and of Geshe Kelsang Gyatso’s acclaimed Lam Rim text Joyful Path of Good Fortune.

Kyabje Pabongka also wrote many other books. His collected works occupy fifteen large volumes and cover every aspect of Buddhism[24] These texts provide explanations on sadhanas, chanting, how to make tormas and myriad other subjects. Among these texts, is a Dorje Shugden practice which includes the empowerment[25] and the sadhana of the female Buddha Vajrayogini, based on the Heruka Root Tantra. Both of these texts are widely used in the Gelugpa tradition today.
Monastery offered him a large retreat complex on the hillside above Pabongka, called Tashi Chuling, or Dakpo Gompa, where he allegedly attained enlightenment. When his fame grew, Ngakpa College of Sera Chakrasamvara, as are his disciples.

Je Phabongkhapa had many disciples, including the most famous Gelugpa Lamas of the twentieth century, who consider him to be a source of uncommon inspiration. Rilbur Rinpoche, for example, was held and tortured by the Chinese for two decades and famously said: "By all accounts he emerged from his trials with a heart full of love and forgiveness and, when asked how, he replied that it was due to the blessings and teachings of his root Lama Kyabje Pabongka Rinpoche."

According to Kyabje Zong Rinpoche, a highly regarded Lharampa Geshe, Je Phabongkhapa was considered an emanation of the Highest Yoga Tantra Deity, Buddha Heruka. He explains how 32 reincarnate Lamas, including his own teacher Tapu Dorje Chang, attended his Lamrim teachings in Lhasa:

Tapu Dorje Chang could hear statues of Avalokiteshvara and Tara speak, and saw visions of multi-armed Yidams (Deities). Once Kyabje Phabongka invoked the wisdom beings of Heruka's mandala to enter into a statue of Heruka Chakrasambhara. Heruka then offered nectar to Kyabje Phabongka, and prophesied that seven generations of his disciples would be protected by the body mandala of Heruka. Kyabje Trijang Dorje Chang is cared for by Heruka Chakrasambhara, as are his disciples.

Geshe Kelsang Gyatso also describes Je Phabongkhapa as an emanation of Buddha Heruka. Geshe Ngawang Dhargye gives an account of his mastery of the practice in his commentary to Wheel of Sharp Weapons:

Once, in the cave-under-water, he experienced a manifestation of Yamantaka for nine days, while he himself was essentially Heruka Chakrasambhara. Further, he experienced a manifestation of Vajra Yogini who told him of the benefits to be derived from merging the Vajra Yogini teachings of the Sakya and Gelug traditions into one mediational practice. When he once made a great (tsog) offering beside a Heruka statue in Lhasa, the wisdom body actually entered into the statue. The statue danced and told him that whoever received Heruka initiation from him up to the seventh generator would be taken to the dakini realms.

Je Phabongkhapa's most famous disciples were Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche and Kyabje Ling Rinpoche because they were the main teachers of the 14th Dalai Lama, who considered Trijang Rinpoche to be his root Guru. Kyabje Zong Rinpoche explains:

Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche and Kyabje Ling Rinpoche were tutors to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. They taught His Holiness everything from basic teachings to advanced levels. Kyabje Phabongka passed all of his lineages to Kyabje Trijang Dorje Chang. He often said this in discourses. The purpose of this detailed exposition is to affirm the power of the lineage. If we lose faith in the lineage, we are lost.[33]

In addition to Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche and Kyabje Ling Rinpoche, Je Phabongka had two other main disciples. They were Khangsar Rinpoche and Tathag Rinpoche. Tathag Rinpoche was the main teacher of His Holiness the Dalai Lama the 14th Dalai Lama when he was a child and gave him his novice ordination. Khangsar Rinpoche's Chinese disciple, Master Nan Hai, started a Buddhist movement in China that survived till the present day despite political changes in Communist China, with tens of thousands of spiritual descendants and over a hundred monasteries and nunneries throughout China.

Other spiritual activities

Also known as Trinlay Gyatso, Je Pabongka held the lineage of the Tantric Deity Heruka. According to Geshe Kelsang Gyatso: "This great Lama was like the sun of Dharma, illuminating the hidden meaning of both Sutra and Secret Mantra (Tantra). He passed the Mahamudra lineage to his heart Son, Yongdzin Trijang Dorjechang.

Lama Zopa of the FPMT praised the enlightened qualities of Je Phabongkhapa (Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo):

My root guru, His Holiness Trijang Rinpoche; Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo, His Holiness the Dalai Lamaâ€™s guruâ€”His root guru; His Holiness Zong Rinpoche, from whom many of the older students received the initiation of Shugden; and the previous incarnation of Gomo Rinpoche, who has a strong connection with Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa, here in Italy, all promoted the practice of Shugden. They were all aspects of the Dharmakaya.

His work and retreat schedule

Je Phabongkhapa's primary residence was first the small monastery atop the Pabongka rock (see picture), called Dakpo Gompa, where he allegedly attained enlightenment. When his fame grew, Ngakpa College of Sera Chakrasamvara, where he allegedly attained enlightenment. When his fame grew, Ngakpa College of Sera
biographies of Kyabje Phabongka that make his realized qualities very clear. The jealousy of ordinary beings has made it difficult to become aware of his tremendous qualities. There are many misbehaviors that have been said to be his, such as the claims of one of his Gelugpa disciples that he was a persecutor of the Nyingma. However, most Gelug Lamas strongly dispute allegations against Pabongka's supposed wrong-doing. Some say that Je Phabongkha's popularity made others jealous, serving as the basis of many rumors of sectarianism.

Position on politics and religion

When the regency of the 14th Dalai Lama was offered to Pabongka Rinpoche, he declined because the regent was offering to give him the worldly dharma, not a true religious position. According to Goldstein, Pabongka was quite well known for saying that “lamas should not become involved in politics.”

Position on other Tibetan Buddhist schools

Although he was a Gelugpa Lama, Je Phabongkha respected the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism and discouraged sectarianism. In Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand, he said:

Abandoning Dharma is, in the final analysis, disparaging the Hinayan school because of the Mahayan school; favoring the Hinayana on account of the Mahayana; playing off sutra against tantra; playing off the classes of the tantras against each other; favoring one of the Tibetan schools; disparaging the rest; and so on. In other words, we abandon Dharma any time we favor our own tenets and disparage the rest.

Je Phabongkha also said that Padmasambhava (the founder of the Nyingma school), Je Tsongkhapa, Atisha, and Buddha Shakyamuni were all one holy being, not four separate mental continuums.

Pabongka Rinpoche was at times at odds with the 13th Dalai Lama over Pabongka's supposed antagonism toward the Nyingma lineage. His advocacy of the Dorje Shugden Protector practice is also now criticized by some in the Tibetan Buddhist world. Von Bruck, however, says that Pabongka's Shugden text “does not say that only Gelukpa teaching leads to liberation, but calls Tsongkhapa's teaching the highest and the essence of all teachings. But this is traditional parlance and not an exaggerated exclusivity.”

According to academic David Kay, in an account that has been much disputed by Gelugpa scholars: “As the Gelug agent of the Tibetan government in Kham (Khamas) (Eastern Tibet), and in response to the Rimed movement that had originated and was flowering in that region, Phabongkha and his disciples employed repressive measures against non-Gelug sects. Religious artifacts associated with Padmasambhava â€œwho is revered as a "second Buddha" by Nyingma practitioners â€œwere destroyed, and non-Gelug, and particularly Nyingma, monasteries were forcibly converted to the Gelug position. A key element of Phabongkha's outlook was the cult of the protective deity Dorje Shugden, which he married to the idea of Gelug exclusivism and employed against other traditions as well as against those within the Gelug who had eclectic tendencies.

