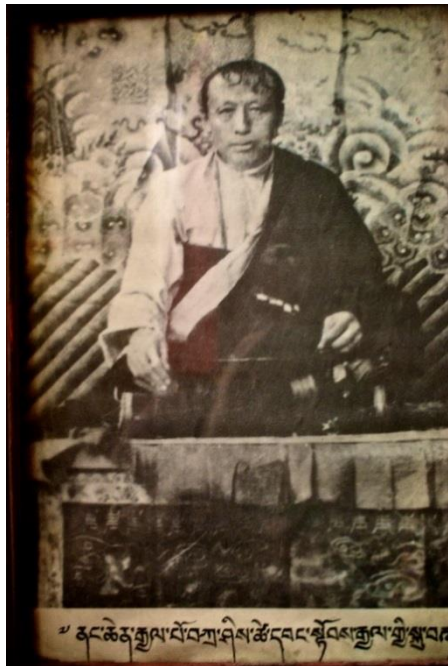


CHAPTER 5 – KARMA AND REBIRTH

Little Konchog Gyaltsen had all the affection he could ever need from his dear mother, Dega. He just loved his mother. She provided his food and all the ordinary things a child could need. What more could he want? Even though the other boys in the village had fathers, he never wondered about his father. And he had no idea about the world beyond his little village of 40 or 50 families, Dong-go drong, and the fields and mountains around it, and a few nearby villages. But Dong-go drong was located in Nangchen, a great kingdom in East Tibet, ruled by a king.



In the year 1943, the name of the King of Nangchen was Sewang Dorje.

One of the main spiritual teachers - called “gurus” or “lamas” - of the King of Nangchen was the Seventh Garchen Rinpoche. It was the responsibility of the king to find where his gurus are reborn after they pass away. So after the Seventh Garchen Rinpoche died, the King of Nangchen very much wanted to find his guru again -- surely he would soon be reborn and in a few years would be a little child.

He met with a few little boys, but none of them seemed to be like his teacher.

So he had to ask for help to find the little boy who had been his guru.



He asked help from the Drikung Kyabgon, a great holy master who was the Sixth reincarnation of Chetsang Rinpoche.

He was a very high lama, so it was very difficult for anyone to meet with him. People sometimes had to wait for months outside the monastery to get a chance to meet with this great master.

He was the leader of the Drikung Kagyu lineage.

Driking Kagyu is a branch of the Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism that originated with the teachings of the great Indian Buddhist enlightened yogi Tilopa, who lived about 1000 years ago.



Tilopa



Naropa

Tilopa transmitted his teachings to his student Naropa. Naropa was an Indian Buddhist monk and a great scholar. He passed the teachings to Marpa.



Marpa was the Great Translator of Buddhist teachings from the Sanskrit language into Tibetan.

Marpa, who was Tibetan, passed them on to Milarepa.



Milarepa had been a powerful sorcerer who did black magic when he was young. But he later purified his mind with the Buddhist teachings from his guru Marpa, and then became a fully enlightened yogi.

Milarepa passed the teachings on to Gampopa.

Gampopa had been a doctor before he found his guru Milarepa. He began the Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. Gampopa passed the teachings on to Phagmodrupa.

Phagmodrupa became a monk when he was only four years old! He then passed the teachings on to Jigten Sumgon, who became an enlightened master with many thousands of students even from faraway countries. He started the Drikung Kagyu lineage in Central Tibet in the 1100s, more than 800 years ago. The teachings were passed on through the lineage from gurus to students, and eventually to the Sixth Chetsang Rinpoche. So, they're called "lineage holders."



Gampopa



Phagmodrupa



Jigten Sumgon

When the King of Nangchen asked the Sixth Chetsang Rinpoche for help in finding his reborn guru, Chetsang Rinpoche did have some information. We don't know how he got this information,

whether it was from dreams or some special technique or mystical power. But he knew that the next Garchen Rinpoche would be born in the area of the Gar Gon monastery, where the Seventh Garchen Rinpoche and many previous Garchen Rinpoches had lived, and would be born to a mother with the name Dekyi Yangzom and a father with the name Masei Sengey.

Chetsang Rinpoche wrote a letter with this information in it, stating that at his request and the request of the royal King of Nangchen, a thorough search should be made for the child of parents with these names, and if the child can pass several tests to prove who he was in his past life, he would be known as the reincarnation of the Seventh Garchen Rinpoche – that is, the Eighth Garchen Rinpoche. Chetsang Rinpoche had a messenger bring the letter to the Gar Gon monastery.

