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Ratnabhadra's Lifestory—the origin of a Tibetan narrative tradition in memoriam Buchen Gyurme, 1930-2004

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It didn't look very promising first when I went to India in 1998 to ask around about a certain type of Tibetan storytellers so called Mani Lamas. Most Tibetans have never heard of them, and those few old lamas who remembered seeing them in their childhood reciting stories on the Barkhor¹⁾ in Lhasa or on marketplaces elsewhere, weren't positive. Most of them shared the opinion, that the Tibetan storytelling tradition perished, as modern forms of narration like movie and television took over its function. I refused to give it up though and kept asking people, when suddenly a monk at Sakya Monastery in Rajpur, India started happily nodding while listening to my question. 'Yes, there is a Mani Lama living in my village, only four km away from here' he said. We set off immediately, and soon arrived to a small Tibetan settlement, Dekyiling, where everyone knew Buchen Gyurme, one of the last representatives of the Mani Lama tradition. He happily invited us to his modest home, and agreed to talk about his life and vocation.

Buchen Gyurme was born in 1930 in TöShelkar, the southern part of Tibet, close to the Everest region²⁾. His family followed the Nyingma school of Tibetan

1) Bar 'khor: middle circle, circumambulation path in Lhasa around the Jokhang Temple, the spiritual centre of Tibet.

2) Stod shel dkar, meaning Shelkar in Töpa, or upper region, Stod rtsa skor

Buddhism, Dzatul Dorje Chang Rinpoche was his family's lama, a famous reincarnation of the locality, who founded Dzarong Gumpa in 1902, on a hillside south of Tingri.³⁾ The Mani Lamas are called 'buchen' in this area, this is why Gyurme also used this name since his early age. He was 8 years old, when his uncle started teaching him the namthars⁴⁾, Buddhist liberation stories or hagiographies, and he performed alone first time when he was 13. From then on he was wandering in Tibet, mostly in the south, carrying thangkas in his backpack to be able to illustrate his stories. He visited the nearby Tsibri mountain quite often, one of the four holy mountains in Tibet. According to Gyurme the Mani Lamas go to Tsibri, the holy mountain to get Chenrezi initiation.⁵⁾ He described the locality in the traditional way Tibetan people see the landscape with its visible and invisible dimensions: 'The stones here have strange shape and it takes five days to circumambulate the mountain. There are one hundred-eight gompas on the circumambulation path (*skor ba*), four big monasteries among them and four mountain peaks. There are four rivers bordering the mountain. The four big rocks were put there by the Khandro⁶⁾, and there are one hundred-eight cemeteries. The Tsibri is unmovable, because it is pinned down by four phurbas⁷⁾ in the form of big rocks. There are many pilgrims coming here from faraway places, especially on big festivals like *cho 'phrul dus chen* (15th day of the first Tibetan month)⁸⁾, a *duschen sa ga zla ba* (15th day of the 4th Tibetan month)⁹⁾, *chos 'khor dus chen* (4th day of the 6th

3) Dzatul Rinpoche Ngawang Tenzin Norbu was born in 1866. The locals called him Rongphu Sangye, the Buddha of the Rocky Valley.

4) Tib.: rnam thar

5) The Mani Lamas are teaching and explaining the meaning of the six syllable mantra of the Bodhisattva of Compassion, Chenrezi (OM MAŌI PADME HŪM), this is why they need Chenrezi initiation. This initiation doesn't have a strict precondition as some others, any lay practitioner can receive it from a teacher.

6) Tib.: mkha' 'gro: Female principle related to wisdom. The word can have several meanings, but in general we can say that common *ḍkinis* possess certain spiritual powers, the wisdom-*ḍkinis* attained the state of final realization.

7) Ritual dagger

8) The Festival of Miracles. According to the Tibetan tradition the Buddha performed several miracles in the city of Shravasti on the first fifteen days of the first lunar month.

Tibetan month)¹⁰, és a *lha babs dus chen* (22nd day of the 9th Tibetan month)¹¹.’

Buchen Gyurme fled to India after the Chinese invasion in 1959. I was thrilled to recognize him on an old black and white photo in R. A. Stein’s book, which was taken around that time by the author¹²). Later he settled down in Delyiling and tried to keep alive the storytelling tradition he learnt. Every year on the 25th day of the 4th month he started a week long storytelling session on the main square of Delyiling. Most often he recited the stories of Sukyi Nyima, Nangsa and Kunga Rangdol. Most of the time he performed from 7 am till 6 pm. To tell a full story without omission took him usually one or two days.