According to Kay, "His teaching tour of Kham in 1938 was a seminal phase, leading to a hardening of his exclusivism and the adoption of a militantly sectarian stance. In reaction to the flourishing Rimed movement and the perceived decline of Gelug monasteries in that region, Phabongkha and his disciples spearheaded a revival movement, promoting the supremacy of the Gelug as the only pure tradition."[44] Buddhist scholar Matthew Kapstein echoes these remarks, writing, "There has been a great deal of sectarian dispute among Tibetan refugees in India. Much of this has its roots in the works of Pha-bong-kha-pa Bde-chen nying-po (1878-1937), whose visions of the Dge-legs-pa protective deity Rdo-ri shugs-ltan seem to have entailed a commitment to oppose actively the other schools of Tibetan Buddhism and the Bon-po.[45]

However, most Gelug Lamas strongly dispute allegations against Pabongka's supposed wrong-doing. Some say that Je Phabongkha's popularity made others jealous, serving as the basis of many rumors of sectarianism on his part against other Tibetan Buddhist schools. Responding to this allegation, Lama Zopa of the FPMT has said that criticism of Pabongka "because he practiced Shugden, making him out to be some kind of demon" is misplaced because he:

"wrote incredible teachings on sutra and tantra; on Heruka, Tara Cittamani and many other topics. All these amazing teachings were written purely from his experience. So itâ€™s impossible that he can really be some kind of evil being, as those extremists accuse him of being. Thereâ€™s no way he could have done the negative things they say he did.

Regarding Kopan Monastery giving up Dorje Shugden practice, Lama Zopa also pointed out:

This was done for His Holiness (The Dalai Lama). This does not mean that Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo, His Holiness Trijang Rinpoche, and His Holiness Song Rinpoche have made mistakes. It does not mean they are wrong. Nor does one have to look at the protector as evil. For us ordinary people it is difficult to judge, because we cannot see these lamas â€œminds. Another side of the teaching is that it is mentioned that the protector (Dorje Shugden) is an Arya Bodhisattva, a manifestation of Manjushri. So, then, there is also the risk of our creating very heavy karmic causes in that context (by criticizing or abandoning this practice).

Geshe Kelsang Gyatso also rejected the rumors that Je Phabongkha was averse to the Nyingma tradition, saying:

â€œJe Phabongkha had great devotion for Je Tsongkhapa. Je Tsongkhapa praised Padmasambhava, so it is impossible for Je Phabongkha to show disrespect for Padmasambhava, impossible.â€

Kyabje Zong Rinpoche, a high ranking Lharampa Geshe and Abbot of Ganden Shartse, said in his teachings:


Kyabje Phabongka was also an emanation of Heruka Chakrasamvara, but degeneration of the times and jealousy of ordinary beings have made it difficult to become aware of his tremendous qualities. There are many biographies of Kyabje Phabongka that make his realized qualities very clear.
Kyabje Zong Rinpoche also explained the importance for Gelugpas of developing faith in the Gelugpa lineage passed down through Je Phabongkha and his principal disciple Trijang Rinpoche:

Kyabje Phabongka passed all of his lineages to Kyabje Trijang Dorje Chang. He often said this in discourses. The purpose of this detailed exposition is to affirm the power of the lineage. If we lose faith in the lineage, we are lost. We should remember the biographies of past and present teachers. We should never develop negative thoughts towards our root and lineage gurus. If we do not keep the commitments after having received teachings, this is a great downfall.

Death

When Je Phabongkha died, an elaborate reliquary was constructed but the Chinese demolished it. Rilbur Rinpoche managed to retrieve some of his cremation relics ("ring sel") from it, which are usually kept at Sera Me Monastery. They are presently on the relics tour of saints and enlightened masters organized by Lama Zopa.

Extracted from Wikipedia.

http://emodernbuddhism.com/

This eBook Modern Buddhism – The Path of Compassion and Wisdom, in three volumes, is being distributed freely at the request of the author Geshe Kelsang Gyatso. The author says: "Through reading and practicing the instructions given in this book, people can solve their daily problems and maintain a happy mind all the time." So that these benefits can pervade the whole world, Geshe Kelsang wishes to give this eBook freely to everyone.

We would like to request you to please respect this precious Dharma book, which functions to free living beings from suffering permanently. If you continually read and practice the advice in this book, eventually your problems caused by anger, attachments and ignorance will cease.

Please enjoy this special gift from Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, who dedicates: "May everyone who reads this book experience deep peace of mind, and accomplish the real meaning of human life."

Re: Recent Lineage Lamas.

- Reply #1 on: April 02, 2010, 03:16:08 am »

Trijang Rinpoche

Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche (1900-1981) was a Gelug Lama and a direct disciple of Je Pabongka. He was the junior tutor and spiritual guide of the 14th Dalai Lama for forty years. He is also the root lama of many Gelug Lamas who teach in the West including Zong Rinpoche, Geshe Rabten, Lama Yeshe, Lama Gangchen Rinpoche and Geshe Kelsang Gyatso. Geshe Kelsang has likened Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche to "a vast reservoir from which all Gelugpa practitioners of the present day received ‘waters’ of blessings and instructions, and the FPMT describes him as "one of the foremost Tibetan Buddhist masters of our time. It is widely acknowledged that "Without his help the situation of Tibetan Buddhism in general and in particular of the tradition of Master Je Tsongkhapa would be in quite a different state." A great number of present-day Tibetan Buddhist masters are his students and "whatever they have accomplished, they owe it directly or indirectly to the great kindness of this master, who stands out as one of the most unforgettable figures in the history of Tibet and its Buddhism.

Birth and early life

Trijang Rinpoche's father, Tserin Dondrub, was descended from the uncle of the 7th Dalai Lama, Losang Kelsang Gyatso, and was knowledgeable in religion. His mother, Tsering Drolma, came from the village of Gungtang Nanggong. Trijang Rinpoche was born in Gungtang in the winter of 1901, the "Year of Increase" or the "Iron Bull year". Allegedly, an apricot tree flowered and had 30 apricots at his birth even though it was deep winter. Before he could walk, he showed great interest in religious paintings, statues, and Tantric ritual implements; and would make as if he was reciting prayers.

When news of his precocious actions reached Ngarampa Losang Tendar and Geshe Gendun Dragpa Chen, who were responsible for finding the reincarnation of Losang Tsultrim Palden, who was the Ganden Tripa and former Trijang Rinpoche, they travelled to his birth place of Gungtang. When the child saw them, he yelled out: "Gendun Dragpa!" and later asked him to wash his feet. Gendun Dragpa used to wash the feet of Losang Tsultrim Palden when he had rheumatism. The child also correctly identified the former Trijang Rinpoche's private Buddha statue, rosary and bowl from among a selection. This and other signs led the search party to conclude that they had probably found the correct reincarnation. They brought the child to some monasteries and places where he had shown
From the ages of 24 to 27, he travelled and taught extensively at many Gelugpa places of learning all over Tibet, then received an invitation to give empowerments of Guhyasamaja, Avalokiteshvara and Vajrayogini at Gangkar. He gave Avalokiteshvara empowerment. He also taught extensively on the practice of Guru Puja (Lama Chopa). He and Hayagriva to about 200 people. In Chatreng, aged 24, he taught Lamrim to 2,000 monks and lay people and monks. He was then invited by Artog Tulku of Sera Je Monastery to give empowerments of Heruka Five Deities, Vajrayogini, Hayagriva and Avalokiteshvara. He also did his preliminary practices (Tib. ngon dro) of body mandala empowerment according to Ghantapa, teachings on Lama Chopa (Offering to the Spiritual Guide), and he meditated on Lamrim and Lojong (training the mind). He also composed chants for spiritual practices and ceremonies and scores for their music for use by Ganden Shartse monastery.

