



HIS EMINENCE NGAWANG TENZIN MIGYUR

His Eminence Ngawang Tenzin Migyur was born into a large and well respected family living in Gelung, a remote village in the eastern Tibetan region of Lathing on July 4, 1935. A year later, while visiting many monasteries throughout East Tibet, Gaton Ngawang Legpa Rinpoche, one of Tibet's most highly realized lamas, visited Lob Gonsar, the second largest of Migyur's twelve monasteries and was asked by the monastery's officials and people's representatives to help them find the newest reincarnation of Ngawang Tenzin Migyur Tsul-trim Dragpa, the former 18th King of Muli, and their Rinpoche or "Precious One". A few days later after sleeping in Migyur Rinpoche's bed, Legpa Rinpoche drew a map of the general region, village, and house that appeared to him in a dream to identify where the new Migyur Rinpoche could be found. After searching several months, the monastery's officials disguised as common travelers, finally located the features identified in Legpa Rinpoche's dream. Once they discovered that a young boy about a year old did indeed live in the house, the officials crossed a nearby river and climbed a hill overlooking the village where they prayed and lit a fire offering of fragrant juniper bows. Rather than flowing along with the wind's normal course above the river, the fire's smoke crossed the river and pointed unwaveringly to the house where Rinpoche lived. When he learned of the search party's discovery and the unusual circumstances attending it, Legpa Rinpoche made the long awaited confirmation of Migyur Rinpoche's reincarnation. Soon afterwards the monastery's officials summoned everyone to the main assembly space to announce the good news and after all had gathered, the awesome sound of a sacred conch locked away in the treasury was heard mysteriously heralding the wondrous discovery from the roof.

While Rinpoche's discovery caused much rejoicing throughout the kingdom, Rinpoche's father didn't like the idea and resisted the clergy's efforts to take his beloved son away. After several unsuccessful attempts to persuade the father that his son was indeed Migyur Rinpoche, the high lamas of Migyur Monastery sought help from Gosok Rinpoche, the Abbot of the region's other large monastery. Gosok Rinpoche met with Rinpoche's father and explained that the many mysterious and auspicious signs confirming the discovery were irrefutable and that Rinpoche's father should consider what would be best for the kingdom. Eventually Rinpoche's father accepted his family's loss as an extraordinary blessing upon the land and its people and at the age of four, Rinpoche and several members of his family were accompanied by many of the monastery's high lamas, ministers and people's representatives for a two day journey by horse to his largest monastery and long awaited coronation.

After enjoying a three week visit at Migyur Monastery, Rinpoche returned home to live with his family until the age of six when he returned to the monastery to begin his formal education. Between the ages of six and thirteen, Rinpoche was tutored privately by the head lamas of Migyur Monastery in the summer and Lob Gonsar Monastery in the winter. During this earliest period of his formal education, Rinpoche was taught language, composition, and metaphysics as well as many ancient and sacred writings on Buddhism and the Sakya Lineage, many of which he was required to memorize. His teachers' expectations were very high and their methods were normally rigorous and occasionally stern.



At thirteen, Rinpoche returned to Lithang Monastery to study with his older brother, Geleg Rinpoche, a Gelugpa monk who upon graduating from Sera Monastery in Lhasa had become Abbot of Lithang Monastery. For two years Migyur Rinpoche memorized the three root teachings of the Tripitaka, or basic Buddhist tenets of moral discipline under the careful guidance of his older brother.

At fifteen, Rinpoche returned to Lob Gonsar Monastery to take his exams, attend college, and exercise his traditional administrative and judicial authority throughout the kingdom. In those days, people paid the monastery a small portion of their earnings to use its vast land holdings to farm and to raise their own livestock. During prosperous times the monastery's food stocks would naturally increase and during hail or drought induced famines, people were permitted to borrow food from the monastery if they agreed to repay what they had borrowed with interest.

When he was seventeen, Rinpoche witnessed two of his monastery's monks attempting to coerce a frightened family of poor farmers into repaying their long accumulated debt. After the farmers left, Rinpoche asked the monks what they were trying to do and they explained they were simply trying to collect the large amount of interest owed. Soon afterwards, Rinpoche instructed his ministers to convene an assembly of the monastery's officials and peoples' representatives to discuss the merit of the long established practice. After the subject was thoroughly discussed, Rinpoche announced that he had decided to abolish the practice and to forgive all debts resulting from the accumulation of interest. News of the revolutionary dispensation spread quickly throughout the kingdom and the people's many generous expressions of gratitude soon overwhelmed the monastery's food storage facilities.

