



CEREMONY OF THE VAJRA CROWN

His Holiness The Gyalwa Karmapa

History

Rangjung Rigpe Dorje is the sixteenth Gyalwa Karmapa *tulku* or incarnation. As the head of the Kargyu order of Buddhism in Tibet since the twelfth century, he embodies, represents and guides its accumulated spiritual energy. The Tibetan teaching concerning *tsulkus* tells us that, although the moment of enlightenment releases one from the forces leading to rebirth, an enlightened intelligence which transcends individuality or ego in the ordinary sense, may decide to continue to work on earth for the benefit of all sentient beings. This enlightened intelligence therefore chooses births over a certain period of time in a series of human individuals. The Gyalwa Karmapa is such a *tulku*. The incarnations of the Gyalwa Karmapas have been as follows:

I	Tusum Khyenpa	1110-1193
II	Karma Pakshi	1204-1283
III	Rangjung Dorje	1284-1339
IV	Rolpei Dorje	1340-1383
V	Teshin Shegpa	1384-1415
VI	Tongwa Domden	1416-1453
VII	Chötrag Gyamtso	1454-1506
VIII	Mikyö Dorje	1507-1554
IX	Wangchuk Dorje	1556-1603
X	Chöying Dorje	1604-1674
XI	Yeshe Dorje	1676-1702
XII	Changchub Dorje	1703-1732
XIII	Dudul Dorje	1733-1797
XIV	Thegchog Dorje	1798-1868
XV	Khakhyab Dorje	1871-1922
XVI	Rangjung Rigpe Dorje	1924-present

The Kargyu order is the medium of transmission of the meditative teachings known as mahamudra. These teachings were first developed through the spontaneous insight of the great Indian siddha or saint Tilopa (988-1069). Their realization was passed

down from guru to disciple through the great progenitors of the lineage Naropa, Marpa, Milarepa and Gampopa and successively through the sixteen Gyalwa Karmapas up to the present time.

The first Karmapa, Tusum Khyenpa (1110-1193), was the foremost disciple of Gampopa. He had great natural ability for meditation and spent many years meditating in mountain caves. At one point, he spent months in a hut so tiny that the meditation posture, crosslegged and erect, was the only possible form of occupancy. After years of meditation under the guidance of his guru, Tusum Khyenpa attained complete enlightenment. His moment of enlightenment was celebrated by the dakinis who made him a gift of a crown made from their hair. This crown is said to have been thenceforth always present, though invisible, above the heads of all the Karmapas. Afterwards, Gampopa recognized Tusum Khyenpa as the first Karmapa, a manifestation of Avalokitesvara, whose existence had been foretold by the Buddha himself in the *Samadhirajasutra*. Tusum Khyenpa had many powerful disciples and created the special emphasis on meditation within the Kargyu order which has identified it as 'the practising lineage.' He also founded the Tsurphu monastery near Lhasa, which was to be the principal seat of the Gyalwa Karmapas for over 700 years.

The second Karmapa, Karma Pakshi (1204-1283), was the first *tulku* ever to be recognized. He attained mastery of the tantric teachings and was considered the embodiment of the highest expression of mahamudra wisdom. His renown was such that he was invited to visit the imperial court of China, where he became guru to the emperor Kublai Khan. Kublai Khan bestowed on him the Chinese title of *pakshi*, 'highest spiritual leader.' All the Karmapas up to the tenth followed Karma Pakshi in this function of guru to the emperor of China. The tenth Gyalwa Karmapa, Chöying Dorje (1604-1674), a great example of genuine spirituality in a time thoroughly given over to political intrigue and war between the sects, displayed his disdain for political power by dec-

laring that he would rather give his blessing to a dog's skull than to the emperor of China. This Karmapa distributed all the wealth that continually came to him as the head of the order and lived the majority of his long life in poverty.

The third Karmapa, Ranjung Dorje (1284-1339), a supreme meditator, was of prime importance for the continuation and enrichment of the meditative tradition. He reintroduced a high level of intellectual understanding as part of the practice and unified the traditional mahamudra teachings of the Kargyu order with the maha ati teachings which until his time had been transmitted mainly through the Nyingma lineages.

It was the fifth Karmapa, Teshin Shegpa (1384-1415), who first wore the physical Vajra Crown which has belonged to all succeeding Karmapas. At the age of twenty-two Teshin Shegpa was invited to China by the emperor Yung-lo. Karmapa was received with a great display of honor and respect and responded by performing a miracle on each of the first twenty-two days of his stay. The emperor became Karmapa's devoted disciple and himself developed greatly in meditative ability. One day during a ceremony the emperor saw the invisible crown hovering above Karmapa's head. Reasoning that he was able to see it only because of his own spiritual attainments, he decided to have a physical replica made that could be seen by everyone. This crown, now in the possession of the present Karmapa, is said to have the power of transmitting enlightenment on sight. Teshin Shegpa was long remembered in China and had an enduring influence on its culture and spirituality.

