

The Lama of *Many* Lifetimes

Touching the Living Heart of Garchen Rinpoche

February 5, 2003 Morning Session

Album 2 Track 5 (A2 T5)

Rinpoche's Parents. Illegitimate Child.

0:09 [SueSue]

We are going to start again, and we are going to start from the beginning. Can you please tell us a little bit about your parents. Where you were born in? And your memories from your childhood?

A2 T5 2:42 [Rinpoche/K.Tamphel]

Rinpoche's father, Masei (spl.) (Singye?), his name was Singye (spl.) and he belonged to the [Masei] [master?] caste. It is a very high caste in Tibet to which the fifth [Tsumang Trungpa?] Rinpoche also belonged. And Rinpoche's father's family, ancestors, have been followers of Dharma for generations. And he [Rinpoche's father] was a great meditation practitioner. And he kind of, with his brother And Rinpoche's father had 3 brothers, and all 3 of them did very strict meditation. And during his meditation when he was in retreat, Rinpoche's mother was a kind of attendant to him. She wasn't his wife. He had another wife. But when Rinpoche's mother attended Rinpoche's father during the retreat, later on, she conceived a child from Rinpoche's father. When the child was born, it was kept very secret. Actually, the child was Rinpoche. And later on, when Rinpoche was enthroned, then it became public. And everybody knew that Rinpoche's father had this relationship with Rinpoche's mother. He had another wife though.

4:45 [SueSue]

In Tibet at that time, it was not allowed to have more than one wife? Is that why it has been kept a secret?

A2 T5 5:27 [Rinpoche/K.Tamphel]

In Tibet, culturally, it was not considered good to have more than one wife. And plus, Rinpoche's father's former wife belonged to a very high family. And the

family, because they were very powerful, could have created trouble so therefore, Rinpoche's father kept it a secret. His own mother (Rinpoche's) belonged to a very ordinary family.

6:01 [SueSue]

But before he was recognized, I think he was recognized at the age of 8? [7], how did he live? He lived alone with his mother? In a separate house? And how was the living conditions at that time?

Recognition Letter from Drikung Thil.

A2 T5 7:03 [Rinpoche/K.Tamphel]

When Rinpoche was actually 7 years old, Rinpoche's recognition later came from Drikung. Drikung is very far away from where Rinpoche was born. And the letter clearly said that the name of the father is Singye (spl.), and the name of the mother is Dewa, and the son of these two is Garchen. So this letter kind of broke the secret. This letter when it arrived, then people began to find out where the child is. And that's how the secret became revealed. Through the letter.

Childhood Living Conditions.

7:47 [SueSue]

But before that, he was living with his mother? In what kind of living conditions? If he has not been supported by his father then...?

A2 T5 8:40 [Rinpoche/K.Tamphel]

Rinpoche's mother belonged to a quite good family in terms of food and so forth. And also, R's mother's family and Rinpoche's father's family have been benefactors of the former Garchen Rinpoches. So Rinpoche thinks that his mother did not have any problem raising him up.

A2 T5 9:12 [SueSue]

During his childhood before he was recognized, how was his relationship with his father? Did he know at all that he had a father?

10:15 [Rinpoche/K.Tamphel]

Rinpoche did not know who his father was. Rinpoche doesn't remember any moment when he knew his father before his recognition. But when Rinpoche

was born, Rinpoche's mother and a lot of the people in the town had special dreams. Some of them had dreams of the former Garchen Rinpoche and so forth. So it became a big rumor in the town at the time of Rinpoche's birth, a lot of extraordinary things happened. People had special dreams. And Gabe Lama would like to say a little bit about this part.

11:01 [Gape Lama]

Rinpoche's Father. Masei Clan.

12:19 [K.Tamphel]

Gape Lama is giving a brief explanation about the caste to which Rinpoche's father belonged, the Masei (spl.) caste. Gabe Lama himself had the opportunity to ask Masei Tsadoah (spl.), Rinpoche's paternal uncle about the caste. Rinpoche's uncle told him that the Masei caste actually dwelled in a place in China (?). [No], they dwelled in a place nearby China, in Zhiling (spl.). And "Ma" was the name of a town, and "Sei" was the name of a kind of small village.

So "Ma" was the name of one bigger town, "Sei" the name of one smaller kind of village in that town. And people of this place moved to Nangchen (spl.) in Tibet. And they settled down in Nangchen. Before they moved, before they settled in Nangchen, they prayed to their protectors, their deities, they got some kind of responses from them [protectors], said that they'd better settled in Nangchen. So now the Masei caste, people belonging to that caste are from the Nangchen area, but originally, they moved from border of China.

14:38 [Gabe Lama/ Rinpoche]

15:22 [Rinpoche/K.Tamphel]

So... all the generations of the Masei caste belonged to... the Masei clan, actually, clan, not caste, [...] were Dharma practitioners. For instance, one of the persons belonging to the Masei clan was Dong Maser Lodro Rinchen (spl.). Dong Maser Lodro Rinchen was the disciple of one of the Karmapas. He [Rinpoche] does not remember the exact Karmapa, which one was him but he was disciple of one of Karmapas. And he actually started the Tzumong (spl.) Kagyu, which is one of the Kagyus, a kind of part of the Karma Kagyu lineage.

Unusual Signs of Birth.

15:39 [Gape]

17:16 [Rinpoche/K.Tamphel]

Something [...] unusual happened when Rinpoche was conceived. Some birds that usually only lived in the forest landed on the roof of where Rinpoche's mother lived. And spent few days there which is something very unusual. These wild birds that lived in the forest, they flew down to the village and landed on Rinpoche's mother's roof and spent a few days.