When he was 9 he contracted smallpox and did long-life retreat. The illness did not become serious.

He was a learned scholar and master debator. In 1919, when he was only 18, he debated before the Geshes of the three major Gelugpa monasteries for his final examination. They had wondered if he would be intellectually up to the task because he was so young and had not studied for very long, but they ended up “praising him to the skies” for the answers he gave. The 13th Dalai Lama awarded him third place, and he received the highest Geshe degree, the Lharampa.

Shortly afterward he received the 253 ordination vows of a fully-ordained monk from the 13th Dalai Lama. He was admitted to the Upper Tantric College, Gyuto, in 1919, where he studied the Root Tantra of Heruka and its commentary by Je Tsongkhapa, Illuminating all Hidden Meanings (Tib. Be dön kun säl).

From the ages of 20 to 22, Trijang Rinpoche received many teachings and empowerments from his root Guru Je Pabongka Rinpoche. He also received empowerments of Guhyasamaja, Yamantaka, Heruka and Vajrayogini. He also continued to receive instructions and initiations from Pabongka Rinpoche, including the Collected Works of Gyalwa Ensapa, the Collected Works of Panchen Choky Gyaltsen, and a Guru yoga of Je Tsongkhapa called Ganden Lha Gya Ma ("Hundreds of Deities of the Joyful Land"). He received the “Empowerment into the Six Ways to Revolve the Chakras of Heruka” (including the full initiation costume of bone ornaments) as well as all the Action Tantra empowerments from Khyenrab Yonten Gyatso, the 88th Ganden Tripa, in 1915, aged 14. In 1916, aged 15, he studied the complete Tibetan grammar and from then on composed thousands of acrostic verses, such as:

Ah Friends! While the spittle drools from the Death Lord's smile/ Bleaching your head as white as falling snow/ Could this tedious life yield aught but chaff?/ Dharma from my Guru is what I'll practice!

He also composed chants for spiritual practices and ceremonies and scores for their music for use by Ganden Shartse monastery.

Giving teachings and initiations

In 1924, when he was 23, Geshe Yonten of Ganden Shartse College requested him to teach. He gave the oral transmission of the Collected Works of Je Tsongkhapa and His Main Disciples to about 200 monks, followed later by granting the empowerment of Vajrayogini according to Naropa to about 60 Lamas, incarna Lamas and monks. He was then invited by Artog Tulku of Sera Je Monastery to give empowerments of Heruka Five Deities and Hayagriva to about 200 people. In Chatreng, aged 24, he taught Lamrim to 2,000 monks and lay people and gave Avalokiteshvara empowerment. He also taught extensively on the practice of Guru Puja (Lama Chopa). He then received an invitation to give empowerments of Guhyasamaja, Avalokiteshvara and Vajrayogini at Gangkar Monastery.
From the ages of 24 to 27, he travelled and taught extensively at many Gelugpa places of learning all over Tibet, becoming increasingly well known and teaching many thousands of monastics and lay people. He also taught at Sakya and Nyingmapa Centers at their request. He travelled west and gave Avalokiteshvara empowerment and teachings on Lamrim to about 3,000 monks at Jampa Ling monastery in Litang, as well as most of the local people. In the foothills of Kambo, a place sacred to Chakrasamvara, he granted initiation and led a long retreat.

In 1928, aged 27, he returned to Chatreng, and was invited by the Tantrists of Chagra Gang to give initiations into the Peaceful Form of Padmasambhava and the Six Forms of Padmasambhava According to the Old Concealed Texts. He also encouraged and helped them to repair the Chagra temple.

On his return to Lhasa later that year, he continued to visit monasteries to grant initiations and teachings, including the valleys and plains of Gyaltang. According to the author of Gangkar Rinpoche’s secret biography, Gangkar Rinpoche at this time had a vision of Trijang Rinpoche as being the reincarnation of Padmasambhava; and he performed ceremonies in his honor and presented a large number of offerings, including a sacred Heruka statue.

When he reached Lhasa he had audiences with the 13th Dalai Lama and Pabongka Rinpoche and made offerings of silver coins, grain and tea to all the monks of Ganden. He also set up a fund for the monks. The following year, aged 28, he also donated gifts to all those attending Monlam, the Great Prayer Festival; and made many offerings to the Tantric colleges.

During the next few years, until 1932, he received profound teachings from Pabongka Rinpoche, including the oral instructions of many secret Gelugpa lineages; and he also engaged in Tantric retreats. In 1932 he gave more extensive teachings at Ganden Shartse and Jangste monasteries.

In 1933, the 13th Dalai Lama died, and Trijang Rinpoche helped Ling Rinpoche and other great Lamas from Sera monastery and Nangyal monastery consecrate the body and the reliquary. In 1936, aged 35, he granted Heruka empowerment to the monks of Ganden monastery and then made a tour of the southern district of Tibet to make offerings and give teachings. He also continued to receive instructions from Pabongka Rinpoche and made extensive offerings to Shartse and Jangtse colleges at Ganden.

After attending Je Phabongkhapa's teachings on Lamrim Chenmo at Ganden monastery, in 1939 Trijang Rinpoche toured pilgrimage sites in India and Nepal, making extensive offerings at each place. He then went to give teachings and empowerments on Heruka, Guhyasamaja, Yamantaka, Vajrayogini and Guru Puja at Dungkar Monastery in Dromo, and on his return he visited important sites in Tsang, including Tashi Lhunpo Monastery. In 1940 he taught the Guru Puja and Gelugpa Mahamudra to senior monks of Ganden Jangtse. In 1941 he continued to receive teachings from Je Phabongkhapa.

He also taught the 14th Dalai Lama extensively as his Junior Tutor.

From 1960 onward, while in exile in India, he continued to teach and initiate the Dalai Lama and many other disciples, including granting Vajrayogini empowerment in Dharamsala, and many teachings and empowerments at the newly located monasteries in Buxa, the Tantric colleges in Dalhousie, and a Tibetan monastery in Varanasi. In 1967 he taught Hundreds of Deities of the Joyful Land (the Guru yoga of Je Tsongkhapa according to the Segyu lineage) to hundreds of students in Dharamsala, and in 1970 he gave similar teachings in Both Gaya. In 1969, he gave the major empowerment of Heruka according to Lupia to around 1,000 people at the request of the Tantric colleges. In the Fall of 1971, he visited Myosore in the south of India at the request of the monks of the three major monasteries who had settled in the Tibetan camp at Mundgod, and gave extensive teachings and initiations to the monks and to lay people, and ordained hundreds of young monks. At that time he also made offerings to the Sangha and donated statues of Je Tsongkhapa and his Two Sons to the main temple of Ganden, along with tangkhas.

In 1972 he gave Vajrayogini empowerment and teachings in Dharamsala to 800 monastics and lay people and in Bodhgaya. Later that year he taught at the Tibetan Studies Institute in Varanasi, and the following year he gave empowerments into Heruka and Vajrayogini to 700 people at the Tibetan monastery there.

He and the senior tutor Ling Rinpoche would also exchange teachings and initiations. In 1969 he taught Ling Rinpoche the Lamrim Chenmo, and in 1970 he granted him Yamantaka empowerment. In return, in 1970 he received from Ling Rinpoche the Action Tantra empowerment of Vairochana and also teachings on Lamrim Chenmo. In 1972 he gave Ling Rinpoche teachings on the Guru Puja and Yamantaka, and in return received a teaching on tormas (ritual offerings) to Yamantaka.

