

A Biography Of His Holiness Thubten Tshultrim Lodro Tenpi Gyamtsen Palzangpo (Lhoga Rinpoche)

The Vajra Throne of Kathog

In 1159, a famous Tibetan Buddhist lama, an actual emanation of Amitabha Buddha, the Venerable Ka Dampa Desheg Rinpoche, in order to propagate the great Dharma of the Lord Shakyamuni as well as the Vajrayana teachings of Guru Padmasambhava for the benefit of pitiful sentient beings who were deeply immersed in their ignorance and apathy, arrived at Hor-po in the inner Tibetan region of Derge. The lama observed that the Do-nyan mountain had a majestic bearing and was moreover impenetrable and stern in appearance, like a big white precious elephant¹. On the slopes of this mountain, he found a large rock on which the Tibetan letter “Ka” had self-arisen. Through his meditation, the lama understood that the rock signified that the place was conducive for the accomplishment of great Dharma and would be an auspicious environment for the flourishing of Buddha’s teachings and benefiting sentient beings. It was upon the foundation of this white rock that the later renowned Kathog Dorje Den monastery was built (the name “Kathog Dorje Den” means “Vajra seat built upon a ‘Ka’ letter”).

To date, the Kathog monastery has had 845 years of history and has passed through the hands of 84 tulku abbots. Among the three main lineages of the Nyingmapa (namely, Kathog, Dzogchen and Palyul), the Kathog lineage possesses the longest history. Its teaching is the most widely propagated and its influence the most far-reaching and deep in Tibet. Since its construction, there have been over two hundred branch monasteries, many hundreds of tulkus, and some hundred of thousands of lamas and monks. Kathog’s branch monasteries are found everywhere in the world and it is no wonder that Kathog is regarded as the center of the Nyingma tradition.

The emanation of Chenrezig, Guru Padmasambhava, in his compassion visited Kathog Monastery thirteen times in order to bless the monastery, and stated in his autobiography and many termas² that Kathog monastery was “the supreme holy ground of the Snowy Land (Tibet), the wellspring of the propagation of Yeshe Tsogyal’s secret teachings.” Guru Padmasambhava also taught that Kathog monastery was the world’s second vajra seat. Its blessings are equal to those of the Bodhgaya in India where Shakyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment. (Including Manjushri Bodhisattva’s blessed Wu Tai Shan (Five-Peak Mountain), this made up a total of the three vajra seats in the human realm).

In the Dharma lineage of Kathog, since the monastery’s inauguration until Tulku Nyag-la Pema Dundul, relying upon Kathog’s Dzogpa Chenpo Men-ngag Tathreng Thrid, Semde Tra Thrid and thirteen other widely emphasized retreat practices (Thrid

¹ One of the seven emblems of royalty of ancient India

² "termas" include sacred texts hidden to be revealed at an appropriate time in the future by destined treasure revealers (tertons).

Chen Cu-sum), a hundred thousand practitioners had accomplished the rainbow body and attained Buddhahood. Even today, the Do-nyan mountain still retains some holy traces of the feats of these hundred thousand practitioners. The greatness of the Kathog lineage is indeed peerless!

The history of the Kathog monastery is populated by the lives of many extraordinary masters. One of the most well known among them was Dri-me Shinjiong tulku who was invited by the Chinese Emperor Kangxi and accorded a title. He also received a golden Dharma hat, carriage along with its carriers, musicians and guards, and royal musical instruments from the emperor. Shinjiong tulku in this life is an exemplary patriot and an outstanding leader of the Buddhist religion.

Other masters included the pandita³ Ge-tse. His disciple, Cangca tulku, from the Gelugpa school, was also the guru of the Chinese Emperor Yong Zhen. There are also great masters like the precious wish-fulfilling Mogtsa tulku, Ge-tse Tulku, Chag-tsha tulku, Jamyang tulku, Nyingon tulku, Karma tulku and many other eminent Nyingmapa Tibetan masters.

The retired abbot of Kathog Monastery, His Holiness Lhoga Rinpoche is the reincarnation of Khenchen Legshe Jorden. By his compassionate aspiration to liberate the countless sentient beings, he has returned to serve as a merit field for all sentient beings. He is indeed the Lord of Refuge for sentient beings who wish to free themselves from the suffering cycle of life and death!

Regarding His Holiness's emanation, Guru Rinpoche's prophecy in a terma called "Unsurpassable Heart Essence in the Dharma Section – An Auspicious Gathering of Sugatas – Blazing Lamp of Awareness Holders' Instructions" was encapsulated in the following words:

"On the blazing vajra seat of Kathog, an emanation of Manjushri, brandishing his wisdom sword, will be known by the name of Legshe. He will construct centers for study and meditation, and eradicate all delusions and defilements obscuring the brilliant vajra."

As predicted, Lhoga Rinpoche is the actual emanation of the wise and brave Manjushri Bodhisattva, who is the main pillar of the secret mantra teachings of Guru Rinpoche.

