

## Part 6 – Trust

Tibet has many areas that are holy lands because of the great yogis who meditated and established their blessings there. People who wish to receive the blessings travel to holy areas, which is called making a pilgrimage. One of those places is a valley called Terdrom, near Drikung Thil monastery, the large autumn residence of Chetsang Rinpoche and Chungtsang Rinpoche. Terdrom became a holy land because the great Indian master who lived about 1200 years ago and who founded Tibetan Buddhism, named Padmasambhava, also known as Guru Rinpoche, spent time there with his students. The valley was called Terdrom, which means “treasure chest,” because of the spiritual treasures that Padmasambhava hid there. The treasures were mostly spiritual texts (teachings), and also some holy objects – but not money, gold or jewelry like a pirate’s treasure. Only a special kind of spiritual person called a tertön, meaning treasure-finder, would be able to discover them, and he would only be able to find them at a time when they would be of most benefit to human beings.

Every year in the autumn, Chetsang Rinpoche and Chungtsang Rinpoche were led on a pilgrimage to the Terdrom valley by a guide who could point out the many magical features in the boulders, mountains, waters and caves, and he would tell the stories about them.



(photos: Achi Chökyi Drolma (left) and Garuda (right))

For example, he pointed out hoofprints in stone left by the horse of the Drikung protector, Achi Chökyi Drolma, and a claw print in stone that was left there by the eagle spirit called Garuda, who cannot be seen by ordinary people.



According to ancient Tibetan beliefs, even before the arrival of Buddhism in Tibet, serpent spirits called nagas live in the earth, and in streams and lakes. They protect the ecological balance on the Earth, and keep the water pure – in rivers, lakes and underground water that emerges from the ground as springs.

(photo of naga protecting Shakyamuni Buddha)

In Terdrom, they protect a special hot spring of very pure water that falls out of a cliff wall with great force, heated by the magma deep in the earth, and then flows into a natural pool surrounded by stone walls. This pool was reserved only for each of the Chetsang Rinpoches and Chungtsang Rinpoches. No one else could ever swim there, because it was

considered especially pure and healing, being protected by the nagas. Ordinary people could only go swimming in the spring further downstream.



Now that the Seventh Chetsang Rinpoche and Chungtsang Rinpoche were there for their annual swim, the guide broke the seal on the lock of the wooden door to the pool and let them in. The weather was quite cold, but the water in the pool was really hot. At first, Chetsang Rinpoche was afraid of being burned.

As he stepped into the pool, his skin turned bright red, but he soon got used to it. Then he and Chungtsang Rinpoche enjoyed splashing and playing in the water.

They spent about a week at the hot spring, camping in the evening. After that week, they rode on yaks to go over the mountains. The main stop on their journey was an enormous cave complex, one of the Eight Great Caves of Tibet, with an entrance about 150 feet high up on a steep cliff wall. But how would they get up there to enter the cave? There was a winding, very steep path to get to the huge, main opening to the cave, and then they had to climb very long, shaky ladders made of bamboo held together with leather to enter into the inner parts of the cave. It was a terrifying climb to get up there. The heavy monks and the less courageous monks

chose not to go up – it was too dangerous. Chetsang Rinpoche’s attendants were more afraid that he might fall than for their own safety. When Chetsang Rinpoche began to climb the ladder, they warned him not to look down, and one especially strong monk held his legs firmly while he pulled himself up the widely spaced rungs of the ladder. He did glance down once, and saw the monks who stayed behind as tiny red specks incredibly far down below. He climbed the last rungs quickly until he felt firm ground under his feet again. But the ground was also dangerous, because the rock was damp, slippery and uneven.

Once they were inside the cave, they were guided into many dark tunnels and room-like openings as they held torches – sticks with fire at the end – so they could see. Some passages were very steep, and they had to hold onto yak-hair ropes so they wouldn’t fall into pitch black holes. There was a roaring-loud waterfall inside the darkness. The guide, who moved easily along the tunnels and passages that branched off into different directions, knew the cave very well, and told about the secrets of the cave. There was one very narrow, twisting tunnel that was very difficult to squeeze through. Chetsang Rinpoche was a small boy, but it was so narrow that he was afraid he could become trapped. He made it through safely.



The guide pointed out dips in the wall that he said were made by Padmasambhava’s head, and he pointed to crystals inside which images of deities and dharma symbols miraculously appeared. As their torches lit up the opening to the round chamber that was Padmasambhava’s meditation room, a smooth, natural quartz crystal stone column shone with rainbow color light.

(statue of Padmasambhava)

After they climbed out of the cave, which seemed even more dangerous than climbing in, they visited other caves. One was a famous retreat cave of Jigten Sumgön. Chetsang Rinpoche was told that Jigten Sumgön’s attendant thought the cave was too small and dark, so Jigten Sumgön expanded the cave by his supernatural power, and threw his vajra at a wall to make a hole in it for a window.

Other caves they visited were retreat places for yogis. The yogis wore ragged clothing, and dedicated their life completely to practicing Dharma, living on whatever food offerings people would bring to them. They prostrated, bowing with their bodies stretched out on the ground, to Chetsang Rinpoche, and looked at him with a gaze that was more calm and accepting than the monks in the monasteries. He didn’t fully understand why they wanted to spend so much time in retreat, but he seemed to have vague memories from past lives, that the yogis were generating great merit and power by their intense practice. He enjoyed asking them questions about how they lived and what they experienced after their years in retreat.



When he returned to the monastery and made prostrations to the golden statue of Jigten Sumgön, he felt like something had changed, either in the monastery or in himself. It was as if he was bowing to the real live Jigten Sumgön, and to the lineage lamas, the yogis, and to the Buddha and his teachings.