Buchen Gyurme was not only a storyteller, but also a prominent leading figure of his settlement’s Nyingma community. Being a Mani Lama also meant working as a spiritual expert, giving advice to the members of the community, praying when someone was ill, doing divination (*mo*) for others. He was often called to the house when someone died to help the deceased person’s consciousness to find the way through the intermediate state, the Bardo. After death at the end of the 7th week he would be invited to the final ritual to recite one of the delog¹³) stories: *Karma Dbang ’dzin* or *Kung dga’ Rang sgrol*.

Buchen Gyurme told me, that in the 1980ies the Oral History Department of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamsala invited all the living

9) The most important Buddhist festival. According to tradition the Buddha was born in Lumbini on this day, attained realization 35 years later on the same day in Bodh Gaya, then 50 years later he passed away on the same day to nirvana in Kushinagar.

10) Commemoration of the day when the Buddha turned the wheel of Dharma and gave teaching on the four noble truths to his five disciples in Sarnath.

11) The Buddha came down from the Tushita on this day to Shankhasa, the city of Kashi. He spent a whole rainy season in Tushita heaven when he was forty-one years old, teaching the Dharma to his mother, Maya and others.

12) Stein, Rolf A., *Recherches sur l’épopée et le barde au Tibet*, Bibliothèque de l’Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, 13., Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1959Pl. 1. I would like to thank Gergo Orosz, the librarian of the Oriental Collection, Hungarian Academy of Sciences for sending me the copy of this photo to Darjeeling.

13) *’das log*: people who died, visited different realms, and returned to their body to teach others about the sufferings of other realms.

Mani Lamas –they could find only four – to record their biography and stories. The interviews were done by Tashi Tsering¹⁴), a librarian that time, who later helped me to find some Tibetan texts related to the topic. By 1998 only two of the four Mani Lamas were alive, Buchen Gyurme, who I met first, and his old friend, Buchen Norgye in Kollegal, South India who I visited in 2000. The other two, Mani Lama Dawa and Buchen Porongpa already passed away by the time I heard about them, but in Paonta Sahib I had a chance to meet Buchen Porongpa's daughter.

Buchen Gyurme told me he knew eighteen stories, but only ten of them were recorded in the Dharamsala library. According to Tashi Tsering he didn't know any of them by heart, just read them out from the text. The following stories were recited by Buchen Gyurme and recorded in the LTWA:

1. *Dri med kun ldan*: popular story of a compassionate prince, it is also performed as a lhamo opera. Originally it is a jātaka story from India, now part of the Tibetan Buddhist Canon, Tengyur (*bstan 'gyur*).
2. *Snang sa 'Od de 'bum*: the biography of Delog Nangsa Öbum. According to some Tibetan sources it is based on a real story, and its origin goes back to the 12th century Tsang Province.
3. *Kun dga' Rang grol*: autobiography of Delog Kunga Rangdol, this story was Buchen Gyurme's favourite
4. *'Das log Padma Chos skyid*: less known delog story
5. *Padma 'Od 'bar*: popular story of Guru Rinpoche's (Padmasambhava) past life, also performed as a lhamo opera. The original story comes from the Pema Kathang¹⁵).

14) Now director of the Amye Machen Institute.

15) The Pema Kathang (pad ma bka' thang) is a collection of life stories of Padmasambhava, the original was written by Yeshe Tshogyal. The 'kathang literature' consists various terma texts which were discovered during the past centuries by different tertons. One of the most popular among them is the Padma bka'-thang shel-brag-ma, discovered by U rgyan gling pa (b.1323).

6. *Nor bzang*: popular story of Prince Norsang, also performed as a lhamo opera. Originated in India, now part of the Tibetan Canon, *Bka' gyur*.
7. *Gzugs kyi Nyi ma*: popular story of Sukyi Nyima brahminess, also performed as a lhamo opera. It is originated in India, a version of Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*, now part of the Tibetan Canon, *Bka' gyur*.
8. *'Gro ba Bzang mo*: popular story of a ḍkinī called Drowa Sangmo, also performed as a lhamo opera. The story has historical background, probably comes from the Monpa tribe living in north-eastern Nepal.
9. *'Das log Karma Dbang 'dzin*: popular story of Delog Karma Wangdzin.
10. *Rgya lu Yid mdzes Bzod pa'i Dbang phyug*