While exercising his temporal responsibilities, Rinpoche was also intensively engaged in his more advanced studies of Tibetan Buddhism. From the age of fifteen to eighteen Rinpoche continued to study the commentaries on the Tripitaka with the Venerable Jamyang Damcho Latuk Rinpoche at Lob Gonsar College. At sixteen Rinpoche received the Sgrub Thabs Kun Btus empowerment from his root guru, Kunsang Chöki Nyima Rinpoche, including the Meditation on Green Tara, one of Rinpoche's principal deities. At nineteen, Rinpoche traveled to the Ngor Monastery to receive his monastic vows of ordination and several teachings and empowerments including the Sakya Lamdre teachings from his root guru, the Luding Ken Abbot Jamyang Tempai Nyima Rinpoche. Later that year, Rinpoche traveled to Sakya where he visited the great North and South Monasteries and then on to Lhasa where he studied the Yamantaka and Samvara with Tijang Rinpoche and Ling Rinpoche, the two tutors of His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, The XIV Dalai Lama.

In 1956, at the age of twenty-one, Rinpoche joined the world's celebration of the 2,500 year anniversary of Buddha's passing into Nirvana by making a pilgrimage to the many holy shrines of Buddhism throughout India and Nepal. Traveling with a young lama translator and his sister's eldest son, Rinpoche beheld for the first time many of the industrialized world's most amazing wonders along with Buddhism's most sacred landmarks.

Rinpoche returned to Lhasa during the latter part of 1957 to receive the Kalachakra initiation from His Holiness, The XIV Dalai Lama at the Norbulinka. A few months later Geleg Rinpoche and Dakpa, their elder brother and gorilla leader in the Tibetan resistance army rode continuously by horseback for two months from Lithang to warn Rinpoche that the Chinese Communists were attempting to take over the country and had already started to kill and imprison anyone who threatened their rule. While conditions in Lhasa still seemed tolerable, Dakpa insisted that Tibet would soon be overrun and urged his younger brothers and the other members of his family to leave for India as soon as possible.

Forced to give up his home, people, and much of his family, including his mother, two brothers, and three sisters to the Chinese Communists, Rinpoche and nine members of his family finally accepted their bitter and uncertain fate and left Lhasa for Darjeeling and Kalimpong during the early part of 1958. Despite their determination to adjust to the foreign customs and climate, living in India was always an ordeal and sometimes nearly intolerable. Rinpoche and his family's financial resources were limited; they had no employable skills and could not speak, write, or understand any of India's many different foreign dialects and customs. Forced to sell most of the priceless antiquities they had carried with them, Rinpoche and his family naively trusted traders who shamelessly lied to steal or discount the true value of much of their family's wealth.



The family's tragic circumstances were made even more traumatizing when an Indian doctor's injection paralyzed Geleg Rinpoche. At first he was not even able to lift a tea-cup to his lips and depended upon Migyur Rinpoche for everything from eating to bathing. Soon after Geleg Rinpoche became paralyzed, the shocking news of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's escape, China's brutal repression of Tibet's popular uprising, and the fall of Lhasa to the communists reached India. While Geleg Rinpoche's has gradually improved, he is still partially paralyzed and continues to require much assistance.

In 1959, while suffering many of his life's darkest moments, the Nationalist Chinese Government of Taiwan invited Rinpoche to become the first Tibetan lama to visit and then to immigrate to Taiwan. Two years later he arranged for Geleg Rinpoche to join him and both became Commissioners of the government's Mongolian-Tibetan Commission; positions which gave them modest stipends sufficient to support their family. In addition to his largely ceremonial duties for the Commission, Rinpoche taught Tibetan culture at the National Cheng-Chi University in Taipei and produced a popular Tibetan language radio news program with one of his nephews, which they broadcasted two hours a day, four days a week for the next four to five years. During this period, Migyur Rinpoche met the Venerable Kangyur Rinpoche, a very learned Mongolian Lama who quickly became a close friend.