18:00 [SueSue]

Did his mother ever tell stories about him when he was young before he was recognized? What kind of personalities he had?

Mother's Dream. Auspicious Stories.

18:14 [K.Tamphel]

18: 29 [Rinpoche]

19:33 [K.Tamphel]

Rinpoche's mother had never told Rinpoche anything specific about his childhood before his recognition. But Rinpoche's mother did tell some stories to Bu Nima and some other monks. So they know better than Rinpoche about his childhood before his recognition. But there are many stories about the things that happened from the day Rinpoche was conceived. For instance when Rinpoche was conceived, Rinpoche's mother had a dream of sunshine, very bright sunshine, and then, in the village different people came up with different stories [*** What kinds of stories?]* that they felt and they witnessed when Rinpoche was conceived and Rinpoche was born.

Lama Konchog Tengye's Prophecy

20:41 [Rinpoche]

22:13[K.Tamphel]

So Rinpoche's father... told Rinpoche something about Rinpoche's childhood. Actually, Rinpoche's father heard these stories from his mother. There was a great master called Konchog Tengye (spl.). Konchog Tengye was a disciple of the previous Garchen Rinpoche. And he spent all his life in meditation so Rinpoche's mother took Rinpoche to this great master to receive the refuge vows.

And at that time, during the refuge ceremony there were many Tantric practitioners. And those practitioners just said, "Today we have found a new monk who is going to sit below us at the end of the row." The Tantric practitioners were disciples of Konchog Tengye, just talked among themselves and said that Rinpoche took the refuge vows so that now he is a new monk, new member of our sangha and someone who is going to take seat below us. At that point, Konchog Tengye said, "No, he is not going to be someone who is going to take seat below us. We're going to take seat below him". So that story, Rinpoche's mother told Rinpoche's father. And Rinpoche's father told Rinpoche.

Recognition Process.

24:10 [Rinpoche]

24:54 [K.Tamphel]

So when Rinpoche took the refuge vows, he was five years old. And when Rinpoche turned 7 years old, the recognition letter arrived from Drikung. And it was clearly said that Garchen Rinpoche was the incarnation of the previous Garchen Rinpoche. And at that time, Rinpoche's father was really overjoyed and until that time, he has kept it secret, but then at that point, the secret became kind of disclosed and then he came to where Rinpoche lived and then became Rinpoche's personal tutor, teacher, for several years from Rinpoche's age of 7 until twelve.

26:24 [SueSue]

Can you please ask Rinpoche whether he remembers anything when the family received the letter and how he felt about it when they made the announcement. What kind of feelings did he have at that moment?

Recognizing Lord Jigten Statue at Lho Miguel Gon

26:42 [Tamphel]

26:54 [Rinpoche]

28:13 [K.Tamphel]

So when the letter came, Rinpoche was not actually told about the letter so Rinpoche didn't have any special feeling at that time but Rinpoche was taken to a monastery by his mother and some other people. The name of the monastery was Lho Miguel Gon (spl.). In this monastery, there were many statues and Rinpoche was asked by the people, the party, to choose, to point out to his guru.

They said among these statues, who is your guru, your master, point out. At that point, Rinpoche remembers, that he pointed out the Lord Jigten Sumgon statue.

28:19 [SueSue]

So it is a statue and not a thangka? Or an image? Because in some of his other biographies, it said it was an image?

28:38 [Rinpoche/K.Tamphel]

Statues. Statues of many great masters. And also, you know, they brought many different items, objects, and put all of them in front of Rinpoche and asked them to point out the items that belonged to him. And so Rinpoche pointed out 7 objects. And later on, they told Rinpoche that he pointed out all the right objects.

30:04 [Rinpoche]

30:13 [K.Tamphel]

So in the monastery, there were statues of many Kagyu masters. And then Garchen Rinpoche just pointed out with his finger Lord Jigten Sumgon 's statue and said "this is my lama."

30:33 [Rinpoche]

31:09 [K.Tamphel]

So when Rinpoche recognized the right objects, when Rinpoche pointed out Lord Jigten Sumgon's statue then it became quite clear that Rinpoche is the Garchen Rinpoche. And then they took off Rinpoche's clothes, and they bathed Rinpoche and made him clean. Actually, it was the Nangchen king who requested the Drikung Thil authority to recognize Rinpoche. The former Garchen Rinpoche had been the personal root guru of the Nangchen king. So it was traditionally the king's duty to request for the recognition of Garchen Rinpoches. It wasn't the monastery where Rinpoche belonged who requested the recognition.

Personal Lamas of Nangchen King

32:20 [Rinpoche/K.Tamphel]

32:57 [K.Tamphel]

So the Nangchen king had four personal gurus. One of them was the Garchen reincarnation. Another one was Hochen (spl.) Rinpoche, another Drikung Kagyu master and then there were 2 Drupa Kagyu masters, Jamei (spl.) Rinpoche and Kugyin (spl.) Rinpoche.

33:37 [SueSue]

After he got recognized, was he brought to see the king of Nangchen and does he remember anything about this at all?

34:00 [Rinpoche]

***End of Album 2 Track 5 ***

Album 2 Track 6 (A2 T6)

Memory of Nangchen King

0:09 [K.Tamphel]

So Rinpoche did not have a chance to see the king of Nangchen until Rinpoche grew up. When Rinpoche was quite big, he was invited to Nangchen do some teachings and some religious ceremonies in the town, Nangchen town....

Translated from Tibetan into English by Khenpo Tamphel at the Southwest Buddhafield, Garchen Buddhist Institute, Arizona, USA in 2003.

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