Ne-teng tulku (or Tsatsa Dorje) who was the main disciple of Lhoga Rinpoche's previous incarnation, composed a supplication prayer with most sincere devotion, saying: *"Externally you're like the fourth perfect liberator,⁴ the crowning glory of Sakya clan; Internally you're like the immortal Awareness holder, the Lotus-Born; Secretly you're the real protector, the primordial Samantabhadra; Sublime emanation of Non-duality, Lodrö Gyamtsen ..,"* and the like. It is evident from these lines that

³ "Pandita" is Sanskrit for scholar.

⁴ i.e. Buddha Sakyamuni

Lhoga Rinpoche had eons ago accomplished Buddhahood and was only spontaneously emanating numerous aspects in the six realms in order to liberate mother sentient beings who were still mired in the deep suffering of samsara.

In his numerous incarnations to deliver beings from samsara, Lhoga Rinpoche was previously the thirteenth abbot of Kathog Monastery, the great Tulku Yeshe Gyamtsen Rinpoche; the great Pandita Candug Sherab Gyamtsen; the great practitioner who had the immutable⁵ accomplishment of the nonduality of compassion and wisdom, Horpo Shahkya Gyamtsen and many others. Among these previous lives, Candug Sherab Gyamtsen was once invited by the Emperor of the Qing dynasty to the capital city to expound and spread the Buddhadharma. Thus there is deep Dharmic connection between him and the Chinese populace. In his previous life as Legshe Jorden, Lhoga Rinpoche was a mahasiddha. With his superior knowledge, consummate debating skills and complete accomplishment of practice, he headed with distinction the third generation of Kathog Khenpos. The practice and teaching of Buddhadharma were thus furthered to its greatest extent and caused the Buddhist scriptures and termas to be widely propagated thereby ensuring the endurance of both the kama and terma teachings. In addition, his building of a Buddhist college cum meditation centre enabled many sangha members to be truly benefited.

After he had fulfilled the prophesy of Guru Rinpoche and the wishes of the most venerable maha pandita Situ Chokyi Gyamtsog Rinpoche, Khenchen Legshe Jorden Rinpoche manifested parinirvana.

The Search

In order to locate Khenchen Legshe Jorden Rinpoche's incarnation, Kathog Monastery's numerous tulkus and lamas engaged in a prayer ceremony. Jamyang Dragpa Rinpoche also invoked the assistance of the protector Palden Lhamo who actually possessed his body. When asked by Kyabje Situ Chokyi Nyima whether Khenchen Legshe Jorden had already been reborn, Palden Lhamo replied that the Great Abbot (Khenchen) had already been reborn in a place called Kulung Dramalung and gave further details about his birth. This account was given to Jamyang Khyentse Chokyi Lodro Rinpoche, who then through his divination said that the child reincarnation of the Great Abbot was among the nomads of Kulung as predicted by Tshe-ten (i.e. Jamyang Dragpa Rinpoche) while he was in trance and that his father was "Samten", his mother, "Tso", and the child was born in the dragon year.

The Incarnation

On the grassy plains of Dramalung, among the nomads of Kulung, there was an ancient and large Buddhist clan by the name of Candug Wendo. About 300 years

⁵ vajra

ago, the great Changdag Rin-dzin Kalzang Pema Wangchug tulku was born into this unusual family. After that, the clan was divided into another branch called Wendo Drachen-tshang. In this branch, another Kathog Monastery's head of the ear-whispered lineage was born – the Dharma King, Drubchen Cho-ying Rangdrol and Situ Chokyi Lodro tulku. This branch produced a small branch called Wendo Tharpa-tshang, into which the son of a protector god (the Mountain diety of the Nyanchen Thang-lha Mountain), Samten Rin-dzin, was reborn. When Samten Rin-dzin was older, he married a virtuous Buddhist woman called Sheran-tso ("Ocean of Enlightened Wisdom").

When the horse-mounted entourage was bringing the bride home, rainbow light filled the deep blue sky from which five-coloured celestial flowers rained down. Many people witnessed this rare sight and exclaimed, "The most auspicious omens have once again appeared in this family. Maybe this portends the coming of another great teacher."

Not long after the marriage, the wife was pregnant. Auspicious dream-states often accompanied her and she experienced no discomfort during her pregnancy. On the twenty-fifth day of the first month of the Tibetan 16th Water Dragon Year, at the break of dawn, she gave birth painlessly to a little boy who was sitting in vajra posture in an upright position. That day was also the auspicious Dakini Ganachakra puja day. The placenta was wrapped around his body like monastic robes and his body gave off a rare aroma. Between his legs and waist were marks that resembled the stripes of tiger skin that was typically the lower garment that wrathful deities wore. The tent was pervaded by resplendent seven-colour light and there were soft thunders rumbling and numerous rainbows and occasional flashes of jewelled canopies and coloured banners in the sky. Relatives and neighbours who witnessed this rare phenomenon were astonished. These auspicious signs heralded the coming of the precious guru Lhoga Rinpoche whose birth was like the rising of the sun from the east illuminating the entire cosmos.