Kangyur Rinpoche had started a small Dharma center in Taipei for students who were mostly from mainland China and he asked both Migyur Rinpoche and Geleg Rinpoche to help him to administer it. Both agreed to conduct several ceremonies and teachings and when Kangyur Rinpoche died in 1979, his students sought Migyur Rinpoche's blessings and asked him to become their head lama. After much consideration and discussion, Rinpoche finally agreed and the center, now known as the Chinese-Tibetan Cultural Institute, has grown to approximately 300 students of all ages. In the early 1980's Rinpoche immigrated to the United States to live near and receive teachings from His Eminence Dezhung Rinpoche, a very highly realized Sakya scholar living in Seattle. In 1986 Rinpoche became a U.S. citizen and in 1989 he resigned from Taiwan's Mongolian-Tibetan Commission.

In July of 1990, thirty-five years after he had been forced to flee, China finally granted Rinpoche permission to return to his homeland for an extended visit with its people and four of his monasteries. Many large and enthusiastic crowds of Tibetans, who often waited several hours along the roadsides to get a glimpse of him frequently filled Rinpoche's car with Katakas (white ceremonial scarves), flowers, and money as he was driven from one village to the next. Occasionally Rinpoche was surprised by those who had been able to conceal and protect several of his most important possessions or antiquities from the communists' destructive excesses. These treasures included a three hundred year old seal from the Quing Dynasty certifying his authority as a "Khutughtu" or reincarnated Buddha who has made great religious, cultural, and political contributions (there are less than seventy throughout all of Tibet and Mongolia) and four silk scrolls from His Holiness The VII Dalai Lama describing and certifying the region of his dominion. While the tide of joyful contagion which followed Rinpoche throughout his visit was often overwhelming, he frequently tried to reciprocate his people's enduring love and generosity with many gifts and blessings of his own including several mantras and long life initiations. Rinpoche was also reunited with his two youngest sisters and learned the fates of the other family members he was forced to leave behind. His youngest and eldest brothers, who had been gorilla leaders in the Tibetan resistance, were eventually caught and killed. Rinpoche's mother died peacefully in 1960 soon after receiving a letter from Rinpoche reassuring her that he and the other members of her family were finally safe in Taiwan. Rinpoche's eldest sister died of natural causes in 1981.

Before leaving Tibet, Rinpoche won concessions from the communists permitting him to restore his many monasteries and to build a new house in Lithang for himself and Geleg Rinpoche. These historic and unprecedented concessions permitted Rinpoche to reestablish an ongoing presence in lives of his people and to gradually rebuild several monasteries destroyed during the Cultural Revolution.

Rinpoche's abiding interest in music, his unusually beautiful voice, talent for composing music, and mastery of the Gyuto multiphonic chanting technique of singing a chord containing two or three tones simultaneously soon attracted the attentions of a few gifted musicians in Taiwan and the United States who helped him record several tapes and CD's of Tibetan songs and mantras. Rinpoche also enjoys painting Tibetan landscapes, he designed White-Horse-Mountain Bodhi Monastery, Taiwan's first Tibetan Monastery, and he established the Canadian Lithang Migyur Organization for artistic and cultural exchanges between North America and Tibet.

In 1980 Rinpoche bestowed the Green Tara empowerment to Phillip and Mariam Lehn and the three gradually become good friends. In 1992 Rinpoche and Phillip Lehn co-founded Green Tara Incorporated to develop environmentally sensitive sites more beneficially and to raise money to help Rinpoche restore his monasteries (see Profile). Rinpoche also hopes Green Tara Incorporated will be able to create and develop western markets for many products made by his people in Tibet including wool carpets of contemporary as well as traditional designs.

In 2005 Rinpoche suffered an unusually devastating stroke that nearly killed him. While his life was spared he was left partially paralyzed and must now depend upon the assistance of others. Despite this often painful and humiliating condition, Rinpoche continues to travel regularly to attend to his ongoing projects and to visit his many students, monasteries, and Dharma centers in Tibet, India, China, Taiwan, Canada, and the United States.



For more on the life and work of His Eminence Ngawang Tenzin Migyur please visit www.Migyur.org and www.greentara-inc.com

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