

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF GURU RINPOCHE'S LIFE

By
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Guru Rinpoche is said to have been miraculously born in India in the middle of Lake Danakosha on a lotus flower, symbolizing the original purity of his mind. Raised by King Indrabodhi, he was one day dancing on the roof of the palace when his trident slipped out of his hand, accidentally killing the son of one of the ministers, which caused him to be expelled from the palace. Going off on his own, he practiced and studied the dharma as a monk, he developed into a master dharma scholar, and he did intensive retreats in charnel grounds and caves, developing as a yogi. He studied and received empowerments from many tantric masters, including the great mahasiddha Sri Simha.

On one occasion, he went to a nunnery where he taught the dharma to the nuns and turned all 500 of them into his students, but when the local king and his ministers learned a man was in the nunnery, they presumed he was a fake teacher and sent in soldiers who arrested Guru Rinpoche. The king sentenced him to be burned at the stake, but even though he was left to burn for 7 days, when they went to check on him, they found him sitting on a lotus in the middle of a lake.

On another occasion he defeated 500 non-Buddhist teachers through debate and miracle at Bodhgaya, the Buddha's place of enlightenment.

While on retreat in a cave in Nepal, the country went into a 3 year drought causing disease and famine. Guru Rinpoche, through spiritual means, was able to end the drought and pacify the spread of disease and famine.

Invited to Tibet to teach the dharma, he entered the king's court, with both himself and the king wondering who would bow and submit to whom. Knowing that if the king submitted to him, Buddhism would spread effectively in Tibet, he refused to bow and instead dazzled the court with his brilliance and authentic presence, which then submitted itself to him. Thereafter he oversaw the building of Samye, the first Buddhist monastery in Tibet, and was essential in establishing the beginning of the monastic community in Tibet. With some other Buddhist teachers from India, he gathered together and trained in translation some bright Tibetan pupils. Under his oversight, they eventually translated into Tibetan all the Buddhist sutras and tantras and the majority of the important treatises on them.

Traveling all around Tibet, he transmitted countless teachings and empowerments. Jamgon Kongtrul the Great lists his most important students:

It is impossible to count exactly how many students in Tibet received empowerment from Padmakara [Guru Rinpoche] in person, but the most renowned are the original twenty-five disciples, the intermediate 25 disciples, and the later 17 and 21 disciples. There were 80 of his students who attained rainbow body at Yerpa and also the 108 meditators of Chuwori, the 30 tantrikas at Yangdzong, the 55 realized ones at Sheldrang. Of female disciples there the 25 dakini students and seven yoginis. Many of these close disciples had blood lines that have continued to the present day.

Guru Rinpoche was famous for subjugating gods, demons, and spirits, which would constitute the subtle psychic energy of a country. He conquered these entities throughout Nepal and Tibet, making them into protectors of the dharma, as a way of pacifying the country of its aggression and making it a place where the dharma would flourish. Having attained omniscient wisdom and complete mastery of enlightened power and skillful means, he would overwhelm beings intent on creating obstacles to the dharma. Trungpa Rinpoche in *Crazy Wisdom* describes one such episode:

Tibet is supposedly ringed by snow-capped mountains, and there are twelve goddesses associated with those mountains who are guardians of the country. When Padmasambhava [Guru Rinpoche] came to Tibet, one of those goddesses refused to surrender to him. She ran away from him...She ran up a mountain thinking she was running away from Padmasambhava and found him already ahead of her, dancing on the mountaintop. She ran away down a valley and found Padmasambhava already at the bottom, sitting at the confluence of that valley and the neighboring one. No matter where she ran, she couldn't get away. Finally she decided to jump into the lake and hide there. Padmasambhava turned the lake into boiling iron, and she emerged as a kind of skeleton being. Finally, she had to surrender because Padmasambhava was everywhere....One of the expressions of crazy wisdom is that you can't get away of it. It's everywhere...