Although respected by Lamas in all Tibetan Buddhist schools, and even invited by them to give teachings and initiations, Trijang Rinpoche taught primarily from the Gelugpa tradition of Je Tsongkhapa. He was also the holder of the Gaden, or Geden, Oral Tradition that was passed to him in its entirety by his root Guru Pabongka Rinpoche. According to Geshe Helmut Gassner, the Dalai Lama's translator for 17 years and one of only two ordained Western Geshes:

The great master Pabongka was in the first half of the twentieth century the pivotal or key lineage holder of the Oral Gaden Tradition. Many other teachers before him mastered certain aspects of the tradition's teachings, but it was Pabongka Rinpoche's particular merit to locate and find all these partial transmissions, to learn and realize them, and bring them together once again to pass them on through a single person. In his lifetime there was hardly a significant figure of the Gaden tradition who had not been Pabongka Rinpoche's disciple. Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche was the one capable of receiving and passing on the entirety of the Oral Gaden Tradition once again. The Dorje Shugden practice is an integral part of that tradition.

Other achievements

Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand

In 1938, when Trijang Dorjechang was 37, Pabongka Rinpoche was invited to Ganden monastery to teach the Lamrim Chenmo, the Great Stages of the Path to Enlightenment, which he did over a four-week period to over 2000 monks and many lay people. During that time, Je Phabongkhapa gave his chief disciple Trijang Rinpoche a copy of the text in gold lettering, along with ritual substances and other precious items. Later, Trijang Rinpoche was responsible for editing this classic Lam Rim text by his root Guru, Pabongka Rinpoche, which is entitled Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand.
Practice of Dorje Shugden

Like his teacher, Pabongka Rinpoche, Trijang Rinpoche was an adherent of the practice of the Dharma Protector Dorje Shugden and widely promoted it. He wrote Music Delighting the Ocean of Protectors, a commentary to a praise of Dorje Shugden called Infinite Aeons, written by Dagpo Kalsang Khedrup, who was the guru of Pabongka's guru, Dagpo Jampel Lhundrup. Trijang Rinpoche stated, on many occasions, that Dorje Shugden was an emanation of the wisdom Buddha Manjushri. He also stated that in order for someone to become a disciple of Dorje Shugden, he would have to be accepted.

Disciples

Trijang Rinpoche also authored other Buddhist texts. In 1967, aged 66, he composed an elaborate set of headings for the Small and Medium Stages of the Path to Enlightenment (Lam Rim). He also composed, amongst a great deal of other material:

* Liberation for Your Safekeeping, a composition from notes on Pabongka Rinpoche’s discourses on Lam Rim (which is included among the Collected Works of Je Pabongka).
* The Body Mandala of Shri Chakrasamvara According to Ghantapada
* A long consecration ceremony related to both Heruka and Guhyasamaja for the Upper Tantric College
* A set of initiations into Chittamani Tara
* A complete set of examples of the points of grammar, in verse form
* A table of contents for the works of Chatreng Jampa
* Various biographies
* Various rituals, prayers and supplications, including for the reincarnation of various Lamas
* A set of initiations into White Tara
* A set of initiations into the Protector Deity Dorje Shugden

Tutor to the 14th Dalai Lama

In 1941, Trijang Rinpoche was appointed Assistant Tutor to the 14th Dalai Lama, and thereafter helped the Senior Tutor Ling Rinpoche in educating him, initially teaching him how to read and memorize texts to be recited. The 14th Dalai Lama describes Trijang Rinpoche as his “root Guru” in two of his books.

In 1941 Trijang Rinpoche also received the news that his Spiritual Guide Je Phabongkha had died. This made him immeasurably sad and he made many prayers and offerings. In 1942, he was one of the Dalai Lama's ordaining monks (and later in 1954 he acted as the so-called “inquisitor into the secrets” when the Dalai Lama took full ordination.) In 1947 he began the Dalai Lama's dialectics and logical trainings (finishing in 1959 by conducting the Dalai Lama's final oral examination during the Prayer Festival), and took him on an extensive tour of Drepung and Sera monasteries to install him on the various thrones he occupies at these monasteries. In 1950, the Chinese communists entered the Chamdo region by way of Kham and as a result Trijang Rinpoche accompanied the Dalai Lama, in his spiritual and temporal capacities, to Dromo, where he gave more teachings on Lamrim. In 1954 he accompanied the Dalai Lama to Ganden, and then to Beijing via Kongpo, Powo, Chamdo etc. In 1956 he accompanied the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama on a pilgrimage to India. In 1960 and 1961, after he and the Dalai Lama had fled to India, he gave the Dalai Lama the major empowerments of Heruka Five Deities according to Ghantapa, Vajrayogini according to Naropa, and other initiations. In 1962 he gave him the empowerment of the Body Mandala of Heruka and taught generation stage and completion stage of this Tantra. In 1963, he gave the Dalai Lama the complete oral transmission of the Collected Works of Je Tsongkhapa, plus discourses on the Guru Puja, Gelugpa Mahamudra and Yamantaka Tantra. In 1964, he taught the Dalai Lama the Lamrim Chenmo and the 800-verses Prajnaparamita Sutra, and in 1966 he gave the Dalai Lama the oral transmission of the Collected Works of Gyaltabsje and Khenrubje (Je Tsongkhapa’s two principal disciples). In Spring of 1970 he taught the Dalai Lama the generation and completion stages of Chittamani Tara and of Vajrayogini according to Naropa, and gave him empowerments into the 16 Droplets of the Kadampas. Later that year he gave many long-life empowerments to the Dalai Lama, along with initiation of Guhyasamaja and teachings on Wheel of Sharp Weapons and Lojong (training the mind), and major empowerments into 62 Deity Heruka Deities according to Ghantapa, Vajrayogini according to Naropa, and others.

According to Helmut Gassner, translator for the 14th Dalai Lama for 17 years:

During those years I frequently accompanied Geshe Rabten on his trips and had the opportunity to meet many important personages, among them Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche, the Junior Tutor of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Trijang Rinpoche was in many ways one of the most important figures of his time. In the fifties he was the power behind His Holiness, a pillar of strength in the difficult and troubled times for the Tibetan people. This fact was well known to the Communist Chinese and so Trijang Lobsang Yeshe became their main enemy. It was also Trijang Rinpoche who taught His Holiness the Dalai Lama the concepts of Buddhism as well as the understanding of politics and mastering social skills.

While helping in the full education the Dalai Lama, he also always continued to teach and give empowerments to larger and larger numbers of monks at the Tantric colleges, Tashi Lhunpo, Ganden, Sera, Namgyal and elsewhere.

According to many disciples:

He was the most outstanding Master in every field of Buddhist teachings as well as Tibetan culture. He was the very source of all the fields of knowledge and a consultant in all of them. It was a well-known fact that he had really been the very epitome of a Master who had attained the highest realizations of the Sutras and Tantras, as well as an unsurpassable propagator.

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Trijang Rinpoche had many well known disciples, some of whom have become renowned in the West, such as Tenzin Gyatso (the 14th Dalai Lama), Lama Yeshe, Lama Gangchen Rinpoche and Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, who continues his un mixed practice and transmission of the Ganden oral tradition. Trijang Rinpoche was the Dalai Lama's teacher until he died. As such, he taught the Dalai Lama from the elementary level up to the highest Tantric transmissions. The Dalai Lama has described him in various books, saying of him that he was his spiritual guide, and:

These two (Ling Rinpoche and Trijang Rinpoche) remained my tutors until the end of my formal education, and I continually received numerous lineages of the Tibetan Buddhist heritage from both of them. They were close friends but very different characters.... Trijang Rinpoche was a tall, thin man of great grace and elegance with a rather pointed nose for a Tibetan. He was gentle and had a deep voice, which was particularly melodious when he chanted.... Trijang Rinpoche was one of the greatest poets of his generation, with an eclectic command of art and literature.

