

Citation

Sangay Wangdi (2009) A Brief Account of Namkhai Nyingpo and his Reincarnations, *Journal of Bhutan Studies*, 21 (Winter 2009), pp.1-6.

A Brief Account of Namkhai Nyinpo and his reincarnations

*Sangay Wangdi**

Om Swasti!

During the era of peerless Buddha Sakyamuni,
The Ancient Tradition of the Early Translation
Spread and flourish in Tibet, the land of snow,
Under the guidance of three outstanding figures,
Together with the eminent translator like Namkhai Nyingpo of
Nub

At the feet of the glorious Namkhai Nyingpo, I prostrate!

These words of homage introduce a brief account of Namkhai Nyingpo (*nam mkha'i snying po*), a famous monk and one of the twenty-five chief disciples (*rje 'bang nyer lnga*) of Guru Rinpoche. He was the heart son of Guru Rinpoche who became an accomplished siddha through esoteric practice on Vishudha Sadhana (*yang dag sgrub sde*), the deity of mind. The lineage of His Holiness is continued to the present day through successive reincarnations.

During the 8th century, Trisong Deutsen (*kbri srong de'u btsan*, 790-844) out of his deep desire to make the teachings of the Buddha flourish in the land of snow invited Shantarakshita (*zhi ba 'tsho*), the Abbot of Nalanda University and a powerful Siddha Guru Padmasambhava of the same university to build a monastery at Samye.

* A former researcher at Dzongkha Development Commission (DDC), Thimphu, Bhutan.

Trisong Deutsen issued an edict that the first five monks ordained by Master Bodhisattva be venerated as supreme beings of respect. Namkhai Nyingpo was one of the first five monks. He received innumerable cycles of ripening empowerment and pith instructions both directly from Guru Padmasambhava and Master Bodhisattva. The King had them trained in translation from the Indian languages into Tibetan. At the command of Trisong Deutsen, an adept translator, travelled to India to receive the Vajrayana teachings of the Secret Mantra from the learned and accomplished Indian siddhas like Rolang Dewa and Kukuradz. The Vajrayana teaching of the Secret Mantra is the pith instructions for attaining the supreme accomplishment of Mahamudra (*phyag rgya chen po*) in a single lifetime. Through the power of karmic link, Namkhai Nyingpo received empowerment and essential transmissions from the accomplished Hungkara (*hung chen ka ra*), the Indian Siddha, one of the eight Vidyadharas (*rig 'dzin brgyad*), according to the prophecy. Having bestowed the Empowerment which is the root of Secret Mantra (*gsang sngags*), Hungkara gradually opened up the mandalas of the Fifty-Eight Crescent and the nine Crescents. Namkhai Nyingpo had the vision of Great Glorious One with a consort and attained the supreme and common accomplishment.

Namkhai Nyingpo was exceptionally intelligent and industrious. He possessed great merit to (who) could walk with his feet the width of a hand above the ground that the twenty-eight ishvari goddesses obeyed his command. On receiving the invitation from Dharma King, Namkhai Nyingpo arrived miraculously in Tibet and displayed his power by cutting open his chest with a curved knife of white silver. He showed Trisong Detsen the vision of the forty-two peaceful deities in the upper part of his chest and the fifty-eight heruka deities in the lower part. The Dharma King felt confident of such accomplishment that he regarded Namkhai Nyingpo as a supreme object of veneration. From him, Trisong

Detsen received the glorious Vishudha Sadhana teaching. Namkhai Nyingpo was also one of the eight chief recipients of Eight Pronouncements (*bka' brgyad* of Mandalas), a Sadhana teaching transmitted by Guru Rinpoche at the cave hermitage of Chimphu. The flowers of Namkhai Nyingpo of Nub fell on the mandala of Vashuddha Mind; so this particular tantra was destined to Namkhai Nyingpo through the practice of which he could travel by riding on the rays of the sun. An imprint of his body and foot which he left can be seen even to this day.

The evil Bon ministers became envious and laid ambush for the lives of the Dharma King and Namkhai Nyingpo. On discovering this plot through his divination Namkhai Nyingpo exclaimed fiercely, HUNG! HUNG! By clapping his hands he struck a lightning bolt from the sky and spun it around the fingertip of his threatening hand gesture. It made some of the evil minded ministers to faint and speechless while others were paralyzed with fear.

Similarly in another occasion Namkhai Nyingpo revealed his amazing signs of his achievement in occult powers by planting his teak dagger at the boundary between the sunlight and the shade. The sun turned red and disappeared as he later took out the dagger from the boundary of sunlight and shade. He miraculously transformed the boulders and pebbles into grain seeds and then flew in the sky. Delighted with such display of miraculously powers, Trisong Detsen expressed inconceivable gratitude to all the translators and proclaimed excellent Namkhai Nyingpo and Vairocana as his Vajra Masters. In presence of people from all walks of life the King prostrated before them with unflagging faith and became the most venerated tantric master in Tibet.