According to Jamgon Kongtrul, Guru Rinpoche spent 55 years in Tibet. It's said he went all around Tibet, leaving no more than an arm span without his footprint on it. One of the most important things that he did was hide scriptures and religious objects (called *terma* or "treasure") to be discovered in the future for the sake of future generations. Jamgon Kongtrul says,

The reasons for hiding these *termas* were to prevent the teachings of Secret Mantra [from being] destroyed, to avoid that the Vajrayana is corrupted or modified by intellectuals, to preserve the blessings and to benefit future disciples. For each of these hidden treasures Padmakara [Guru Rinpoche] predicted the time of the disclosure, the person who would reveal them, and the destined recipients who would hold the teachings.

One of the most famous *terma* texts is *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, about how to use the death process to liberate oneself, which Guru Rinpoche wrote.

Guru Rinpoche made many prophecies about the future of Tibet, and one reason he left behind the *terma* teachings was to provide a way to preserve the practice of the dharma in the face of its repression at various points in history. He predicted the coming of King Langdarma in Tibet within a couple of generations, who almost completely destroyed Buddhism during his reign. He

also accurately predicted the invasion of Tibet by China almost twelve centuries before it happened. Chogyam Trungpa says,

The prophecies tell us that in the end Tibet would be conquered by China, that the Chinese would enter the country in the Year of the Horse, that they would rush in in the manner of a horse. The Chinese Communists did invade in the Year of the Horse, and they built roads from China to Tibet and all over Tibet introduced motor vehicles.

He also predicted, it is said, the coming of the United States of America and many of our technological developments like airplanes.

In many parts of Tibet, he left his hand and footprints in solid rock, as inspiration to people in the future.

Guru Rinpoche was an incomparable master of the dharma, so accomplished and crucial to the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet, he's called by the Tibetans "the second Buddha." His enlightened activities go well beyond this short summary of them. The true significance of Guru Rinpoche is his complete union with the state of Buddhahood and it's unimaginable potential and compassionate activities for the sake of sentient beings. Jamgon Kongtrul cites Yeshe Tsogyal, one of Guru Rinpoche's most important disciples:

Dakini Yeshe Tsogyal had a vision in which she saw a manifestation of Guru Rinpoche called Immense Vajra Ocean in the direction to the east. Each of the pores in his body held one billion realms and in each realm there were one billion world systems. In each of these world systems there were one billion Guru Rinpoches who each created one billion emanations. Each of these emanations carried out the activity of taming one billion disciples. She then saw the same display in each of the other directions and in the center.

By supplicating Guru Rinpoche's blessing, we are supplicating for a connection to this same unimaginable potentiality in ourselves, a power which is based on the naked reality of our lives as they are right now. Trungpa Rinpoche observes that "the principle of Padmasambhava [Guru Rinpoche] consists in freedom from any speculative ideas or theories or activity of watching oneself. It is the living experience of emotions and experiences without a watcher. Because we are Buddha already, we are Padmasambhava already." Guru Rinpoche's life shows us what is possible, not in some spiritual fantasy realm, but on the basis of who and what we are right now, if only we're willing to open up to it.

Biographies of Guru Rinpoche usually end with his farewell to his disciples at Gungtang Pass, when he leaves Tibet, his work there finished. Yeshe Tsogyal, who was present for this event, describes it in her biography of Guru Rinpoche:

"As I now take leave in a miraculous way,
You cannot follow me with your material bodies.
Exert yourself constantly in making supplications,
And you will always be in my presence."

Having sung this, Padmasambhava mounted a beam of sunlight and in the flicker of a moment flew away into the sky. From the southwestern direction, he turned his face to look back and sent forth a light ray of immeasurable loving kindness that established the disciples in the state of nonreturn [to samsara]. Accompanied by a cloudlike assembly of outer and inner dakinis making musical offerings, he then went to the southwestern continent of Chamara.

This account of some of the buddha activity of Guru Rinpoche was composed by Gary Allen Kunga Tsultrim in September-October of 2006, in order to spread the light of his teachings into new places. May it be auspicious!

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