Buchen Gyurme often visited Bodh Gaya, the place where the historical Buddha Shakyamuni attained enlightenment, and where His Holiness the Dalai Lama gives teachings every year in the 10th Tibetan month. In 1998 I also went there to see Gyurme performing for pilgrims who came for the Dalai Lama's teachings. That year he told the story of Kunga Rangdol. He was singing, reciting, explaining it 3-4 hours a day to his engaged audience, little children, nomads coming all the way from their distant Tibetan homeland, and exile Tibetans, who were all singing together the six syllable mantra after each chapter full of devotion: OM MAÓI PADME HŪM. He always emphasized the importance of these delog stories teaching the audience how to live a virtuous life through the experiences of delogs in the lower realms. He was always urging me to translate these texts, and showed me several times his books he considered to be the most important teachings:

1. *'Das log lha mo lham cung gi dmyal ba 'grim pa'i rnam thar bzhugs sol*¹⁶⁾
Delog story from the Yolmo valley, Nepal. Photocopy from the collection of the LTWA. Acc.No. 2454.

16) Reproduced from a rare manuscript from the library of Lama Zla ba of Yol mo. Published by Lama Dawa and Chopal Lama, Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, Darjeeling, Printed in Delhi, 1984. fs.1-95, fs 1-48a. Right now I'm working on the translation of this text.

2. *Rigs bzang gi mkha' 'gro ma Snang sa 'Od 'bum gyi rnam thar bzhugs sol*¹⁷⁾
 Story of Delog Nangsa Obum. Popular Tibetan story, also performed as a lhamo opera.
3. *'Das log dkar chags thar pa'i lam ston gsal ba'i sgron me bzhugs sol*
 Delog manual. Photocopy from the collection of the LTWA.
4. *A lags kar ma dbang 'dzin de nyid kyi rnam thar*¹⁸⁾
 Old blockprint, story of a famous Tibetan delog.
5. *Lo chen Ratna bha dra'i rnam thar bzhugs sol*
 Text on the origin of Mani Lamas. Photocopy from the collection of LTWA, incomplete manuscript.¹⁹⁾
6. *Dmyal ba mi yul gyi sa mtshams shi bson gnyis kyi bang chen bka' 'phrin pa bya bral kun dga' rang grol gyi dmyal khams gnas su byon nas 'khor 'dus kun gyi chos rgyal rin po che'i dkar nag dbye ba'i 'bras bu'i rnam thar mdo rtsom bzhugs sol*
 The story of Delog Kunga Rangdol.²⁰⁾

Ratnabhadra's life story, the text on the origin of Mani Lamas was considered to be an important work by Buchen Gyurme, because it described the origin of the vocation and the symbolism of different tools used by storytellers. But as we can notice from the list above, he didn't have the original copy of the text, only a photocopy of the pecha from the LTWA library. This is an incomplete

17) I translated this text in 1998 into Hungarian, but it hasn't been published yet.

18) Written down by Khrag 'thung Rdo rje (Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan), reproduced from the manuscript belonging to Dr. Yeshay Donden of Dharamsala by Ngawang Gelek Demo, New Delhi, 1973. Gedan Sungrab Minyam Gyunphel Series Vol. 55. Ka/3, 1973, 373 p., 10.7x14 cm

19) The translation of this text is included in this article.

20) I translated this text in 2005 into Hungarian, and it was published under the title Kunga Rangdrol's visit to the lower realms - Account of a Tibetan delog, in: Proceedings for the 70th birthday of Prof. Georg Kara, ELTE University, Budapest, 2005.

manuscript bought in Sikkim, folio 10-14 are missing²¹). First I translated this text and published excerpts of it in the catalogue of an exhibition held in the Hopp Ferenc Museum of East-Asian Arts, Budapest, called Demons and Protectors.²² When I asked Buchen Gyurme, what it could have been written on the missing pages, he told me to go to Kathmandu, to meet the nuns he taught before at the foot of the Swayambhu Stupa, and get the recordings they made, where he sang the whole story without omission. The following translation of Ratnabhadrā's lifestory is a reconstruction. A translation of the manuscript, and the missing four folios are inserted from the transcription of the recording made in Kathmandu.