The Young Lhoga Rinpoche

After his birth, the boy did not touch his mother's milk for fifteen days. His uncle, Kundrag was extremely anxious and thus invited Kunzang Palgyi Nyima tulku to help ward off evil and to bless the child. When the tulku looked at the child's face that was like the perfect full moon in Autumn, he laughed and said, "This child has a very benevolent nature. He is an excellent vessel for the glorious Buddhadharma, with merits like the sun at the peak of a snowy mountain, shining forth in all directions." With that, the tulku joyfully gave the child special blessing. After that, the venerable teacher A-pe An-gyur conducted a refuge ceremony for the child and bestowed upon him the Dharma name Sherab Menbar or "Blazing Wisdom".

Back at Kathog monastery, Tulku Situ Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche observed in his meditation that the auspicious conditions had ripened. Thereupon, he sent his

personal assistants, Khenpo Jamyang Gyamtsen as well as Lama Gonpo Dorje to the Kulung grass plains secretly.

With the parent's names, the child's predicted features as well as the protectors' indications being confirmed, the search party requested to see the child. Lhoga Rinpoche who was then only two years of age was able to recognise the disguised search party as if they were old friends. He clasped the hands of both Khenpo and Lama and brought them home. Without any hesitation or doubt, he took from Khenpo's baggage an iron ring that had been the possession of Khenchen Legshe Jorden (his previous incarnation), and wore it on his own finger with great familiarity. This act shocked those who were present. After a series of examination, the search party was sure that this young boy was definitely the incarnation of Khenchen Legshe Jorden.

One year later, a big celebration was held in Kathog Monastery to welcome the boy, who was nearly three-year old then. Tens of thousands of monks and devotees came, dressed in their finest attire. At the same time, a big enthronement ceremony was held to recognise him as the incarnation of Khenchen Legshe Jorden. Rinpoche was then given the name Lodro Tenpi Gyamtsen. Lhoga tulku ("lovable tulku") as he is more commonly known was the nickname everyone used to call him by when he was an infant as everyone found him very lovable.⁶

In the years that followed, Lhoga Rinpoche accompanied his root teacher Situ Rinpoche, practising intensely in a Buddhist college that was on Nyingon Serdong Mountain, opposite Kathog Monastery.

When Rinpoche was seven years old, China underwent its well-known political changes. Lhoga Rinpoche had no choice but to return to the dwelling place of his previous life – the Yonten Jungkhung Monastery in Xin Long province. When they learned of the return of Lhoga Rinpoche, monks and laypersons alike in the area were greatly overjoyed. They prepared a hundred mounts to welcome Rinpoche and once again enthroned him on the highest throne in the Yonten Jungkhung Monastery.

Upon his return, Rinpoche came under the guidance of Lama Gonpo Dorje. In the daytime, he would study at the community school. At night, under the light of a butter lamp, he would be painstakingly studying the Dharma. Within a short span of time, he completed the Dzogchen preliminaries in the Kunzang Lamai Shelung ("Words of My Perfect Teacher"). This included the five common and uncommon preliminaries of the sutric-tantric practice.

Later, when the political situation worsened, Lhoga Rinpoche who was only nine years old then, was assigned to be a shepherd in a government cooperative. Relying on his innate pristine Wisdom and a mind that is unaffected by worldly concerns, the

⁶ As explained to the editor by Khenpo Chimed Tsering.

young Lhoga happily faced whatever difficulties he encountered with an immovable bodhicitta motivation.

In his fourteenth year, Lhoga Rinpoche was assigned by the cooperative to an even more desolate place to tend cattle, horses and goats, and to farm apples and vegetable. During this time, he was accompanied only by Khenpo Rangjung and both of them concentrated their energies on the study of Dharma apart from their daily labour. And it was during his practice at the dilapidated house meant for tending the fields that Rinpoche actually saw Manjushri and received the deity's unsurpassed Wisdom blessings. From then on, Lhoga Rinpoche's wisdom increased with each passing day.

When Rinpoche was twenty-one year old, the Chinese government relaxed its policy on religion. Rinpoche joyfully went to Tromge Monastery to seek the audience of the reputed mahasiddha Tromge A-rig and Gyamtsen Wozer, an old khenpo of Kathog Monastery. Being able to meet and seek teachings from these two luminaries of the Buddhist teachings gave Rinpoche more joy than anything else. Lhoga Rinpoche gave rose to an unwavering faith in these two teachers as being none other than Buddhas themselves and made the aspiration to rebuild the Kathog Monastery together with Khenpo Gyamtsen Wozer.

Later, Lhoga Rinpoche recognising Kathog Khenchen Gyamtsen Wozer as his root guru, received his pratimoksha³ vows from him and was given the Dharma name Thubten Tshultrim Lodro Tenpi Gyamtsen Palzangpo.

Upon their return to Kathog Monastery, they found that owing to the recent political upheaval, all the buildings had been demolished. Lhoga Rinpoche could only stay in a large tent to practice and conduct prayer ceremonies. In order to rebuild the monastery, Rinpoche had to spearhead the fund-raising efforts and be thrifty in his daily needs. When eating his meals, he would only take half of what he was given and offer the other half to the reconstruction team. Through five years of such effort, the new prayer hall of Kathog monastery was finally rebuilt over the ruins of its predecessor.