According to Gonsar Rinpoche, "It was Kyabje Traigang Dorje Chang who offered His Holiness the most important transmissions of Dharma such as the Great Lamrim (Tib. Lamrim Chenmo), the Chakrasamvara Tantra and many hundreds of various initiations and special instructions. He also helped His Holiness in his younger age to compose texts, prepare speeches, etc.

Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, a scholar and Yogi who teaches in the West, has praised Trijang Dorjechang as his kind root Guru on many occasions. He has followed him and his lineage teachings and attributed his success with the New Kadampa Tradition to his root Guru. He has likened Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche to "a vast reservoir from which all Gelugpa practitioners of the present day received ‘waters’ of blessings and instructions.

For example, in his commentary to Offering to the Spiritual Guide (Tib. Lama Chopa), Gehlek Rinpoche says that the teaching "came continuously, as a living tradition from Buddha Vajradhara to the late Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche and:

I received this teaching from Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche forty years ago, somewhere across the river from Tsechor Ling valley in Lhasa. A number of people who are known in the West now were there, too: Lama Yeshe, Dagayab Rinpoche, Tomo Geshe Rinpoche, and also Geshe Kelsang Gyatso. We received the teachings at the same time.

Trijang Rinpoche's disciples consider him to be in the same mental continuum as Atisha, and the lineage holder of all the essential Gelugpa lineages of Lamrim, Lojong and Mahamudra. In the preface of his Lamrim commentary, Geshe Kelsang states, "I have received these teachings from my Spiritual Guide, Trijang Dorjechang, who was an emanation of Atisha; thus the explanations given in this book, Joyful Path of Good Fortune, actually come from him and not from myself. According to Gonsar Rinpoche, his "compassion and wisdom and the service rendered to the Dharma and sentient beings were absolutely unsurpassable.

Trijang Rinpoche also had many other less well known disciples and was an object of pilgrimage first in Tibet and later in Dharamsala and Mundgod in India:

Almost every Tibetan sought his guidance and blessings in almost all situations and activities, and that includes great masters, senior and junior rinpoches, Geshes, monks, nuns, ministers, business people, men, women, old and young, poor and rich, intellectuals or practitioners. Tibetans from practically every walk of life sought his help and advice in their good and bad times. He cared for everyone equally, without discrimination, with boundless compassion and patience.

**Bringing Buddhism to the West**

Trijang Rinpoche had seminal and far-reaching influence on Tibetan Buddhism integrating into the West. The FPMT website states, "The spreading of Dharma in the West is directly and indirectly connected with Trijang Rinpoche, due to his own teachings, as well as the activities of his disciples, including Lama Yeshe. Lama Zopa Rinpoche, Geshe Rabten, Kyabje Zong Rinpoche and many others. Towards the end of his life he had many Western disciples himself and there are many thousands more who, though they have not met him personally, are still following his teachings through the teachings they have received from their own teachers, his disciples. In the Fall of 1966 he was invited to the West and visited Switzerland for medical treatment; then he visited Germany, England, France and so on, wherever Tibetans lived, giving teachings on tour. He was invited back to Switzerland in 1968 to consecrate a new Tibetan monastery, and travelled there with Kyabje Ling Rinpoche, and this was followed by another Western tour, returning to India in the Spring of 1969.

He encouraged Geshe Rabten, Geshe Kelsang and many other of his closest disciples to bring Je Tsongkhapa's Dharma to Westerners, pointing out that "such efforts are never in vain, but are an important contribution to the Dharma and the well being of sentient beings." Talking about Geshe Rabten, Gonsar Rinpoche explains: "Geshe's principal spiritual father, His Holiness Kyabje Trijang Dorje Chang, whose advice was always the conclusive factor in Geshe's decisions, supported Geshe's teachings to Westerners from the very beginning. Trijang Rinpoche requested Geshe Kelsang Gyatso to go to England in 1977, giving "many predictions that there would be great results" and also giving him permission to present Gelugpa Dharma in a way that was suitable for Westerners but without losing any of the meaning of the teachings. Despite his Tibetan background, Kyabje Trijang Dorjechang believed in Westerners' ability to gain deep experience of Buddha's Sutras and Tantras within their own countries and cultures, and encouraged his close disciples to “give to those who were mature some Tantric teachings and initiations on top of the essential Dharma teachings like Lamrim (the graduated path to enlightenment), Lojong (training of the mind) and great philosophical treatises.

Trijang Rinpoche was also the first Tibetan master to meet a Pontifex of Rome, when he met Pope Paul the Sixth in 1963.

**His work for Tibetans in exile**

Shortly after the Dalai Lama's final examinations in 1959, he and the Dalai Lama left the Norbulingka Palace in
Lhasa and travelled to India because of the Chinese. According to Trijang Rinpoche's disciples:

Not only did he offer to His Holiness studies from the elementary level up to the highest Tantric transmissions, he was also the backbone of the struggle against the Chinese occupation at the most difficult and confused time of Tibetan history. The escape of His Holiness the Dalai Lama from Tibet in 1959 was also thanks to the wisdom and efforts of Kyabje Trijang Dorje Chang.

Most reports suggest that after the exodus from Tibet in 1959, the main concern was to acculturate into Indian society and yet maintain core Tibetan values and identity. The Dalai Lama's two tutors, Khyabje Ling Rinpoche and Khyabje Trijang Dorjechang played vital roles in outlining the basic structure of the Tibetan Government in Exile (TGIE), advising the Dalai Lama, and laying down the foundations of the three great monasteries in South India, the Tantric colleges and various smaller monasteries. Heads of other sects provided their leadership to their respective orders.

**Tibetan national anthem**

Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche wrote Gyallu, the Tibetan National Anthem, which was adopted by the community-in-exile around 1950 and is still used to this day. The anthem focuses on the radiance of Buddha Shakyamuni:

By the spread of Buddha's teachings in the ten directions, may everyone throughout the world enjoy the glories of happiness and peace.

In the battle against dark negative forces, may the auspicious sunshine of the teachings and beings of Tibet and the brilliance of a myriad radiant prosperities be ever triumphant.

**Trijang Chocktrul Rinpoche**

Trijang Rinpoche's recognized reincarnation, Trijang Chocktrul Rinpoche, lives in the United States as a private citizen allegedly to avoid the Dalai Lama's prohibition of his practice of Dorje Shugden.

From Wikipedia.

**Life and education in Tibet**

Geshe Kelsang Gyatso was born in Tibet in 1931 and ordained at the age of eight. After leaving Tibet, he spent eighteen years in retreat in the Himalayas in India. In 1976 he was invited by Lama Thubten Yeshe via their spiritual guide, Trijang Rinpoche, to teach at his FPMT center Manjushri Institute, Ulverston, England.[5] Following a three-year retreat in Tharpaland, Dumfries, he founded the NKT-IKBU in 1991. He retired as General Spiritual Director of the NKT-IKBU in August 2009.

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Geshe Kelsang Gyatso is a Buddhist monk, "meditation master, scholar, and author of 22 books based on the teachings of the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism. He is the founder and former spiritual director of the New Kadampa Tradition ~ International Kadampa Buddhist Union (NKT-IKBU), a Western Buddhist order based primarily on the teachings of the Gelugpa tradition, albeit "not subordinate to Tibetan authorities other than Geshe Gyatso himself. The NKT-IKBU has grown to become a global Buddhist organisation that currently lists more than 200 centres and around 900 branch classes/study groups in 40 countries.

