

THE GEDEN PHACHO BHUCHO PROJECT

(Preservation of the Sacred Lineages of Empowerments and Oral Transmissions of the Geden Tradition known as Gelug Tradition)

BACKGROUND

The Geden tradition of Buddhism in Tibet was founded by the highly revered Buddhist master and scholar-practitioner, Je Tsong Khapa, in the 14th century. Born in Eastern Tibet in 1357, Je Tsong Khapa studied extensively from an early age, favouring the use of both powerful meditation techniques and incisive intellectual understanding. He explored the entire range of Buddhist doctrines in all Buddhist schools flourishing at the time and sought to synthesise these into a cohesive whole. Je Tsong Khapa's legacy is enormous; he is credited with having revitalised many sutra and tantra lineages which would otherwise have become extinct. The thirty seven volumes of the Collected Works of Je Tsong Khapa and his two chief disciples, Gyaltsab Dharma Rinchen and Khedrup Gelek Palsang, comprise the root texts containing the precious teachings and commentaries of Je Tsong Khapa and his two main disciples are known as "Phacho" in Tibetan ("Teachings of the Fathers"). The works of the immediate disciples of the three former masters and their followers together with the commentaries of the Indian Buddhist scholars and commentators are known as "Bhucho" in Tibetan ("Teachings of the Sons"). The importance of pure lineage transmission in the form of Buddhism practised in Tibet is undisputed. It ensures a stream of undiluted blessing from the Buddha himself to contemporary students. The purity of lineage teaching is considered essential for ultimate attainment and realisation of Buddhahood. It is essential because if a lineage is broken, or in danger of becoming broken, then the teachings themselves are threatened. Without qualified teachers giving correct personal oral transmissions, the enlightened understanding, beneficial spiritual energy, and extraordinary blessing of previous masters cannot be passed on effectively.

RATIONALE

Since 1959, when Tibetans began to leave Tibet and settle in many parts of the world, many precious teachings have already been lost, due to older Tibetan Lamas passing away, without having properly transmitted the teachings they held to the younger generation. If this continues for a long time, Je Tsong Khapa's precious legacy, amongst others, is at risk of being lost forever. If the work on the preservation of the lineage teachings is not carried out now, the vast and profound teachings of the Geden tradition may not survive for long. This will be a great loss not only for Tibetans but also for the whole of humanity as this unique tradition has much to offer for world peace.

VISION

To preserve the sanctity and purity of the teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni for all the sentient beings who have within them the seed to attain Buddhahood.

GOALS

Although the practice of Buddhism differs in Tibet, with each school following its own set of unique traditions propounded by their own founders, the root of all these traditions can be traced to the Teacher of all Teachers - Buddha Shakyamuni himself. Je Tsong Khapa, like all other highly revered Buddhist Masters studied the teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni extensively and founded the Geden School of Buddhism in Tibet in the 14th century. This project, would like to focus at first on conducting a comprehensive research project on the lineages of the Geden tradition and successfully preserving all the transmission lineages belonging to this unique tradition.

OBJECTIVES

1. To compile a working reference catalogue to serve as a master copy of all the lineages belonging to the Geden Tradition,
2. To determine a programme and process of oral transmissions of the Geden lineages based upon the expertise and advice of the highly revered Buddhist Masters and scholars of Geden Tradition
3. Following this process, to facilitate the oral transmission of all the known Geden Lineages to the most appropriate students.

Each of the above stated objectives will have a series of activities, the broad framework of which is outlined below in three phases:

PHASE ONE: Compilation of the Reference Catalogue

This phase will be the foundation upon which the whole project will be built. For the effective and efficient execution of the project, efforts are already underway to establish an office in Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, India for the coordination of initial activities, research and networking . This office will be the central liaison base for all project-related activities.

Its personnel will include:

- Chief researcher, who will have no less than 20 years of experience in lineage related research,
- Two Research Assistants, who are well qualified in research
- Data Manager, who is well versed in database and cataloguing software
- Office Administrator, whose primary responsibilities will be to keep accounts/carry out bookkeeping, and network/coordinate with field researchers, monastic institutions, offices and, particularly, sponsors.

Field Research:

The researchers will make as many field trips as possible given the various constraints: time and resources. Although the intensive research will be carried out by researchers in-house at the primary office, for much of the initial information and extensive research, the office will rely mostly upon the Field Representatives of the respective monastic institutions and centres. The information collected will be thoroughly scrutinised by the researchers and standardised for final inclusion in the Reference Catalogue.

Immediate Activities of the Office:

As soon as this office is established (which is expected to be as early as mid-2006), it shall lose no time in working towards:

- i) Organising a conference of the heads of monastic institutions following the Geden tradition. The project and its activities will be presented by the Project Director during this meeting, which will be held in June, 2006 at the Norbulingka Institute in Dharamsala. Detailed activities of the project as well as the whole process of cataloguing and oral transmission of lineages will be formulated only after the suggestions, advice and blessings of the most highly revered Lamas of the Geden tradition, who will gather for this most auspicious occasion. The project will also be formally inaugurated and launched at this esteemed gathering.
- ii) Identifying the most appropriate Field Representatives and laying a framework for field research.
- iii) Formulating a framework and process for the compilation of Reference Catalogue of the Transmission Lineages of Geden tradition. This proposed Catalogue, unlike others, will have the following features:

- Title of the texts;
- Classification as per the subject matter: Sutra or Tantra;
- Categorisation as per different lineages: Oral Transmission or Empowerment;
- A short life history of each of the successive teachers/Masters of each lineage;
- Information on whether each transmission lineages is extant or broken;

- If extant, which Masters still hold the transmission lineage;
- If broken, how that happened; and
- In case of doubt, efforts will be made to verify the truth and these will be recorded to continually update the information in the catalogue.