The Footprints of Lhoga Rinpoche

While leading the efforts to rebuild the monastery, Lhoga Rinpoche diligently engaged in the practice of Longchen Nyingthig Tsa-sum (Longchen Nyingthig Three Roots), Dzogpa Chenpo Longchen Nyingthig Ngondro, namely the Kunzang Lamai She-lung ("Words of My Perfect Teacher") preliminary practice of Dzogchen Nyingthig and various other Nyingmapa preliminaries. With his proper knowledge and view, Rinpoche was able to swiftly complete his sutric education. His pure aspiration and veneration for the Buddhadharma allowed him to rapidly make headway into the unsurpassed teachings of the Vajrayana.

Thereafter, taking various Nyingmapa high lamas as his teachers, Rinpoche received the Bodhisattva vows of the profound lineage and the samaya of empowerment⁷. At the seats of great masters from many different lineages, Rinpoche also received the complete empowerment of many different peaceful and wrathful deities, and protectors. At the same time, he also received the teachings, initiations and accomplished the practices of Gyud Sangwa Nyingpo Ci-don (General Meaning of Tantra's Secret Essence), Longchen Dzod Dun (Seven Treasures of Longchenpa), Nyingma Gyud Bum (Hundred Thousand Tantras of Nyingma), Ngeshe Dronme (Illuminating Lamp of Faith), Shi-Thro Bardoi Drug Thrid (Six Essentials within Peaceful-Wrathful), Longsal Thrid Gen (Extensive Commentary to Longsal) and Nyingthig Yabshi (Four Heart Essence Practices) among others from a wide variety of lineages. With his pure wisdom, Lhoga Rinpoche developed very deep insights into the nature of ultimate reality.

One of Lhoga Rinpoche's root guru was Tromge A-rig Rinpoche who was the heart disciple of Ngaggi Wangpo, the third lineage Dharma King of Longchenpa's Great Perfection lineage. The all-knowing A-rig Rinpoche who had gained mastery over the three times (past, present and future) and who was the master of the instructions on the ultimate stage of Great Perfection's ear-whispered teachings declared that Lhoga Rinpoche has accomplished the Great Perfection and can well be regarded as the "Dharma Lord of the True Meaning" who is capable of spreading the secret teaching widely. Following that, he passed the root Dharma lineage to Lhoga Rinpoche and gave him the permission to teach the Great Perfection in order to maintain this lineage which was the heart-essence of the Nyingmapa teachings.

Subsequently, Lhoga Rinpoche returned to Kathog Monastery and entered retreat to practise intensively. He personally saw the various deities who appeared and blessed him.

One day, Khenchen Gyamtsen Wozer visited Lhoga Rinpoche in his retreat room and said affectionately, "Last night, I dreamt that I gave you many variegated patterned cloth. This morning, I observed that this is really an auspicious sign that you will accomplish many activities. This is really great!" When Lhoga Rinpoche completed his retreat successfully, Khenchen Gyamtsen Wozer was about to enter nirvana. Before doing so, he entrusted his bell, Dharma hat, one set each of various other gold and silver Dharma instruments, a Guru Padmasambhava statue and a carpet to Lhoga Rinpoche and exhorted him, "In order to fulfill the wishes of Situ Rinpoche, you should protect and maintain both the monastic college and retreat centre and ensure that they are rebuilt and flourish. You should also take care of Kathog Monastery's regular great prayer festivals. It is very important to take every opportunity to propagate the Dharma to ensure the continuity of the Kathog's lineage and to benefit sentient beings. You should bear the onerous task of propagating the Buddhadharma and ensure that the pure nectar of Dharma saturates this world." With this, Khenchen also gave Lhoga Rinpoche an initiation to

⁷ Vows can be classified as outer, inner and hidden or secret vows. Pratimoksha vows are outer vows; Bodhisattva vows are inner vows; and the samaya of empowerment are hidden or secret vows.

the throne and recognised him as the successor to the Nyingmapa lineages of Longchenpa and Longsal and as a fully qualified Great Perfection teacher and guide of these two Dharma systems.

As the heart-son of the Venerable Gyamtsen Wozer, Lhoga Rinpoche through his unbiased view and immutable faith and devotion towards his guru, accomplished the practices of the lineages passed down to him. Lhoga Rinpoche demonstrated his realisation of the true appearance of reality through his humility, patience, diligence, purity of mind, compassion and selflessness.

After the parinirvana of the Venerable Gyamtsen Wozer, Lhoga Rinpoche attended meticulously to the details of his teacher's funeral. After he had built a golden stupa to house the body of his Guru in the main hall of Kathog Monastery, he left on a pilgrimage to visit the holy sites of Guru Rinpoche and related temples in Lhasa. In Samye Monastery, Orgyen Mindrolling Monastery, Jokhang Temple, Ramoche Monastery, Potala Palace, Sera Monastery, Drepung Monastery, Ganden Monastery, Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, Rinpoche presented khatas (offering scarves), offered a hundred thousand ganachakra feasts and a hundred thousand lamps and various other great offerings. He also gold plated the statues in Samye Monastery and Jokhang Temple while making aspirations for sentient beings, and consequently received much transcendental blessings and prophetic signs.