The letter soon arrived at the Gar Gon monastery, the same place where Dega had visited the Seventh Garchen Rinpoche with her family when she was young. And the letter said that the name of the mother of the very special child is Dekyi Yangzom – which was the full name of Dega! And she did have a little boy, Konchog Gyaltsen. Could that small boy be the next Garchen Rinpoche?

But the father named in the letter, Masei Sengey, did not live with Dega. The man with that name was a meditation practitioner of a well-respected family who lived in another village. Aha! The secret came out, that he was the father of little Konchog Gyaltsen! Soon all the people in the village of Dong-go drong heard about the letter, and talked about little Konchog Gyaltsen and his parents. And they talked about the forest birds who had stayed on the roof of Dega's house at the time she first found that she was going to have a baby. They thought about the birds having come from the forests around the Gar Gon monastery, where the Seventh Garchen Rinpoche had stayed. Maybe the birds came from the monastery to protect the little child growing inside Dega's body because he was the *tulku*, or reincarnation of the Seventh Garchen Rinpoche!

Little Konchog Gyaltsen was only seven years old at the time, and he was not told about the letter. But he was told that he and his mother would have to go to a monastery in a nearby village, so he rode on a horse with his mother, because he was too small to ride a horse by himself. The King of Nangchen's brother, who was a very important lama in the Drikung Kagyu lineage, was waiting at the monastery for little Konchog Gyaltsen and his mother.

Imagine how this little village boy felt, meeting with such an important person! Soon after Konchog Gyaltsen and his mother arrived, the great lama who was the King's brother, and other lamas, showed him many sacred items, things that a very respected Buddhist lama might use. He was asked to choose which of those items belonged to him in a past life.

He immediately pointed to seven of those items. It seemed very natural to him - they just looked familiar. And those were the seven items that belonged to the Seventh Garchen Rinpoche! Everyone was so happy – this little boy might be the Eighth Garchen Rinpoche!

But that was not all he was asked to do. Next, they took him to the main temple where he saw many very beautiful gold and bronze statues. They told him that these were statues of great Buddhist masters of the past, who had attained deep wisdom and become enlightened.



The seven-year-old Konchog Gyaltzen looked at them intently. He had never seen such beautiful holy statues. They seemed so powerful, and filled him with wonder.

He heard a lama standing behind him ask, “Among those masters, who is your root teacher, your *tsawei* Lama? Now point to him.”

Little Konchog Gyaltzen reached out his hand immediately and pointed to one of the statues, exclaiming, “This is my Lama!”

The face of this statue looked wonderful to him, and he didn’t know why. It was a rather large statue that seemed to glow with light. What he felt while looking at this statue was a whole new feeling, something peculiar, that he couldn’t explain. He just liked that statue so much! The lama’s straight posture, the folds in his robes, his red ceremonial hat, his gazing eyes, the positions of his hands. It was so familiar, yet it awakened such a new feeling for him.



He repeated, “This IS my Lama!”

This lama, he was told, was Jigten Sumgon, who was believed to be an incarnation of Nagarjuna, the famous Indian Buddhist monk and philosopher who lived around 1,800 years ago.

Konchog Gyaltzen just kept looking and looking into the face of the statue ---his Lama. The statue almost looked like it could speak to him.

This great master, Jigten Sumgon, was indeed the lama of Gar Chodingpa, the first Gar incarnation, about 800 years before. Gar Chodingpa was reborn seven times before his rebirths were numbered, from the first to the seventh Garchen Rinpoche. And this little boy, Konchog Gyaltzen, was to be the Eighth Garchen Rinpoche.

QUESTIONS:

1. Who was the King of Nangchen looking for? (his guru, the 7th Garchen Rinpoche, reborn)
2. What did Chetsang Rinpoche do to help the King of Nangchen find the reborn guru? (wrote a letter with the names of the parents of the next Garchen Rinpoche and the area he will be born)
3. What was Konchog Gyaltzen first asked to point to when he got to the monastery? (the items that belonged to him in a past life)
4. What was he shown next at the monastery? (many statues of enlightened Buddhist masters)
5. What was he asked to point to? (his root teacher, root Lama)
6. How did he feel when he looked at the statue of Jigten Sumgon? (he liked it, it was familiar, new feelings arose in him, looked like it could speak to him)

DHARMA DISCUSSION – KARMA and REBIRTH:

“Everything follows the law of karma naturally We are responsible for our own karma, we ourselves have created the causes for all our experiences.” Garchen Rinpoche, Quote 90.

“Our life is like an oil lamp. The oil is the karma and the fire is this life. As long as there is oil, there is fire. Our life lasts until the karma for this life comes to an end. Then we will move on, controlled by the karmic imprints stored in our mind continuum.” Garchen Rinpoche, Quote 14.