The eighth Karmapa, Mikyö Dorje (1507-1554), revitalized once more the intellectual aspect of the Kargyu tradition. He was also a great artist, as were the seventh, ninth and tenth Karmapas. He excelled in painting, carving and the casting of metal images. He was a prime force in the formation of the Karma Gadri school

of thangka (scroll) painting. The story is told that he once cast an image of himself and asked if it was a good likeness, whereupon the statue answered that of course it was.

The fifteenth Karmapa, Khakhyab Dorje (1871-1922), was a disciple of Jamgön Kongtrul the Great, himself a disciple of the fourteenth Karmapa and a holder of the Kargyu lineage. Khakhyab Dorje mastered the teachings at an extremely early age and became an outstanding exponent of the ri-me school, founded by his guru, which brought together the meditation teachings of all the Tibetan schools. He was an accomplished student of medicine and the author of memorable devotional poetry. An inspired teacher, Khakhyab Dorje had many important disciples.

Rangjung Rigpe Dorje, the present Gyalwa Karmapa, was born in 1924. As with all the previous Karmapas, he was discovered through a letter left by his predecessor predicting the place and time of birth of his next incarnation. As a child he displayed tremendous natural insight and received the complete meditative training traditional for a Gyalwa Karmapa. He has had the difficult task of maintaining the meditative legacy of the Kargyu order through the dissolution of the society which supported it for hundreds of years. His Holiness was one of the first to see clearly the implications of the Chinese movements in Tibet and was therefore able to bring with him a large party of his monks together with many precious ritual objects and texts when he escaped to India through Bhutan in 1958. In 1962 at the invitation of the royal family of Sikkim, he founded the Rumtek monastery in Sikkim, which is his present seat.

In response to the spiritually disturbed character of our times, His Holiness has frequently conducted the Ceremony of the Vajra Crown as a direct means of conveying the powerful blessing of his presence. The Ceremony of the Vajra Crown or Vajra Mukut, which His Holiness alone can perform, transmits the energy and intelligence of the awakened state of mind.

Ceremony of the Vajra Crown

His Holiness the Gyalwa Karmapa sits on an elevated throne. He is wearing a ceremonial hat, in most cases the meditation hat of Gampopa. He is surrounded by his monks and, beyond them, the audience. The monks begin to chant, acting as spokesmen for the entire gathering in a prolonged request that Karmapa assume his transcendental form of Avalokitesvara, the bodhisattva of compassion.

First, addressing Karmapa as Tusum Khyenpa, the manifestation of Avalokitesvara, they invoke the presence of the Karmapa lineage. A metal disc with rice on it, symbolizing the entire universe as a mandala, is offered to the Karmapa. Then the invocation takes the form of the traditional sevenfold service. First is a prostration expressing devotion to Karmapa-Avalokitesvara. Offerings are made symbolizing the body, speech and mind of the supplicants. Acknowledgement of misguidedness and imperfection is made with a sense of devotion to the higher wisdom becoming present. There is praise and adoration of the buddha-activity of Avalokitesvara. A request is made that Karmapa-Avalokitesvara turn the wheel of dharma, making the teachings manifest. There is a further request that he remain in the world and not die. The sevenfold service is ended by dedicating the benefits of the activities of the participants to all sentient beings.

In response to the supplication, His Holiness removes his hat

and repeats the 'om mani padme hum' mantra while using his crystal rosary. At this time, he is opening himself and preparing to enter wholly and completely into his manifestation as Avalokitesvara, totally awakened and radiating the energy of compassion.

A true transmission, the meeting of minds between His Holiness and the audience, here becomes possible. Having with devotion participated in the opening of the invocation and sevenfold service, the audience has fully prepared the ground for a process of free exchange. As His Holiness repeats the 'mani' mantra, the audience should be fully attentive to him and permit its awareness to merge with his. Having completed one hundred repetitions of the mantra, His Holiness places the Vajra Crown on his head. This completes the link with his transcendental aspect and with the audience. His Holiness then removes the Crown and the ceremony is terminated by the chanting of the monks, dedicating the benefits arising from the ceremony to all sentient beings and asking for long life for His Holiness.