'Biography of Ratnabhadrā, the translator/ For the benefit of every sentient being

OM MAI PADME HŪM HRĪ/ NĀMO GURU

The lifestory of Ratnabhadrā is the following:

In the land of India Dharmabhadrā was born; in the central part of Tibet *Thon mi Sambhota*²³) was born; in the golden grove of *Sman Lding*²⁴) Tulku Ratnabhadrā was born, the great master. He was called Ratnabhadrā by Indians, *Rin chen bzang po* by Tibetans. The Mirror illuminating Ratnabhadrā's life describes his story the following way:

21) Lo chen Ratnabhadrā'i nram thar, Dkon rigs, LTWA, Dharamsala, Ms., fs.1-19b

22) The Masters of the Mani Mantra, in: Demons and Protectors, Hopp Ferenc Museum of East-Asian Arts, 2003. pp.111-119.

23) Thon mi Sambhota: 'the great Tibetan of the Thon tribe', was a minister of Songtsen Gampo, who was sent to North India with others to study Sanskrit. After his return to Tibet by creating the Tibetan alphabet and writing several grammar books, he provided solid foundations for Tibetan literacy.

24) *Ldog sman sding*, or '*dog ma lding*', name of a place in southern Tibet.

The first chapter is about how Ratnabhadra emanated. OM MAÓI PADME HŪM

Thus how I have heard. Once upon a time on the eastern part of the Land of Happiness stood the *Dvags po Bkra shis* house, whose lord was called *Bkra shis Rnam rgyal*. He and his wife had everything they desired, generated lots of wealth, but they were still sad, because they were without a heir, who could inherit their lands. One day *Bkra shis Rnam rgyal* thought: 'Though I got all the wealth and prosperity in this life, I should also have a son, who could inherit it all.'

By thinking this he said to his wife, *Skal bzang chos kyi sgrol ma*: 'My dear spouse, as long as we were young, and our teeth were white, we didn't have a son. Now, that our hair is turning grey from old age we should go and visit *Thang stong rgyal po*²⁵⁾, the great siddha, and ask him how we could have a son, who would take over our wealth and possessions.'

They packed up numberless presents and set off with their entourage to the Chubori ironchain bridge²⁶⁾. There they handed over their marvellous gifts to the great siddha, *Thang stong rgyal po*, and requested him to help to have a son.

Siddha *Thang stong rgyal po* gave them the following advice: 'Oh, noble couple, as long as you were young, you didn't have a son. Now that your hair is turning grey from old age, your son will be born as the emanation of the holy Bodhisattva Chenrezi²⁷⁾ by the great compassion of the bodhisattva. Oh,

25) Tibetan 'crazy yogi', 1361-1485, according to some authors he was the founder of the Mani Lama tradition, the Chenrezi prayer written by him is still part of the introductory ritual of the mani lama performance.

26) Tib. chu bo ri: Famous ironchain bridge built by Thangtong Gyalpo on the Tsangpo River. The siddha was not only a great Buddhist master, but also a polihistor of his era. Some of the suspension bridges built by him are still used today.

27) *sprul-pa*

noble lady, avoid contaminated food and clothing. Have a bath, clean the house, and sit down in a spotless place to meditate and strive.'

Then let them set off with his advice. After the noble couple returned home, the lady of the house had a bath and started holy meditation in a clean spot.

That time the holy Chenrezi Wangchug²⁸⁾ was staying in samādhi for the benefit of every sentient being in the East, on the Potala mountain²⁹⁾, and he was looking down at the four big and the other small continents³⁰⁾. By experiencing the unbearable suffering of the six classes of beings³¹⁾ caused by impermanence, he thought: 'Oh, what a pain is to see the deviation of 'I', that makes beings fall into the three lower realms³²⁾! May my emanation be born for them. May he eliminate the ignorance of beings, and make them able to strive for virtue.'

Then he thought: 'May my emanation be born in the East, in the House of *Dvags lha*, as the son of *Dvags po bkra shis rnam rgyal* and *Skal bzang chos kyi sgröl ma*, and teach the heart of MAÓI PADMA³³⁾ on the southern Jambu continent.'

28) *Spyan ras gzigs dbang phyug*

29) *Ri Po ta la*: Chenrezi's abode according to Buddhist cosmology on the eastern part of the world.

30) According to Buddhist cosmology the bhūmandala has three levels: the kāmadhātu (desire realm), a rūpadhātu (form realm) és az arūpadhātu (formless realm). The Sumeru Mountain stands in the middle of the kāmadhātu, and there are four big continents around it in the four directions, which are flanked by two smaller continents. The southern continent is Jambudvīpa, the human realm. This is the only place to encounter the teachings of the Buddha, and the only realm where attaining enlightenment is possible.