After observing that the karmic connections with sentient beings were almost ripe, Lhoga Rinpoche who was deeply versed in scholastic knowledge of Dharma and who had perfectly consummated Buddhahood while taking the aspect of humbly pursuing his own studies, started at the same time to turn the great wheel of Dharma for the benefit of the ordained in Tibet.

Due to the great merit arising from Rinpoche's complete mastery of the teachings from both lineages of Longchenpa and Longsal, and due to the closeness and directness of the two lineages to him, he was approached for teachings by thousands of other monks who came from thousands of miles away while he was leading his disciples in their practice. Lhoga Rinpoche had more than a hundred thousand students who took initiation and received teachings from him in Tibet alone.

At Kathog Monastery, Lhoga Rinpoche imparted the transmission for the Ngan-gyur Kama (Scriptures from the Early Translation), Rinchen Ter-dzod (Great Precious Hidden Treasure), Ka Ling Shi-Thro (Peaceful and Wrathful of Karma Lingpa), Dud Long Ter Cho (Dundul Longsal Dharma Treasure) and various other initiations and practice of unsurpassable great Dharma to the Eminent Chag-tsha tulku, Dza Kachog tulku, and various great practitioners and monks.

In order to repay the kindness of the elders at Xin Long Province for looking after him, Rinpoche gave the initiations of Rinchen Ter-dzod (Great Precious Hidden Treasure), Dud Long Ter Cho (Dundul Longsal Dharma Treasure), Nyingma Gyud Bum (Hundred Thousand Nyingma Tantra), Nyingthig Ter Pod (Treasure Book of the Heart

Essence) and various other sutric and tantric teachings to a large crowd of monastics and laity. At Dhakki Drug Tod Monastery's Dharma celebration ceremony, he imparted the Guru Tshen Gyed (Eight Manifestations of Guru Rinpoche) to Shinjiong tulku, Dolo tulku, Jamyang tulku, Xin Long Wonpo tulku and thirty other tulkus and khenpos. At Zurpa monastery, he conferred the Shi-Thro (Hundred Peaceful and Wrathful Deities) to Dolo tulku, A-Cho Lama, Shuggang Ma Trul and various other excellent practitioners. At Tsara Monastery, he gave the initiation of Rinchen Terdzod (Great Precious Hidden Treasure) etc.

In order to further benefit sentient beings, during these years, Lhoga Rinpoche's footsteps graced many monasteries in the inner and outer Tibetan regions.

At a place called Golog in Qinghai, at the invitation of Khenchen Munsel Rinpoche, Lhoga Rinpoche gave the initiation of the great hidden treasure Dud Long Ter Cho (Dundul Longsal Dharma Treasure) in its entirety to the disciples of Khenchen Munsel. At the same time, he specially gave Munsel Rinpoche the initiations of Amitabha and Amitayus of the Kathog lineage. In Tibet, at the Mar Kham Gyalse monastery, at the invitation of Melong Rinpoche, he bestowed the initiation and transmission of the Rinchen Terdzod (Great Precious Hidden Treasure). At Sichuan Dege Tsashul Monastery, Yunnan Dechen Yundrug Monastery, Tibet's Chamdo Tagmo Monastery and other places, he gave many tulkus and monks the initiation of Dud Long Ter Cho (Dundul Longsal Dharma Treasure).

Lhoga Rinpoche also accepted the invitation of the current luminary of the Nyingma tradition, the Eminent Chatral Rinpoche, to go to India's Kathog branch monastery where he gave the incarnated Dunjom (Dudjom) Rinpoche, Kathog Situ Rinpoche, Wonpo Rinpoche and many other tulkus, lamas and khenpos the Dud Long Ter Cho (Dundul Longsal Dharma Treasure) initiation. Lhoga Rinpoche also performed a consecration ceremony for Bero Rinpoche's monastery, and gave his monks the transmissions and initiations of "Kama Transmission", Dud Long Ter Cho (Dundul Longsal Dharma Treasure) etc.

In 1991, Lhoga Rinpoche observed that his karmic connections to China had ripened and therefore acceded to the request of Venerable Wei Yin (the abbot of Bai Yan temple in Da Yi Xian) and his four disciples for initiations and teachings. Upon reaching the temple, Lhoga Rinpoche was approached by a big dog which requested him for blessings that will help it to journey safely through the death stage, et cetera. When Rinpoche was giving the initiation, he saw Guru Padmasambhava in person. Guru Padmasambhava praised Lhoga Rinpoche for his great compassion in liberating sentient beings and gave Rinpoche his complete blessings. Due to Lhoga Rinpoche's immeasurable aspirations and realisations, many of the Buddhist laity and ordained immediately gave rise to an unwavering faith in him and the Nyingma teachings. Lhoga Rinpoche transmitted Dud Long Ter Cho (Dundul Longsal Dharma Treasure), Five Foundations, Chenrezig Practice, Revered Guru Padmasambhava Practice and other various profound Dharma at the temple. Later, Lhoga Rinpoche gave the Amitabha initiation of Ka Dampa Desheg tradition at Qiong Lai Yin Siang temple.