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Geshe Kelsang Gyatso was born on Dharmachakra Day (the 4th day of the 6th month of the Tibetan lunar calendar) 1931 in Yangcho Tang, eastern Tibet. His lay name was Lobsang Chuponpa. His ordination name "Kelsang Gyatso" means "Ocean of Good Fortune". His mother made great sacrifices to enable her son to attend the Ngamring Jampa Ling Monastery because he showed interest and aptitude from an early age. He joined the monastery when he was 8 years old and later described memorizing the Medicine Buddha Sutra:

In my first monastery, Jampa Ling, this was the principal practice. The Tibetan translation of the Sutra is about fifty pages long. I memorized this together with some additional prayers, because this was one of the commitments for being able to stay in the monastery.

(In November 1986, Geshe Kelsang oversaw the rebuilding of Ngamring Jampa Ling Monastery after its destruction, and it was fully restored and reopened by September 1988.)

Later Geshe Kelsang studied for 15 years at Sera Monastery near Lhasa, one of the great Gelug monastic universities of Tibet. According to Cozort, Kelsang Gyatso is "a highly trained geshe. At Sera Je, he successfully completed the full Geshe studies of five large philosophical texts. After passing two examinations at Tashilhunpo and Sera, he was awarded the title of Geshe Lamra."
by his students in the NKT-IKBU magazine Full Moon as "a wonderful development in the history of the early months of 1991, Geshe Kelsang announced the creation of the NKT-IKBU, an event which was celebrated.

In 1987, Geshe Kelsang entered a 3-year retreat at Tharpaland Retreat Centre in Dumfries, Scotland. During his retreat, he wrote five books and established the foundations of the NKT-IKBU. After completing his retreat in the
teach at FPMT Centers in the early years still considered themselves to be autonomous entities: "Not all of the geshes shared Lama Yeshe's vision of Gelug Buddhism in the West or understood themselves to be part of it. Geshe Kelsang has repeatedly talked about his complete indebtedness to and reliance upon his Spiritual Guide, describing him as more important than his life.

In 1978 Trijang Rinpoche wrote a prayer for Geshe Kelsang Gyatso's long life that is regularly recited at New Kadampa Tradition Centres.

Leaving Tibet and Life in India

After the exodus from Tibet in 1959, Geshe Kelsang escaped to India through Nepal and stayed at the initial location of his monastery, in Buxar. All he took with him were two Buddhist scriptures -- Shantideva's Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life and a text by Je Tsongkapa. Later, after Prime Minister Nehru donated large tracts of land in South India to the community in exile, the monastery moved south. At this time, Geshe Kelsang left the monastery at Buxar for Mussoorie (a hill station in the Indian state of Uttaranchal) where he taught and engaged in intensive meditation retreat for 18 years.

Journey to the West

Even before coming to the West, Geshe Kelsang was "by all accounts, a very well-respected scholar and meditator" within the Tibetan exile community. Since then, "this diminutive and unassuming Tibetan has won the hearts and minds of people from all cultures and walks of life.

Kay remarks that Lama Yeshe's decision to invite his former classmate to be Resident Teacher at the FPMT's Manjushri Institute in England was advised by the Dalai Lama. The invitation was extended by Trijang Rinpoche, the root Guru of Geshe Kelsang. He arrived in August 1977 and gave his first teaching on Lamrim on September 10. Geshe Kelsang later recounted that Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche asked him to go to England, teach Shantideva's Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life, Chandrakirti's Guide to the Middle Way and Lamrim, and then to check whether there was any meaning in his continuing to stay."

In Geshe Kelsang's own words:

When I was in India I received an invitation from Manjushri Institute in England through Lama Yeshe, who was my very close friend in Tibet. He and I were from the same monastery in Tibet and we had the same Teacher. He wrote to me and requested me please to go to England and give Dharma teachings. I received this invitation but I didn’t answer for two months. At that time it was difficult for me to say yes due to certain commitments to local Tibetan people, and also I thought how could I teach as I could not speak English? I had no confidence. Lama Yeshe was very clever; he went to visit my root Guru Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche, and requested him to ask me to go to England to teach Dharma. He knew if my root Guru asked me, then I would agree to go.

Under Geshe Kelsang's spiritual direction, Manjushri Institute "became a thriving training and retreat center. Geshe Kelsang taught the General Program at Manjushri from 1977 to 1987. At that time, the Geshe studies programme was taught by Geshe Jampa Tekchok and then Geshe Konchog Tsewang (1982-1990). (In 1990 the Geshe Studies Programme at Manjushri Institute was cancelled, as it had been in most of the other FPMT Centres where it had been established.)"

On October 13, 1983, Geshe Kelsang became a naturalized British citizen: â€œ became a subject of the British Queenâ€

Establishing Buddhist Centres

In 1979, Geshe Kelsang opened a Dharma Center (Madhyamaka Centre in Yorkshire) under his own spiritual direction and apparently without FPMT approval[29] David Kay explained how many Geshes who happened to come to England to teach Dharma. He knew if my root Guru asked me, then I would agree to go.

Robert Bluck explained that as a consequence of opening Madhyamaka Centre, Lama Yeshe asked for Geshe Kelsang's resignation, "but his students petitioned him to remain, and a struggle ensued for control of Manjushri Institute, which eventually withdrew from the FPMT. Although some FPMT students regarded Geshe Kelsang as a "rogue geshe" as a result of his separation from the FPMT, Bluck suggests an alternative view: "FPMT teachers became increasingly remote, with Geshe Kelsang's single-minded approach and personal example inspiring many students.

Creation of the NKT-IKBU

In 1987, Geshe Kelsang entered a 3-year retreat at Tharpaland Retreat Centre in Dumfries, Scotland. During his retreat, he wrote five books and established the foundations of the NKT-IKBU. After completing his retreat in the early months of 1991, Geshe Kelsang announced the creation of the NKT-IKBU, an event which was celebrated.
Geshe Kelsang Gyatso is a prolific writer and teacher of Buddhism in general, in particular the teachings of Je Tsongkhapa. He has taught extensively on all aspects of Buddha's Sutras and Tantras both in regular courses for the first ten years at Manjushri Institute and then in International Festivals two or three times a year. His teachings draw on the original texts of Buddha Shakyamuni and a number of Indian and Tibetan teachers and commentators. They also draw on his own meditative experience acquired in his long 1959-1976 retreat.

Talking about his training at the monasteries, he explains that it mainly emphasized intellectual debate, and that he would therefore stay up all night to meditate on Lamrim (stages of the path), Lojong (training the mind) and Mahamudra in the meditative tradition of Je Tsongkhapa. His teachings reflect this emphasis on practical teachings based on Lamrim, Lojong and Mahamudra. When he established the NKT-IKBU study programs he said:

"I wanted to encourage people to practice purely. Just having a lot of Dharma knowledge, studying a lot intellectually but not practicing, is a serious problem. This was my experience in Tibet. Intellectual knowledge alone does not give peace."

Geshe Kelsang explained how he received his Guru Trijang Rinpoche's permission to present Dharma in a more practical way suitable to Westerners. Waterhouse commented that "He teaches in English with a strong Tibetan accent. He is an endearing character to look at; petite with slightly downcast eyes which look about him as he walks or teaches his devoted students. Many people have been struck by his charismatic and wise style of teaching.

Books

At the heart of the NKT-IKBU are its three study programs: the General Program, the Foundation Program, and the Teacher Training Program. In these programs people can study Geshe Kelsang's books with authorized NKT-IKBU Dharma teachers.