31) The six classes of beings (*'gro ba rigs drug*): gods (*lha*), demigods (*lha ma yin*), humans (*mi*), animals (*dud 'gro*), hellbeings (*dmyal ba*), pretas (*yi dvags*).

32) The three lower realms: the realm of animals, hells and hungry ghosts.

33) *Lho 'dzam bu gling* is the southern continent, Jambudvīpa. The MAÓI PADMA's heart: the meaning of Chenrezi's six-syllable mantra.

The holy Chenrezi shot out a comet-like golden light, that entered *Skal bzang chos kyi sgrol ma*'s heart.

As long as the noble couple was young, and their teeth white, they didn't have a son, now that their hair was turning grey from old age, the wife *Skal bzang chos kyi sgrol ma* had a beautiful, revelation-like dream as a sign of the birth of Ratnabhadra. She told it to her husband the following way: 'There was a fourfold conch shell stairway in the East, on the Potala Mountain, I climbed up on it. Inside there was the Great Compassionate One³⁴⁾ and from his heart a golden ray of light shot out and entered the top of my head. A white ācārya³⁵⁾ came holding a crystal mālā³⁶⁾ in his hand and he said to me: 'Give me lodging in your body!' then disappeared like a transient rainbow.'

Hearing this story, the husband said: 'Your dream is beautiful. Keep your promise and go on meditating!'

Skal bzang chos kyi sgrol ma sat down again to immerse herself in the meditation of the venerable Tārā. After nine months and ten days, on the day of Great Miracles³⁷⁾, rainbow-tent covered the sky, a rain of flowers was falling, a sweet melody was heard from above and the baby was born. In the moment of birth the baby said: 'OM MAÓI PADME HŪM HRĪ, may I be the protector of the ones without protection, may I be the defender of the ones without defence. May I show the way to all beings, who are my mothers and fathers, to the land of the Potala Mountain! OM MAÓI PADME HŪM HRĪ.'³⁸⁾

34) Tib. *'phags pa thugs rje chen po*, the epithet of Chenrezi.

35) Tib. *lo tsa ba chen po*, great scholar.

36) Tib. *'phreng ba*, Buddhist rosary with 108 beads.

37) Tib. *cho 'phrul chen po'i zla ba*: the first fifteen days of the first month of the year, when the Buddha performed a miracle every day to strengthen the faith of his disciples. The 15th day of the Tibetan calendar is always the day of the full moon. They always perform rituals, because they believe, that the effect of positive actions is stronger during full moon.

38) This verse is part of the Chenrezi puja.

His parents and the people living on their estate were all truly rejoicing by hearing these words, and organized a big celebration for the honour of the baby's birth. The little boy was given the name *Rin chen bzang po*³⁹. [Already when he was born] he was skilled in the five sciences⁴⁰, and when he was three years old, his father pondered: 'It's time to get an Indian name for my son.'

That time an Indian siddha, *Dam pa sangs rgyas*⁴¹ was contemplating: 'I can see, that in Tibet *Thon mi Sambhota*'s emanation was born.' He mounted the wings of the wind, and reached soon the golden grove of *Sman lding*.

The mother, *Skal bzang chos kyi sgrol ma* was milking the cow at the door. Seeing the approaching *ācārya*, she rushed inside to her husband and said: 'There is an *ācārya* at our gate.'

'Invite him inside, if it's so' answered *Dvags po bkra shis rnam rgyal*.

After the *ācārya* was called inside and offered food and drinks in abundance, the father said: 'Please, give a name to my son!'

The Indian siddha, *Dam pa sangs rgyas* replied: 'In the dark land of Tibet a boy was born, who is like an illuminating lamp. Shall his name be Ratnabhadra.'

This is the reason why he became known as Ratnabhadra.

When the boy was ten years old, *Dvag po bkra shis rnam rgyal* handed him over the estate, and made him its rightful owner. Ratnabhadra stayed at home for

39) Meaning 'noble, blessed jewel'.

40) *Rig pa'i gnas lnga*: arts and crafts (*bzo*); medicine (*gso*); linguistics (*sgra*); logic (*tshad ma*); the teachings of the *tripiṭka*, the three baskets (*sde snod gsum*).