Lhoga Rinpoche has been invited as well to visit and propagate the Buddhadharma in Tibet, Qinghai, Shanxi, Beijing, Tian Jing, Liao Ning, Black Dragon Lake, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhe Jiang, Guang Dong, Gui Zhou, Yunnan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Nepal, India, United States and various other countries.

Some of these initiations need to be given in a religious ceremony that can last for one to two months. The difficulties involved are evident. However, in order to fulfill the wishes of his predecessor and to lead sentient beings to realisation and liberation, Lhoga Rinpoche did not spare any efforts in carrying out the ceremonies and teachings, endowing them with an endless flow of blessings and merit that resulted from his great realisation and practice. He was able to cut through every obstacle and inauspicious coincidences, gather perfect virtues and bring great satisfaction to everyone who participated. Thus, his empowerment ceremonies were always specially commended.

Zung Phug Lung Temple

- the place where Lhoga Rinpoche practised in a previous life

This is where Lhoga Rinpoche attained enlightenment two lives ago as Horpo Shahkya Gyamtsen. Horpo Shahkya Gyamtsen was highly regarded for his sublime qualities. Following his dissolution into the great transformation rainbow body, many devotees saw his form in this mountain and in order to remember him, the people there created a circular enclosure around the place where they saw him. The present Lhoga Rinpoche built a temple called Zung Phug Lung at this very site based on the perimeters marked out by the devotees.

1992 – Thousand Sangha Grand Ceremony

In order to restore and uphold the tradition that had been started by the Venerable Khedrub Yeshe Bumpa, Lhoga Rinpoche assisted the Eminent Lord of Refuge Shinjiong tulku and over ten other important rinpoches of Kathog Monastery in organising the Kathog Thousand Sangha Grand Ceremony (Kathog Tong Thra Monlam Chenmo) in 1992. The enthronement of the incarnation of Wonpo Rinpoche from Bhutan took place at the same time. This was also when Lhoga Rinpoche obtained approval from the relevant department in the government to assume the eighty-fourth abbotship of Kathog Monastery.

1995 – Kathog Monastery Conducts the Ten Thousand Sangha Grand Ceremony

After becoming abbot of Kathog Monastery, Lhoga Rinpoche presided over the Ten-Thousand Sangha Grand Ceremony (Thri Thra Monlam Chenmo) in 1995. He invited many Nyingmapa monks who were practising primarily the Kathog Dharma Lineage and all the devotees in China. This culminated in a crowd of over four hundred

thousand people congregating in one hall practising the mandala of three kayas⁸, praying for the Buddhadharma to flourish and for there to be peace in the world. During the ceremony, the enthronement of the tulku⁹ of Khenchen Gyamtsen Wozer took place. In this unprecedented grandeur, the assistant mayor of Szechuan, Yaling Dorje, also came to offer his respects and best wishes.

Lhoga Rinpoche Among the People

Displaying extraordinary means

In order to benefit and subdue the sentient beings still bounded by grasping at things of ordinary life, a realised being at ease in the pristine nature of Wisdom could occasionally display some extraordinary manifestations.

When the young Lhoga Rinpoche replaced his milk teeth, Lama A-nyi kept one. After many years, he discovered that the tooth had spontaneously produced many five-coloured relics.

When Rinpoche was still a child, Jamgyal lama's cousin who was only over ten years of age, accidentally fell from the second storey of Jungkhung Monastery and broke one of her front incisor teeth. She was crying over this when the young Lhoga Rinpoche consoled her saying, "Don't be sad, you will grow another new good tooth." Later, the cousin who had already replaced her milk teeth indeed grew another new front incisor.

Another event that happened during Lhoga Rinpoche's youth was when he and Lama Sherab Nyima were tending a herd of yaks. One day, after both had driven the herd up the hill, they were reciting scriptures and playing at the bottom of the hill. When it was dark and time to return home, they suddenly realised that they had yet to round up the herd. Sherab Nyima was anxious to the point of crying. Lhoga Rinpoche consoled him saying, "Don't be anxious, I will recite some prayers to help you gather the cows!" Thereupon Rinpoche started chanting and gathering the stones around him into a pile. Shortly, the yaks, one by one, came down the hill by themselves and amassed around them.

Once, the young Lhoga Rinpoche and an old lady by the name of Legmo was in the wilderness tending the sheep for the Chinese cooperative. A heavy rain fell and there were no firestarters to make tea or a meal. Rinpoche gathered some wet wood, blessed them and the fire started spontaneously.

Whenever he lost the key to his room, all that Lhoga Rinpoche needed to do was blow and the lock would unfasten.