According to the NKT-IKBU, it "seeks not to offer a westernized form of Buddhism, but rather to make traditional Gelugpa Buddhism accessible to westerners. To achieve this, Geshe Kelsang taught himself English and wrote 22 books that aim to provide Western Dharma practitioners with essential Buddhist texts. His first book published in 1980 was a commentary to Shantideva's Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life called Meaningful to Behold. This was followed by Clear Light of Bliss in 1982. His books were first published by Wisdom Publications. In 1985, Tharpa Publications was founded, which since has been the exclusive publisher of his works worldwide.

A number of Geshe Kelsang's textbooks have received favourable reviews. Bluck writes that "The three most popular worksâ€”Introduction to Buddhism, The New Meditation Handbook and Transform Your Lifeâ€”have sold 165,000 copies between them, showing their appeal far beyond the movement itself. Batchelor says that Geshe Kelsang's books are written with "considerable clarity. Braizer echoes this sentiment, saying that Geshe Kelsang writes "excellent" books that are "an important contribution to Western understanding of Buddhism and its traditions. They can stand on their own merit. Guide to Dakini Land and Essence of Vajrayana have been described as "the most detailed and revealing commentary on specific tantric practices yet to be published in a Western language. In his book review of Guide to Dakini Land, Richard Guard said:

"It is remarkable that the author has managed to give us so much information in only a few hundred pages. The editors are to be commended for their skilful efforts in conveying Geshe Kelsang's instructions in such simple and precise language... By making this book available for Vajrayogini practitioners, Geshe Kelsang has truly brought a blessing into our lives."

Geshe Kelsang regards all his books as "coming from Je Tsongkhapa, with himself as being like a cassette recorder into which the Wisdom Buddha, the Dharma Protector Dorje Shugden, has placed the cassette of Je Tsongkhapa's teachings." And in the preface of one of his books, Geshe Kelsang states: â€œI have received these teachings from my Spiritual Guide, Trijang Dorjechang, who was an emanation of Atisha; thus the explanations given in this book, Joyful Path of Good Fortune, actually come from him and not from myself. â€œ

Biography Research Guide describes Geshe Kelsang's books:

A Tibetan Buddhist monk and scholar; Geshe Kelsang has written twenty books that aim to provide Western Dharma practitioners with essential Buddhist texts; some are books for beginners such as Transform Your Life and How to Solve Our Human Problems, books about the Mahayana path like Universal Compassion (Lojong), and books on Vajrayana (TANTRA) like Mahamudra Tantra, Guide to Dakini Land and Essence of Vajrayana. Two of his books are commentaries on Indian Mahayana texts: the book Ocean of Nectar is a commentary to Chandrakirti's Guide to the Middle Way, and Meaningful to Behold is a commentary to Shantideva's Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life or Bodhicaryavatara.

The books are also highly thought of within the Tibetan establishment. Three of his published works contained forewords by previous Ganden Tripas and the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama contributed a foreword to Buddhism in the Tibetan Tradition, while Trijang Rinpoche and Ling Rinpoche (who each held the position of Ganden Tripa) also provided forewords for his books Meaningful to Behold (which was dedicated to the long life of the Dalai Lama).
his is a great downfall. Thoughts towards our root and lineage gurus. If we do not keep the commitments after having received teachings, we will lose. We should remember the biographies of past and present teachers. We should never develop negative emotions.

The purpose of this detailed exposition is to affirm the power of the lineage. If we lose faith in the lineage, we are destroyed. Kyabje Phabongka passed all of his lineages to Kyabje Trijang Dorje Chang. He often said this in discourses. Lharampa Geshe Zong Rinpoche, affirms Geshe Kelsang's view on the importance of lineage:

The lineage Geshe Kelsang follows is that taught to him by Trijang Rinpoche, his root Guru, and in turn by Kyabje Ling Rinpoche. If we mix traditions many obstacles arise and it takes a long time for us to attain realizations. One who is by "following one tradition purely — relying upon one Teacher, practising only his teachings, and following his instructions — will have the special power of the lineage, whereas one who mixes traditions will become confused, develop doubts, and lose direction. If we try to create a synthesis of different traditions we shall destroy the special power of each and be left only with a mishmash of our own making that will be a source of confusion and doubt.

Every Teacher and every tradition has a slightly different approach and employs different methods. The purpose of this detailed exposition is to affirm the power of the lineage. If we lose faith in the lineage, we are destroyed. Kyabje Phabongka passed all of his lineages to Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche, respectively. Kyabje Ling Rinpoche refers to Geshe Kelsang as "this most precious Spiritual Guide," while Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche refers to him as "The excellent expounder, the great Spiritual Master Kelsang Gyatso." Tsem Tulku praised Geshe Kelsang and his publications: "The great master, the Kadampa Geshe, Kelsang Gyatso, you can see very clearly his works, his centers, his books, his pure vows, and how many thousands of people he affects.

The books are being translated into many other languages.

Bibliography


Geshe Kelsang has also translated and/or composed many sadhanas, or prayer booklets, for the practice of many of the Buddhist Tantras.

Emphasis on lineage

Kay says that NKT-IKBU practitioners practice their tradition exclusively, “eschewing eclecticism. Geshe Kelsang’s “conservative and traditional presentation of Buddhism” is appealing to Westerners who “wish for a meaningful alternative to spiritual pluralism. According to Geshe Kelsang in Understanding the Mind:

Every Teacher and every tradition has a slightly different approach and employs different methods. The practices taught by one Teacher will differ from those taught by another, and if we try to combine them we shall become confused, develop doubts, and lose direction. If we try to create a synthesis of different traditions we shall destroy the special power of each and be left only with a mishmash of our own making that will be a source of confusion and doubt.

Therefore, Geshe Kelsang has taught in Great Treasury of Merit that the most effective way to progress spiritually is by “following one tradition purely â€“ relying upon one Teacher, practising only his teachings, and following his Dharma Protector. If we mix traditions many obstacles arise and it takes a long time for us to attain realizations.

The lineage Geshe Kelsang follows is that taught to him by Trijang Rinpoche, his root Guru, and in turn by Pabongka Rinpoche, the root Guru of Trijang Rinpoche. One of Geshe Kelsang's teachers, the highly respected Lharampa Geshe Zong Rinpoche, affirms Geshe Kelsang's view on the importance of lineage:

Kyabje Phabongka passed all of his lineages to Kyabje Trijang Dorje Chang. He often said this in discourses. The purpose of this detailed exposition is to affirm the power of the lineage. If we lose faith in the lineage, we are lost. We should remember the biographies of past and present teachers. We should never develop negative thoughts towards our root and lineage gurus. If we do not keep the commitments after having received teachings,
Ghazni. Their letter of expulsion stated that Geshe Kelsang's outspoken criticism against the Dalai Lama's ban of Sera Je Monastery in a letter “calling him an ‘apostate’ and comparing him to ‘Mahmud of Ghazni’.”

According to Michael von Brück, in 1996 Geshe Kelsang was expelled by a number of abbots and Geshes from the Sera Je Monastery. The letter of expulsion stated that Geshe Kelsang's dedications to the long life of the Dalai Lama found in earlier editions of Meaningful to Behold are no longer valid, and that Geshe Kelsang himself is not a qualified Teacher. Additionally, in the first edition of Clear Light of Bliss, Phabongkha Rinpoche was followed by Trijang Rinpoche and Ling Rinpoche, the latter being the ‘current holder of the throne of Ganden’. In the second edition, Ling Rinpoche is omitted from the fourth edition (1994) onwards. Geshe Kelsang also criticized the lack of transmission of the lineage teachings he received from his root Guru, Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche, and accused the Dalai Lama of having no authority in the NKT-IKBU, whose organization the Dalai Lama has no control over.