41) *Pa dam pa sangs rgyas*, Skt.: Buddha Paramapitri (d. 1117): Indian mahāsiddha, who was born in South India and travelled to Tibet five times to transmit many teachings on sūtra and tantra. His best known teaching is the 'Pacifying of Suffering' (*zhi byed*), and he is considered to be one of the teachers of Machig Labdrön (1055-1149), who founded the Mahāmudrā Chod lineage.

three years protecting the property to fulfill his parents' wish. One day, when he was thirteen, he heard the hymn of a formless clear voice from the sky: 'Oh, *Rin chen bzang po*! There is a siddha living at the Chubori ironchain bridge called *Thang stong rgyal po*, visit him and request the initiation (*dbang*) of the Great Compassionate yidam⁴², the oral instructions (*lung*) and the precepts (*man ngag*). Ask him to explain the biography of the first and greatest Jina, give you its written copy, and do without distinction for the benefit of sentient beings.'

The words entered *Rin chen bzang po*'s heart like piercing arrows. He explained his wish to enter the path of Dharma to his parents the following way: 'My kindparents, please, let me enter the path of Dharma, let me go to visit *Thang stong rgyal po*, who is residing at the iron chain bridge to be able to enter the path of Dharma.'

His parents replied: 'Though you are our only child, you are our son by the benevolence of *Thang stong rgyal po*. Follow then the holy voice, visit the great siddha and enter the path of Dharma.'

After *Rin chen bzang po* bundled up his gifts, he set off to the Chubori ironchain bridge to meet *Thang stong rgyal po* and enter the path of Dharma. When he arrived, he said to the siddha: 'Oh, great siddha, *Thang stong rgyal po*, please, listen to me! I received a holy message to spread the MAÓI for the benefit of sentient beings without distinction. Please, bestow the teachings of the Great Compassionate One with its profound meaning by your great kindness.'

Thangtong Gyalpo cut Rinchen Sangpo's hair, transformed his countenance, and took away his name. When taking the *genyen* vow⁴³) Ratnabhadra received from

42) Tib: *yi dam*, Skt.: iṣṭ-devatā, personal protector, in this case Chenrezi, the Bodhisattva of Compassion.

43) Tib: *dge bsnyen*, five lay vows, which are the following: refraining from killing, from taking that is not given, from sexual misconduct, from incorrect speech, and from intoxicating drinks and drugs. In

him the name *lo chen*⁴⁴⁾ He was also given the initiation of the Great Compassionate yidam, the precepts and the oral instructions, as well as the consecration⁴⁵⁾ of Aryapalo⁴⁶⁾. This is how the lineage of *lo chens* began, which is like the river whose source leads to the snow. OM MAÓI PADME HŪM HRĪ. He also taught him the highest teachings (*bka'*) and histories (*lo rgyus*) of the Jina, which were followed by liberation stories (*rnam thar*). The lama of the Chubori iron chain bridge spoke thus: 'Among the ten chapters of the father tantra biographies, the most important [histories] are about the highest lamas, Dharmaking Jigten Wangchug and Dharmaking Drime Kunden; among the seven chapters of the mother tantra the history of Sukyi Nyima brahmin woman is the most important; among the twenty-one delog histories, the [history] of Delog Lingsa Chokyi is the most important. But this is not all. In addition to these I will give you a few more liberation-stories as well. Oh, wise Ratnabhadra, head of *lo chens*! Continue your meditation in the golden grove of *Sman lding*.'

Ratnabhadra, the emanation and lama-scholar was sitting in the northern golden grove of *Sman lding*. There were dark red clouds up on the sky. The snowmountain stood like a crystal stupa. Little lower the multi coloured rocky mountain looked like the fur of a roaming tiger. Deep down there were precious stones hidden under the earth. The golden grove of *Sman lding* was permeated with the fragrance of lotus flowers, down in the river the water looked like morning offering⁴⁷⁾, and the song of water birds filled the air.

the Tibetan tradition anyone can take these vows after taken refuge and bodhisattva vow.

44) *Lo chen*, short form of *lo tsa ba chen po*, meaning: great translator, great scholar.

45) Tib: *rab gnas*, Skt.: *pariṣṭā*, Buddhist practice performed for consecrating sacred objects, statues, images. Usually it is part of a longer ritual (Skt.: *sādhana*).

46) Hayagrīva, horse-headed Tantric deity, a form of Chenrezi.