Then Namkhai Nyingpo visited upper, middle and lower valleys of Tibet and hid many profound termas for the benefits of future beings. As specifically prophesied by Guru Padmasambhava, he brought immense benefits to the sentient beings through many forms of manifestation. While meditating in Spindled Long Cave of Kharchu (*mkhar chu*) at Lhodra (*lho brag*), he had visions of numerous yidams and attained the Vidyadhara (*rig 'dzin*) level of mahamudra. Finally he departed for celestial realms without leaving a corpse behind.

Namkhai Nyingpo, the crown ornament of all the scholars and siddhas of the land of snows, manifested his enlightened activity as a Terton known as Jangchu Lingpa Palgi Gyaltshen. He then reincarnated as Terton Dawa Gyalchen and revealed Tercho concealed by Guru Rinpoche for the sake of worthy people in future generations.

During the age of degeneration through his karmic destiny and previous aspirations, Namkhai Nyingpo was reborn in 1670 with many amazing signs to Tshewang Ngedup and Logo, as his parents were known in the vicinity of Lhodra Shartsen Drolung, located nearby the seat of Guru Chowang. Even as a little boy of eight he was endowed with astonishing intelligence that the Dalai Lama the Great Fifth recognized him as the direct incarnation of Namkhai Nyingpo. He learned to read and write and developed an understanding of the meaning of the Dharma effortlessly, simply upon exposure to these subjects. Thereafter, he establishing a permanent seat at Lhodra Kharchu and since then the golden rosary of Namkhai Nyingpo lineage had been passed down in an unbroken transmission. His incarnations have continued to the present and his enlightened activity has spread far and wide.

The successive reincarnations are:

Rigzin Lobzang (1670), 1st incarnation
Kelzang Pema Wangchuck, 2nd incarnation
Jampal Ngawang Drukdra, 3rd incarnation
Kinzang Ggawang Namgyal, 4th incarnation
Kelzang Sangnag Thegchog, 5th incarnation
Pema Tenzin Thinley Namgyal, 6th incarnation

The present Namkhai Nyingpo po, the 7th reincarnation Jigme Thinley Namgyal was born in eastern Bhutan in 1966 at Tongshong to Tshering Gyaltshen and Sherabmo, the wisdom Dakini. At the time of his birth, many wonderful signs appeared. The rainbow appeared over the valley in the sunshine and the drinking water turned into white milk. The first word the child spoke was "Kharchu, Kharchu". He could remember his past lives clearly and he even vividly recognized his previous disciples. Through his pure wisdom vision, the 16th Karmapa Rigpai Dorji impeccably recognized the boy as the legitimate reincarnation of Namkhai Nyingpo. He was able to identify the belongings of his previous reincarnation displayed before him without a slightest hesitation and even went to the extent of calling his earlier disciples by their names, further validating him as a true reincarnation of *nam mkba'i snying po*. This fore-knowledge arose an immutable faith in his disciples.

Subsequently, his previous monk-disciples stationed at Bumthang as refugees formally enthroned him with elaborate ceremonies. He began his studies under his grandfather Geshe Pekar and Khenpo Namdrol. When he was taught he could comprehend through mere indications. He studied many texts and commentaries. While in audience with the 16th Karmapa Rangjung Rigpai Dorji (*rang 'byung rig pa'i rdo rje*, 1924-1981) at Tashichhodzong, he was made to read Buddhist text. The

Karmapa was delighted with his reading skills. He received his monastic ordination from Karmapa and gave him a special name, Karma Rigzin Jurme Tenpai Gyaltshen (*kar ma rin 'dzin gyur med bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan*).

Thereafter, over the period of many years Rinpoche received complete teachings along with empowerment and initiations from many prominent Buddhist masters such as the Dalai Lama, Dudjom Rinpoche, Jigdrel Yeshe Dorji (*bdud 'joms rin po che, 'jig bral yi shes rdo rje, 1904-1987*), Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (*dil mgo mkhyen brtse rin po che, 1910-1991*), Trulshik Rinpoche (*'khrul zbig rin po che*), Minling Trichen Jurme Kunzang Wangyal (*smin gling khri chen rin po che, 'gyur med kun bzang dbang rgyal, 1931-2008*) and so forth.

Similarly, he bestowed empowerment and scriptural transmission to many spiritual friends following the directives of his Root Teacher. The entirety of these teachings was transmitted and received just like pouring the content of a vase into another. In addition Rinpoche also patronized the five month Empowerment on Treasury of Terma Teachings (*gter mdzod dbang lung*) by Tsetrul Rinpoche at the Kharchu Dratshang (*lho drag mkhar chu*) in Bumthang. Known as Pema Shedrup Choling (*pad ma shes grup cho gling*), Kharchu Dratshang and other retreat centres are established for the study and practice of the Dharma particularly emphasizing profound clear light teachings of Rediscovered Northern Treasures (*byang gter*) of Tertön Rigzin Godem (*gter ston rig 'dzin rgyod ldem, 1337-1409*).

As long as space endures,
And as long as sentient beings exist,
May I, too, remain
To dispel the misery of the world.