“Truly understanding karma will enable us to tolerate our present circumstances and will teach us how to abandon suffering in the future. Karma can be explained very easily – love is the cause of happiness; self-grasping is the cause of suffering.” Garchen Rinpoche, Quote 2.

“There is outer and inner karma. Outer karma refers to our external activities. One may think, ‘I am not killing, or stealing, I’m not doing anything wrong.’ But what is more important is the inner karma. Even if one is not engaging in negative deeds externally, if one fails to give rise to compassion and only thinks about oneself, negative thoughts will accumulate in the mind like snowflakes falling continuously day and night. . . . Karma, cause and effect, is infallible.” Garchen Rinpoche, Quote 47.

We heard in the story about the rebirths of Garchen Rinpoche – when one body passed away, he was born again soon as a new baby.

Usually we forget our past lives.

But some people can remember something from a past life.

Like little Konchog Gyaltzen could recognize some of the things he used in his previous life.

We have all had many, many past lives.

Some as a human, on the Earth.

What other types of beings or worlds can people be reborn in?

People can reborn in lower worlds as animals, hungry ghosts, or in a hell-world

People can also be reborn in a heaven-world.

Which of those worlds we are reborn in depends on our karma.

What is karma? It is our actions, and our speech - what we say and do.

When we do helpful, good actions or say kind words, then that causes good things to happen to us – what is pleasant, happy and comfortable for us - at some time in our future.

When we do bad things and say hurtful words, then that causes bad things to happen to us – what is unpleasant or painful for us - at some time in our future.

So we get exactly what we deserve, good and bad, from the karmas from this life and our many, many past lives.

We all have a mix of good and bad karmas from past lives that makes both good and bad things happen to us in this life.

So when bad things happen to us, it's not really someone else's fault, even if it seems like someone else caused it.

It's really from our own negative karmas that we did in the past. So we shouldn't blame others.

We are really responsible for everything that happens to us.

Other people just help to make the things happen, good or bad, that we deserve from our karmas.

What about people who seem always to be lucky? Sometimes we might feel jealous of them. But they're just receiving the results of their good karmas.

And, we never know what may happen in their future. Sometimes people who are very lucky when they are young become very unlucky when they are older. So we shouldn't be jealous.

What about people who are unlucky – such as those who are very ill, poor, unattractive, or have terrible experiences – are they bad people, with so much bad karma?

No, they have a mix of good and bad karmas like everyone.

They may become very fortunate later on from their good karmas.

Everyone has some very unpleasant events in their lives – even Shakyamuni Buddha got badly injured on his foot because of some bad action he did in a past life.

So are you making a good future for yourself, by your good words and actions?

This is a question we should ask ourselves often.

We shouldn't just relax and think our karma is great because we don't kill, steal or do other terrible things.

It's important to increase our love and compassion for others.
If we don't try to become more compassionate, then selfish thoughts creep into our minds.
How to become more compassionate?
Use kind words, and notice what we can do to be helpful to others, wherever we are.
There are so many ways that we might not have noticed before- every day, all around us – to be helpful to someone.

We can't just wait until the future to improve our compassion.
We are very lucky to be born as a human, because we can choose to do good karmas and improve our future.
Animals, hungry ghosts, and people who are very sick or live in terrible conditions, don't have much opportunity to do good deeds, so they can't improve their situation.
So now that you are a human, and you are healthy and live in a good environment, it's very important to be compassionate and helpful to others now, in this life!

PRACTICE THIS WEEK:

When you notice that you are bored, or have nothing to do, think of a way you can be helpful to someone around you.

When you notice that someone is "lucky," remember that it is their own good karma, that has given them this good luck.

ACTIVITY – Fill in the blank:

1. Konchog Gyaltzen lived in a village in _____ Tibet.
2. Birds from the forest around _____ Gon monastery had stayed on the roof of Dega's house when she found that she was going to have a baby.
3. A _____ is a reincarnated lama.
4. The Sixth _____ Rinpoche knew the names of the parents of the little boy who would be discovered to be the Eighth Garchen Rinpoche.
5. _____ is the enlightened yogi who lived about 1000 years ago, who was the guru of Naropa.
6. When Konchog Gyaltzen was asked who is his root lama, he pointed to _____ Sumgon.
7. The Seventh Garchen Rinpoche was _____ as little Konchog Gyaltzen.
8. Konchog Gyaltzen was _____ years old when he was discovered to be the Eighth Garchen Rinpoche.
9. _____ was a powerful sorcerer when he was young, but became an enlightened yogi.

WORD BOX:

TULKU	SEVEN	TILOPA	EAST	MILAREPA
CHETSANG	JIGTEN	REBORN	GAR	