47) Buddhist practitioners fill seven water bowls in the morning from left to right, light an incense and a butter lamp or candle. These offerings are multiplied without limit through mantra and visualization. The water is visualized as billowing clouds of pure offerings and qualities that are presented to all buddhas and bodhisattvas, especially to someone's personal deity (*yi dam*), and their blessings shower on the practitioner and all beings.

In the middle of this grove, that in the old times was the gathering place of Tārā and the ḍkinīs, Ratnabhadra, Chenrezi's emanation was sitting, the lama-scholar, his right hand formed protection mudra, and held the *Mani bka`bum*⁴⁸⁾ in his left. On his head he wore a floating hat, signifying the level of his realization; his body was cloaked in a trellised cloth of monks, and he was praying to Āryā Avalokiteśvara the following way: 'May all beings of the six classes be born in the East on the Potala mountain!'

Then he took the highest teachings and the histories of the Jina, and went from the golden grove of *Sman Lding* to Kyirong⁴⁹⁾. He arrived to the Garden of Teaching on the 15th day of the month of performing miracles⁵⁰⁾, blew his conch shell, and for his signal the people of Kyirong, urban and villager, old and young, men and women all gathered. On that day he told them the story of Dharmaking Drime Kunden. The chief of Kyirong, who was called Chowanglha, also appeared, and after listening for a while, he said: 'Your teaching sounds beautiful. Please, explain us what the Garden of Teaching symbolizes.'

'Very well' answered [Ratnabhadra].

And the all-knowing lama said the following: 'Pay attention, great lord! That protecting ceiling-like silk fabric is called the rainbow palace of the ḍkinīs, the lower part is the ḍkinīs' silk rope. The two tent poles are the axis of the Teaching, the two vehicles, the applied paths to enlightenment. The two iron pegs are called lightning from the sky. The yidam's name is Phakpa Chenrezi Wang⁵¹⁾. The Garden of Teachings is also called celestial divine palace of gods.'

48) Belonging to historical literature the *Mani bka`bum* originated in the late 12th century or later. It includes legends, rituals and teachings related to the Chenrezi cult. In the text King Songtsen Gampo, who is considered to be the first Tibetan king devoted to Buddhism, appears as an incarnation of Chenrezi.

49) Place in southern Tibet, near the Nepali border.

50) *cho`phrul dus chen*: the 15th day of the first Tibetan month, full-moon day and festival of performing miracles by Buddha Shakyamuni.

The rosary is to drag living beings up. I am the *lo chento* encourage [people] to practice the Dharma. The market congregation is the vajra brotherhood. The backcurtain is to close the door of downfall. This palace of the Victorious Ones⁵²⁾ is symbolizing the prosperous buddha-lands. On the right the eight stupas of the Tathāgatas are the symbols showing that the life tree of Buddhist teaching is planted. On the left the venerable White Tārā is to dissolve the obstacles of the *lo chen*. The string tied to its lower part symbolizes the magical abilities we can attain in this world. The little stupas in front arranged in a square symbolize the merit-field of devotion. On the top of that the hundred-thousand mandala base shows that the virtuous ones will be purified from all the impurities. Thus it is taught.'

Then the great chief said: 'Then now please, explain and teach the meaning of your iron lance!'

'Yes, please, do!' joined in the audience.

'All-knowing lord, please, be patient! Pay attention when I explain the meaning of the iron lance!' and said the followings to the great chief: 'OM MAÓI PADME HŪM HRĪ. The iron lance in my hand symbolizes the introduction to the history of liberation. It is an offering for the joy of the father-lama. On the tip [of the lance] the *'khyong go* shakes people up from the deep saṃāra, and the knot in the middle is the symbol of the holy doctrine woven into the heart. On the bottom, the vajra symbolizes the wrathful scarlet-black Hayagrīva⁵³⁾, and the ring on the holder symbolizes the eternal oath. The attached chain symbolizes the stairway to the heavens. The separate bracelet symbolizes the rule of the marketplace. The half-circle healing stone is the base of the father-lama's seat. The three separate knots on it symbolize the three pure bodies, the dharmakāya,

51) Skt.: Āryā Avalokiteśvara

52) The audience is sitting under a Tibetan-style tent, more like a canopy held by poles.