Ordination of Westerners

There are currently 700 monks and nuns within the New Kadampa Tradition, all ordained by Geshe Kelsang. Geshe Kelsang says: “Western people are well educated; they do not have blind faith but immediately question and try to understand the truth. I cannot pretend with you. We cannot be like a fully ordained monk who has taken 253 vows, but who is not even keeping one. We should never do like this; we need to do everything correctly and purely. The Kadampa ordination solves all these problems. Practically speaking, all the 253 vows explained in the Vinaya Sutra are included within the ten commitments.”

Development of Western Dharma Teachers

Geshe Kelsang founded the New Kadampa Tradition “to bring pure Buddhist teachings to the west, where he would train equally four types of teacher: monks, nuns, lay men and lay women. NKT-IKBU Dharma Centres are mixed communities of lay and ordained practitioners who are all on the same teaching programs. He also promotes the development of local teachers in their own language. This is a departure from most Tibetan Buddhist Centres where monastics take precedence over lay people, monks take precedence over nuns, and Tibetans take precedence over Westerners.

In a teaching called Training as a Qualified Dharma Teacher, Geshe Kelsang explained where the teachers of the NKT-IKBU come from:

- We need qualified Teachers. The New Kadampa Tradition cannot buy qualified Teachers, nor can we invite them from outside. We need Teachers who can teach the twelve texts that we have chosen as our objects of study in the Teacher Training Programme and the Foundation Programme. Other Teachers cannot teach these books because they have not studied them and they do not have the transmissions. Therefore, qualified Teachers within the New Kadampa Tradition can come only from our own students.

Retirement

Although he is in good health, in August 2009 he voluntarily stepped down as General Spiritual Director of the NKT-IKBU, in a democratic system of succession that he established in the NKT-IKBU's Internal Rules.

Geshe Kelsang engages in meditation retreat and continues to write Dharma books and to help to preserve and promote the Kadampa Buddhism of Je Tsongkhapa in accordance with the instructions of Trijang Rinpoche. According to Richard Spanwicks, “Since taking up residence at Conishead Priory, Geshe Kelsang has been working to produce a complete set of instructions for westerners wishing to set out on the path to enlightenment. Continuing this task, a new book entitled Modern Buddhism: The Path of Wisdom and Compassion is slated for release in 2010, and its oral transmission will be given by Geshe Kelsang at the Fall 2010 NKT-IKBU Festival.

Development of Western Dharma Teachers

Consistent with the lineage teachings he received from his root Guru, Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche, Geshe Kelsang believes that the practice of Dorje Shugden should continue to be practised by any Gelugpas who wish to do so. This view differs from that held by the current Dalai Lama, who, despite having received the same lineage teachings, now actively discourages this practice. However, as it is an independent Western Buddhist organization, the Dalai Lama has no authority in terms of how the NKT-IKBU is organized and what practices are taught. The controversy surrounding the Dalai Lama's ban of the practice of Dorje Shugden is described in the article on the Dorje Shugden Controversy.

Geshe Kelsang said at an NKT-IKBU Festival in 1995 that the Gelug tradition is in a state of “serious degeneration. In explaining this, Geshe Kelsang said that if the Dalai Lama succeeds in destroying the practice of Dorje Shugden, the entire Gelug tradition itself will be destroyed:

- If the practice of Dorje Shugden is harmful then it follows that Je Phabongkapa was not an authentic Buddhist master, and if he was not then there is no doubt that his heart disciples, Kyabje Ling Rinpoche and Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche (the Senior and Junior Tutors of HH the Dalai Lama) were also not authentic. These three Lamas are the most important Gelugpa Lamas of recent times. If these three are not pure Teachers then there is no doubt that the entire practice of the Gelug Tradition is invalid. This is the main issue that needs clarification.

Geshe Kelsang became critical of the Gelugpa hierarchy's attempts to prevent him from passing on Dorje Shugden teachings that he had received from his own teacher. The distancing of Geshe Kelsang from the Tibetan hierarchy has also been underlined by a number of revisions made to later editions of his earlier publications. Geshe Kelsang's dedications to the long life of the Dalai Lama found in earlier editions of Meaningful to Behold are omitted from the fourth edition (1994) onwards.

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Also, Geshe Kelsang's students made revisions to the list of Mahamudra lineage gurus in the second edition of Clear Light of Bliss published in 1992. On this point, Kyabje Gelek Rinpoche explains that “We have two lineage prayers, one long and one slightly shorter one. Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, who had the teaching from Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche at the same time when I was there, gives the shorter lineage prayer and I put in the longer one;” and Bellthi confirms that “one of two existing lineages was removed to avoid possible confusion.

Additionally, in the first edition of Clear Light of Bliss, Phabongkha Rinpoche was followed by Trijang Rinpoche and Ling Rinpoche, the latter being the ‘current holder of the throne of Ganden’. In the second edition, Ling Rinpoche's name is omitted and replaced by 'Dorjechang Kelsang Gyatso Rinpoche' (Geshe Kelsang Gyatso).

Letter of expulsion from the Sera Je Monastery

According to Michael von Brück, in 1996 Geshe Kelsang was expelled by a number of abbots and Geshes from the community of Sera Je Monastery in a letter “calling him an ‘apostate’ and comparing him to ‘Mahmud of Ghazni’.”
Ghazni. Their letter of expulsion stated that Geshe Kelsang’s outspoken criticism against the Dalai Lama’s ban of the practice of Dorje Shugden was not acceptable.

Geshe Kelsang is one of hundreds of other monks and nuns who have been expelled from their monasteries because of refusing to give up their practice of Dorje Shugden. Monks at Sera Je and Gaden monasteries silently demonstrated against the ban; a number of them were expelled for having "broken their vow of obedience to the monastic authorities."

James Belither, former secretary of the NKT-IKBU and editor for Tharpa Publications, asks what it means to expel someone from an establishment they graduated from forty years previously, and explained the political circumstances surrounding Geshe Kelsang Gyatso’s “expulsion”:

It is only now, when Geshe Kelsang has dared to face up to the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government in Exile in refusing to accept the Dalai Lama's ban against the practice of Dorje Shugden—a practice given to him by his Spiritual Guide Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche—that Geshe Kelsang’s credentials as a Buddhist teacher have been called into question.

The campaign to discredit Geshe Kelsang is clearly an attempt to silence him and to act as a warning to others. As one Tibetan Lama living in America said to another Lama living in Germany who was planning to come out publicly against the Dalai Lama’s ban ‘No, you mustn't do that. They’ll do to you what they've done to Geshe Kelsang."

Extracts from Wikipedia.

http://emodernbuddhism.com/

This eBook Modern Buddhism – The Path of Compassion and Wisdom, in three volumes, is being distributed freely at the request of the author Geshe Kelsang Gyatso. The author says: "Through reading and practicing the instructions given in this book, people can solve their daily problems and maintain a happy mind all the time." So that these benefits can pervade the whole world, Geshe Kelsang wishes to give this eBook freely to everyone.

We would like to request you to please respect this precious Dharma book, which functions to free living beings from suffering permanently. If you continually read and practice the advice in this book, eventually your problems caused by anger, attachment and ignorance will cease.

Please enjoy this special gift from Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, who dedicates: “May everyone who reads this book experience deep peace of mind, and accomplish the real meaning of human life.”

Buddhists are encouraged to practice the Six Perfections as part of the path to enlightenment. St. Matthew exhorted, "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” Our culture’s idealization of perfection extends beyond religion, philosophy, and art. Our leaders should be perfect (George Washington never told a lie, Abe Lincoln walked miles to return a penny). The media projects images of perfect skin, perfect hair, perfect teeth, perfect bodies, and perfect lives, and offers us products to attain them. Many of us see perfectionism as a motivator. But striving for excellence and perfectionism are not synonymous. Those who strive for excellence do their best and see setbacks as challenges, defeats as learning opportunities.