Meanwhile, the Tsarong family, having returned to their home in Lhasa, was being faced with a totally different culture than that of the religion and traditions of Tibet.



Chetsang Rinpoche's two brothers and two sisters were going to the new Chinese school, and they liked it. Every student had to wear the same uniform, so there was no difference between the rich kids and the poor kids. They enjoyed singing, in class and in the streets, new songs – Chinese Communist propaganda songs – and they sang them enthusiastically, without knowing what they really meant.

They liked the freedom they had in these schools; it was different from the strict education with their tutors or at schools in other countries. (photo: Tsarong children)

Chetsang Rinpoche's oldest sister Namgyal Lhamo joined a Communist political drama group. The group was sent to rural areas in Tibet to perform plays which portrayed Chairman Mao and his army as heroes who would ensure a bright future for Tibet. The children's faces were radiantly happy, and they made attractive, persuasive activists for Chairman Mao's programs.

In this way, the Chinese Communists molded Tibetan children into enthusiastic followers of their propaganda – their idea that Communist ideas and policies are the best, much better than the old traditions of Tibet.

Most of the students, including Namgyal Lhamo, were so enchanted with their new freedom from the traditional social norms that they didn't notice that they were being manipulated to do the work of the new Chinese rulers. They had no idea that in the neighboring eastern areas of Tibet - Kham and Amdo - the Chinese army was brutally attacking the people, separating families and sending children to China to become immersed in Chinese culture - or to vanish forever. Some children were even forced to beat their parents. High ranking lamas were put in prison or into hard labor or on road construction crews.

Chetsang Rinpoche's two sisters slowly began to realize that their new freedoms were only bait to entice them into a harsh system of oppression, being controlled by the Communists. Teachers were no longer understanding and tolerant, and the propaganda slogans were put into practice when the teachers criticized people who were wealthy, because Communists believe that all people should be equal and not have any more than anyone else, and that only the government should have power and own and control everything. Kids from wealthy families were harassed, and teachers encouraged poorer kids to have confrontations with them. Many Tibetan kids felt betrayed, and became angry at their Chinese teachers.

The Chinese Communists were also manipulating the Tibetan adults, especially those who were in power. They made the Dalai Lama the chairman of a committee to rule Tibet, but that was only a way to persuade the Tibetan people to accept the committee, which secretly had the goal of transferring the Dalai Lama's power over to the Communists. Chetsang Rinpoche's grandfather, who had experience in constructing bridges, canals, and hydroelectric plants, was put in charge of the department of construction. Owners of large homes were forced to offer their homes to the committee. Soon, the ground floor of the Tsarong home was filled with Chinese construction department employees. Then, Chinese guards were stationed at the front gate, and Chetsang Rinpoche's grandfather was like a prisoner in his own house.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. According to ancient Tibetan beliefs, what type of spirit guards the purity of rivers, lakes and springs? (nagas, serpent spirits)
2. What happened when Jigten Sumgön's attendant thought the cave was too small and dark? (Jigten Sumgön by supernatural power expanded the cave and made a hole in the cave wall by throwing his vajra)
3. Who were living in caves, that Chetsang Rinpoche enjoyed talking to? (yogis)
4. What did Rinpoche's brothers and sisters think of the new Chinese school at first? (they liked it)

## DHARMA DISCUSSION – Trust:

When Chetsang Rinpoche went into the cave, it was very dangerous.

His life was in the hands of the guide and other monks - he had to trust they knew what they were doing to keep him safe.

Some other monks didn't have so much trust – they didn't go to the cave, they stayed behind. He also trusted what the guide and monks told him – about the claw print of the eagle Garuda, the dips in the cave walls from Padmasambhava's head, and supernatural powers of Jigten Sumgön, although these supernatural things couldn't be proven or seen by ordinary people.

When he returned to the monastery, he felt the statue of Jigten Sumgön was real, as if alive. Going on the pilgrimage (travel to a holy place) and hearing the stories about supernatural spiritual events had increased his faith - his belief, trust - in the power of the lineage masters. Trusting in the teachings and stories of lineage masters gives us a sense of happiness, belonging to a family of truly great beings, and confidence that we also can become successful.

Meanwhile, his sisters and brothers were putting their trust in their Chinese teachers.

They thought that having more freedom in school, and fun activities like the drama group, performing plays, meant that the teachers were good, and could be trusted.

But what happened? They found out the teachers couldn't be trusted.

The teachers became intolerant, unkind and criticized wealthy students, betraying their trust.

When we trust someone - when we are kind, helpful or generous to them - and then they turn against us, betraying our trust, that can be extremely painful.

Someone we thought was a friend suddenly becomes an enemy.

It's one of the most painful experiences, and can make us feel extremely hurt or angry.

We might feel foolish, gullible and naïve for having trusted them.

But you shouldn't feel angry at yourself for having trusted someone.

Even Chetsang Rinpoche's wise grandfather was betrayed by the Communists – he even had them living in his house! And the Dalai Lama himself was tricked into joining in their activities.

When we haven't had much experience with evil-minded people, we only understand good-hearted people and so we tend to trust everyone.

We haven't learned the cunning ways that hateful or greedy people use to trick us.

And we usually have to learn it by having the experience of being betrayed, exploited or "used."

These are normal learning experiences in life.

If we have an extreme experience of betrayal – with violence, abuse, or a very shocking situation - it can affect our mind for life, causing extreme bitterness, anger and hatred.

The only way to ease our mind is to have compassion for people who betrayed us.

We have to remember that they only abuse us because of the hatred, greed and ignorance in their mind. They are a victim of those terrible emotions, which make them suffer terribly, even if we can't see their suffering.

We should pray that they be free from suffering, that they become peaceful and happy, that they learn to be kind and loving, and then they won't abuse others anymore.