At this time all present receive blessings from His Holiness in the form of a touch on the head and a symbolic tantric thread. This is the time for members of the audience to give their offerings. The offering should include a white scarf, which symbolizes the offering of one's pure consciousness plus flowers and incense. All money offered at this time goes directly to His Holiness.



Sevenfold Service

He whose mind is turned to tranquility will produce fruit which is superior to it; goodness to the sons of the Conqueror is without effort.

I reverence their bodies, wherein this most excellent jewel of enlightenment mind has arisen, wherein even a sin results in happiness. I go for refuge to these resources of happiness.

In order to grasp this jewel of the mind, I offer worship to the Buddhas, and to the spotless jewel of the true Dharma, and to the sons of the Buddhas, who are oceans of virtue:

As many flowers and fruits and species of healing herbs as exist in the world, and as many jewels as exist, and waters clear and refreshing;

likewise, mountains of jewels, and forest places to be enjoyed in solitude, and vines blazing with flower-decoration, and trees whose branches bow down with good fruit;

fragrant incenses; wish-fulfilling trees, and trees of jewels; lakes adorned with lotuses, and the endlessly fascinating cry of wild geese;

harvests without cultivation, and crops of grain, and everything else ornamenting those worthy of worship; things within the limits of extended space and likewise all things which belong to no one.

These I offer mentally to the eminent sages (*muni*) and to their little sons. May the great Compassionate Ones, worthy of choice gifts, mercifully accept this from me.

I have nothing else for worship. Therefore, for my sake, let the Lords whose highest object is the mind, accept this through my own effort.

And I give myself to the Conquerors completely, and to their sons. Pre-eminent Beings! take possession of me! Through devotion I go into servitude.

By your taking possession of me I become without fear of existence, I do good to all beings, and I by-pass former sin, and, moreover, I do no further sin.

Hereafter may delightful clouds of worship arise, and clouds of music and song which thrill all creatures.

Upon all jewels of the true Dharma, shrines and images, may the rains of flowers, jewels, and such, fall without end.

With salutations as numerous as the atoms in all Buddhafields, I salute the Buddhas of all three worlds (of past, present, and future) and the Dharma, and the great congregations.

I go to the Buddha for refuge until Enlightenment is reached. I go to the Dharma for refuge, likewise to the hosts of Bodhisattvas.

With folded hands, I implore the perfect Buddhas stationed in all places, and likewise the great compassionate Bodhisattvas:

Whatever evil, on the endless wheel of rebirth, or simply right here, whatever evil was committed by me, an animal, or caused to be committed,

and whatever was enjoyed foolishly, ending in self-destruction, that evil I confess, stricken with remorseful feeling.

Having seen all quarters devoid of protection, and having fallen again into complete confusion, what then shall I do in that place of great fear?

Therefore, I go now for refuge to the Lords of the earth, the ones laboring for the sake of the earth's protection, the Conquerors who dispel all fear;

and likewise I go for refuge to the Dharma that is mastered by them, which consumes the fear of rebirth: and I shall go to the company of Bodhisattvas.

I rejoice in exultation at the goodness, and at the cessation and destruction of sorrow, wrought by all beings. May those who sorrow achieve joy!

I rejoice at the release of embodied beings from the sorrowful wheel of rebirth. I rejoice at the Bodhisattvahood and at the Buddhahood of those who have attained salvation.

I rejoice at the Bearers of Happiness to all beings, the Vehicles of Advantage for all beings, and those who teach.

With folded hands, I beseech the perfect Buddhas in all places: May they cause the light of the Dharma to shine upon those who, because of confusion, have fallen into sorrow.

With folded hands, I beseech the Conquerors who are desirous of experiencing cessation: May they pause for countless aeons lest this world become blind.

Having done all this, let me also be a cause of abatement, by means of whatever good I have achieved, for all of the sorrow of all creatures.

I am medicine for the sick. May I be their physician and their servant, until sickness does not arise again.

From the Bodhicaryavatara by Shantideva (8th century);
translated by Marion L. Maties

Song

by Ranjung Rigpe Dorje,
His Holiness the sixteenth Gyalwa Karmapa
(excerpt)

This ordinary mind of nowness
Is untouched by fixations on birth
and liberation,
Its unceasing manifestation is unshaken
by projections.
The realms of samsara and nirvana appear
simultaneously –
This is the effortless path of the marvellous
mahamudra.
Seeing the self-existing ground of insight,
The gaits of samsara and nirvana fall into step
And the apparent confusion of the three worlds
collapses into space.
The three bodies of enlightenment are arrived
at in the natural state,
So why look forward to future results?
This is the special teaching of the Kagyupas –
Thinking on that, I emulate my forefathers.