⁸ Dharmakaya (Reality Body), Sambhogakaya (Enjoyment Body) and Nirmanakaya (Emanation Body)

⁹ Nirmanakaya or reincarnation

Once, when a teapot was accidentally broken, Rinpoche used his saliva to glue the broken pieces together and it was as good as new.

When Lhoga Rinpoche was having his hair cut, Tragyal Rinpoche kept some of the cut hair in the prayer hall. Before long, it was discovered that the hair had yielded many round crystal-clear relics.

Once, someone was possessed and a bystander quickly threw a little of Lhoga Rinpoche's hair into the fire. When the possessed man inhaled the smoke, he immediately recovered his senses.

When Rinpoche was riding a horse to a place called Kha-nyal, a disciple who was accompanying him took a picture of him. Later, when the film was developed, the photo showed the horse with Lhoga Rinpoche on it soaring in the air. Below the horse were many satin silks and auspicious symbols.

When Lhoga Rinpoche was teaching at the Yunnan Yundrug temple, once again there were the auspicious signs that had accompanied the arrival of Situ Rinpoche many years ago such as a strong earth tremor and soft thunders. When the initiation was given, the tormas in the Lotus Flame Mandala grew many fine hair-like substances.

When Lhoga Rinpoche was giving the Dud Long Ter Cho (Dundul Longsal Dharma Treasure) initiation at the Dege Tsashul temple, a sphere of light that was about the size of a bowl appeared from the mandala. It was as luminous as the moon and rose slowly above the mandala. After circling the mandala clockwise three times, the light dissolved into the mandala. The disciples present were completely amazed.

When Lhoga Rinpoche was teaching phowa (a practice for attaining rebirth in the Buddha's pureland at the point of death) at Do Lha Ne Nang, seven nuns instantly passed away due to the formidable force of the special blessings. Rinpoche saw that it was not yet the right time for them to leave and thus gave them a blessing that would preserve their lives. Through his extraordinary abilities, he retrieved their consciousnesses so that they could continue to live and complete the entire course of their practice.

Many of Lhoga Rinpoche's disciples have had similar experiences. Whenever they meet with difficulties in the course of their practice, the wish-fulfilling Lhoga Rinpoche would appear in their dreams at the right time to give blessings and special instructions. Following this, the problems were easily resolved.

Auspicious signs accompanied Rinpoche

When a disciple had the chance to accompany Lhoga Rinpoche, he or she would realize that wherever Rinpoche went, auspicious signs very frequently occurred.

On a pilgrimage to the Buddhist holy site of Emei Mountain, auspicious snow fell like flowers, and glowing in the sky were many intersecting five-coloured halos.

On a pilgrimage to Yunnan Chicken Foot Mountain (Riwo Chakang), Lhoga Rinpoche met a lama who was wearing tattered robes near the peak. After Rinpoche and the other pilgrims made offerings to the lama, he vanished mysteriously and no one could find any traces of him. After ascending the mountain, the clouds in the sky had the shape of the Chinese characters “Fo” and “Mi Le Fo” (which means “Buddha” and “Maitreya Buddha” respectively). Many clumps of clouds also appeared bearing the semblance of Buddhas. Those Chinese and Tibetan pilgrims who witnessed this were overawed.

Once, Lhoga Rinpoche, Shinjiong tulku, Wonpo tulku and three other tulkus set off on a pilgrimage to Wu Tai Mountain. Before setting off, everyone was filled with great hopes, but was uncertain if they would be able to meet Vimalamitra and the great Bodhisattva Manjushri. They ascended the mountain early in the morning with Lhoga Rinpoche leading the way. On the way, they met an old lama who was wearing a blue shirt and a lower Tibetan skirt, holding many ganachakra offering food substances. Everyone felt that he was not an ordinary person and greeted him. The old lama offered the party the food substances he was carrying and gave everyone a hand rosary. He gave Shinjiong tulku a red one, Wonpo tulku a black one, and Lhoga Rinpoche both a red and a black one. When the old lama gave them the food, Wonpo tulku declined his portion because he felt it was too dirty. But when everyone who ate the food said that they felt it contained great blessings. Wonpo tulku realised his mistake and looked for the old lama for some to try. However, the old lama was nowhere to be found. After the event, Shinjiong tulku checked the karmic traces and remarked that the old lama was really the emanation of the lineage lama Vimalamitra.

In Autumn 2001, when Lhoga Rinpoche was giving the last initiation of the Rinchen Ter-dzod (Great Precious Hidden Treasure) at Xin Long Tsara temple, there appeared in the sky two immense seven-colour clouds, and flocks of rarely seen auspicious birds assembled above the prayer hall. They were witnessed by many disciples who were listening to the teachings outside the hall. When Rinpoche had finished the initiation and was on his way to Chengdu, masses of seven-colour clouds appeared and followed Rinpoche's vehicle. The people who were travelling together with Rinpoche were astonished at the sight when they were having their meal beside the stove.

Rinpoche and non-human entities

Lhoga Rinpoche's extraordinary miracles and blessings did not only convince his human disciples and filled them with delight and devotion but also many non-human entities, who took refuge in him.