The process of compilation of the Catalogue will continue until all the lineages and their holders are properly identified. In the meantime, the process for the transmission of lineages to the younger generation will be initiated as and when the extant lineages and their Holders are confirmed. Although there is no clear distinction in the timeframe of the phases, as activities of a phase may overlap with another phase, it is deemed necessary here to classify the sets of activities of each phase for more effective and efficient execution of the project.

PHASE TWO: Identification of the Lineage Holder/Master and the Disciple and the Transmission of Lineages

The First Phase and the Second Phase are intertwined with each other. In the First Phase, compilation of the Reference Catalogue is given priority, whereas in the Second Phase, it is the actual meeting of the lineage holders and the establishment of a process for the transmission of lineages to the most appropriate disciples/students which is given more importance. However, these two activities can be done concurrently. Although the process for the identification of the lineage holder and the disciple as well as the method by which the lineage is to be transmitted will become clearer with the suggestions and advice given during the conference of the most highly revered Lamas of the Geden tradition, a broad framework is outlined here:

- Step 1. Identify the lineages which are extant and their holders. Also identify all the doubtful cases and prove beyond doubt the status of the lineage, whether extant or broken.
- Step 2. Identify a group of highly qualified students or disciples, who shall receive the oral transmission of lineages from their holders.
- Step 3. Facilitate the transmission of lineages from the holders to the students/disciples. Provided there are enough funds available, the project will facilitate transmissions of lineages to all identified students/disciples. In many cases, students will need to travel to many different places to meet the lineage holders. It may be more practical, to prioritise lineages and their associated teachings according to their rarity.

The broad framework outlined above could serve as a working draft for the project. However, the final decision regarding this is expected to be taken during the meeting/conference of the Head Lamas of the Geden tradition in June, 2006.

PHASE THREE: Completion and Follow-Up

Once the compilation of the Reference Catalogue of all the existing transmission lineages of the Geden tradition is done and all the existing lineages are successfully transmitted from their holders to the students/disciples, the project will be said to be complete. With the completion of this project, the great legacy of Je Tsong Khapa and his teachings and lineages will be secure for at least the next five decades.

For the perpetuation of the great legacy of Je Tsong Khapa and the Founding Fathers of the Geden tradition, a system will have to be established to make sure that the Reference Catalogue is regularly maintained and updated.

Although this project is designed and expected to be completed within a decade, for the long-term sustainability of the project and the perpetuation of the great Geden tradition, the Lelung Dharma Trust (a charitable organisation based in the UK), and the Project Director, H.E. Lelung Rinpoche, will be entrusted with the regular maintenance

and continual updating of the Reference Catalogue in the future.

BOARD OF ADVISORS

"The Geden Phacho Bhucho Project" for the Preservation of the Sacred Lineages of Empowerments and Oral Transmissions of the Geden Tradition was conceived by H.E. Lelung Rinpoche and has been widely applauded and endorsed by many great Masters and Tulkus (incarnate holy beings) of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Without the blessings and guidance of these spiritual masters, it would be impossible to embark on this journey. It is sheer good fortune for the whole of humanity that this project has the blessings of these most highly revered spiritual masters of our time:

Supreme Patron:
H.H. The Dalai Lama

Honorary Patron:
Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche

Chief Advisors:
Ganden Tri Rinpoche
Shartse Choje Rinpoche
Jangtse Choje Rinpoche

Honorary Advisors:
- Denma Locho Rinpoche, Dharamsala
- Kirti Tsenshap Rinpoche, Dharamsala
- Dagpa Rinpoche, Sera Monastery, S India
- Rizong Rinpoche, Ladakh
- Dagyab Rinpoche, Bonn
- Rato Khyongla Rinpoche, New York
- Choden Rinpoche, Sera
- Dagpo Rinpoche, Paris
- Zopa Rinpoche, Nepal
- Doboomb Tulku, Delhi
- Panchen Oetul Rinpoche
- Khalkha Jetsun Dampa Rinpoche
- Lati Rinpoche

Field Researcher:
- Abbot, Segyud Dratsang Tantric Monastery
- Gen Choeze Wangyal, formerly LTWA
- Dorje Gonpo

Field Research Consultants/Sponsor Liaison:
- Tobden Rinpoche (abbot of Gyuto Monastery)
- Jhado Rinpoche (former Namgyal Monastery)

Field Researchers' helper (unconfirmed):
- Gyuto Gen Samten
- Gyume Gen Chime

Reference Catalogue Consultants:
- Beri Jigme
- Sangye Tendar

- Lobsang Choephel

Financial Coordinator (unconfirmed):

- Ngawang Choedak, SJC

FUNDING

Initially, the Project Director, H.E.Lelung Rinpoche and the Lelung Dharma Trust is hoping to secure funds of approximately UK Pound 10,000 (US\$ 17,500) for:

- the establishment of the office
- the organisation of the conference of the heads of the
- monastic institutions belonging to the Geden tradition to be held in June, 2006
- running expenses of the office for the first year, including initial research

A total of UK Pound 1,000 has already been raised towards these costs and kind donations towards funding the remaining amount needed to fulfil this unique project are invited from all Dharma friends across the world.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For further inquiries, suggestions and financial support, please contact:

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