When Lhoga Rinpoche was farming at the top of mount A-khu Norbu, black smoke suddenly issued from the ground. From it emanated five persons dressed in black and riding black horses. When they dashed at Rinpoche in a bid to capture him, Rinpoche with his immeasurable compassion was neither angry nor afraid. Through the power of immovable faith in his Guru and the Triple Gems, Rinpoche overcame the attack of the spirits and subdued them.

One day, the great female protector Palden Lhamo actually appeared before Rinpoche and presented to him a skullcup of fresh blood and vowed to always protect him. After this, there were many signs of the protectress' protective activities.

When giving an initiation at Gong Jue Da Mo temple, nearing the completion of the sky offering ritual that took place on a grass plain, some demons audaciously disturbed the ceremony with strong winds and heavy rains. Large hailstones pelted the ground. Rinpoche immediately blessed the ceremony. From adjacent to the tent where Rinpoche was reciting his texts, a thousand strong crowd saw two huge dragons glided up to the sky in a dance, giving their protection to the ceremony and Rinpoche. Shortly, the clouds dispersed and the rain ceased. The sky was crimson red and when the entire Dharma ceremony had been concluded, the two gigantic dragons flew off.

When Rinpoche was on pilgrimage in India, he sat in meditation beneath the Bodhi tree under which Shakyamuni Buddha had attained enlightenment. A squirrel bit off a piece of the tree bark and presented it to Rinpoche by placing it on his meditation robe. Shinjong tulku's brother, Sang-gye Kyab and his mother, witnessed the entire scene and were very surprised. Sang-gye Kyab commented with great emotion, "I have been here with many others over ten times, but I have not seen this strange scene before."

When Lhoga Rinpoche visited the place where many years ago Shakyamuni Buddha had preached the Dharma to the mermaids, a white snake appeared. Many locals were mystified at this incident, saying that they have never seen this snake before.

Role Model

Lhoga Rinpoche possesses the compassion of Chenrezig, the aspiration vows of Ksitigarbha, the activity of Samantabhadra and wisdom of Manjushri. When he teaches the Dharma, he teaches according to the capacities of the student, using logic to convince them. The extent of his all-encompassing heart, ingenuity and skilfulness is hard to measure. Rinpoche often told his students, "Of utmost importance is refuge, aspiration to benefit others and a deep conviction in cause-and-effect." He was strict in his training, ensuring that disciples proceeded progressively, beginning with the foundational practices and sutric teachings.

The Wish-fulfilling Lhoga Rinpoche who is pure and undefiled from the beginning with pristine and flawless body, speech, mind, qualities and activities, parallels Shakyamuni Buddha in his perfection. Rinpoche is actually a great unbiased scholar, with a humble character and who is always eager to learn more. He deals with situations calmly and with a sharp, penetrating mind. He is conscientious and rigorous in his studies. He rides the fundamental vehicle of upholding the vinaya or discipline; the great vehicle of generating bodhicitta; and the vajra vehicle of internal realization, while engaging in the manifold activities of a Bodhisattva to benefit beings. He integrated both spiritual and material, daily life and Buddhism as one seamless whole. At all times, he set himself as an example and role model for his disciples.

Despite being a greatly revered Nyingmapa tantric master from Kham, the region where the Nyingma tradition was established and from where it expanded out, Rinpoche remained humble and approachable. Wherever he went, he would always offer lamps or tea personally to the monastery or sangha. To those monks and temples that were in difficulties, Rinpoche would always do his utmost to help. Till today, besides sponsoring forty children and orphans from poor families in their study of the Tibetan language, he also looked after twenty elderly people in their daily lives, thirty-two retreatants in Kathog Monastery, two retreatants in Zung Phug Lung Temple and thirteen retreatants in Xin Long. Even more praiseworthy was the Guru Padmasambhava Grand Global Commemoration Ceremony in 2004 that was staged by the penetrating clarity of Rinpoche's mind, a clarity that is like a moon in a clear sky. Lhoga Rinpoche toiled tirelessly for the benefit of beings, fulfilling the aspiration of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to work for sentient beings.

*Tibet's Nyingmapa unsurpassed Secret Awareness-Holder and guiding teacher, Kathog's Sublime Golden Rosary Lineage Holder, to you the Lord of Refuge, I and all sentient beings go for refuge. The foremost vajra lion jewel-like teacher Lhoga tulku, for the benefit of the doctrine, in particular the Kathog root stream of teachings from its foundation to its entirety, propagated it widely, in order that sentient beings may swiftly and firmly enter the highway to liberation, achieving the final result with unflagging effort and forever be free from any laziness! **May your magnificent activities, like the spiritual water of an unceasing river, nourish the ten directions!***

Editor's note to the English translation:

According to Khenpo Chimed Tsering, the material on the earlier part of Lhoga Rinpoche's life came from a biography of Lhoga Rinpoche written by his late teacher, Khenchen Gyamtsen Wozer. Inclusion of later material resulted in an expanded biography that was published in Mandarin in China in 2004.

Editor, 8th November 2004.