53) Tib. *Rta mgrin*, 'Horse-neck'. Tantric deity, manifestation of the wrathful activity of Amitābha.

the sambhogakāya and the nirmānakāya. The point of the awl on its tip is the introduction performed in the marketplace. The five-pointed diadem fastened onto this is the meeting of the mother-ḍkinīs belonging to the five groups. The little bell tied to it symbolizes that fame spreads in ten directions. The ring on this symbolizes the reign over the three worlds. The little ring tied to this symbolizes the circumambulation of the kingdom. The sign of the Sun and the Moon on it cleanses the four continents from pollution. The mirror on this is the symbol of cleansing from ignorance. The little bell shows that the voice of the glorious Dharma resounds [in far-away lands]. The *a lig rtsi lig* tied to it symbolizes the great faith in the Dharma. The tiger skin tied onto the right side symbolizes the pure right-side hero. The yellow leopard skin symbolizes the pure left-hand heroine. This was the explanation of my iron lance.'

'If this was the explanation of your iron lance, that's marvellous! Now please, explain and teach the meaning of your white conch shell!'

'Very well!' he said, 'I prostrate in front of the great father-lamas. The conch shell of the Dharma was born in the depth of the sea. There is an oral instruction (*lung*) related to the appearance of the conch shell of the Dharma. It is the Dharma conch shell of beautiful temples, the sweet voice of lamas, the signal of nobles devoted to the teaching, the messenger of Mani Lamas, who encourage the market congregation to be virtuous, the sound of Chenrezi's teaching. OM MAÓI PADME HŪM HRĪ. The white conch shell horn symbolizes that I belong to the lineage of the sons of Chenrezi. The spotless lineage is the lineage of Ratnabhadra, the faith is the untainted six-syllable mantra's wisdom, the Dharma is a clear and blooming water lily. I am a humble pauper traveling the kingdom, a *lo chen* who understands his actions and their reasons. I am an elephant prod, who prompts the believers to follow the Dharma. I am the judge above the great sinners, the one who knows the Path. Thus the origin of *lo chens* is taught.'

The great chief, the lords and servants all said in unison: 'If this is the origin, that's marvellous! Now please, tell us and teach about the action, its causes and conditions.'

Then *Lo chen* Ratnabhadrā told them first the history of Delog *Gling bza'* *chos skyid*, then *Mi la ras pa*, and *Dri med kun ldan's* hagiography. During [his teachings] everyone was crying. The great chief, the lords and servants were all just crying and sighing. From the Garden of Teaching they went to the palace. After a short while *Lo chen O rgyan Bhairotsani* arrived with great female entourage. Seeing Ratnabhadrā she marvelled him and said:

'OM MAÓI PADME HŪM HRĪ. May all beings of the six realms be born on the Potala mountain and meet Chenrezi by the [teaching] of this great heir of noble parents!' said *O rgyan Bhairotsani*. 'Even just the sight of you makes everyone being filled with joy. Your body colour is beautiful, and your face is white. You are protecting the interest of beings the right way.'

Then they heard from the distance the humming sound of the MANI. Three more *lo chens* arrived, *Lo chen Klong yangs Rang grol*, *Lo chen Bkra shis Dar rgyas* and *Lo chen Karma 'Brag grags*.

[They said:] 'Son, you are serving the benefit of beings without delay! May the unspoiled teaching of the six-syllable mantra shine bright like the Sun!'

Then the great chief thought: 'Is the teaching of *lo chens* indeed true?'

By seeing the *Aṣṭsāhasrikā*⁵⁴), and the hagiography of the *Always-crying*⁵⁵) in it, great devotion and faith was born in the heart of the great chief towards *Lo chen* Ratnabhadra. He gave him a golden mandala and a seven-fold present to acknowledge his excellence. *Lo chen* Ratnabhadra's generous patron was the chief of Kyirong district named *Chos dbang lha*, the governor (*sde pa*) himself. Then Ratnabhadra soon left for the marketplace, and he was teaching there for seven days. Then he went to *Kong po A rong rdzong*⁵⁶). From there he went to Sikkim. He got a disciple called *O rgyan bstan 'dzin*. This is how his story of benefitting endlessly sentient beings spread far and wide. We collected it and wrote it down.

The lineage of the *lo chens*:

Lo chen O rgyan bstan 'dzin

Lo chen dvags lha sgam po

Lo chen bkra shis dar po

Lo chen O rgyan rig 'dzin

Lo chen blo gsal rgya mtsho

Lo chen 'jam dpal rang grol

Lo chen bstan 'dzin 'brug rgyal

Lo chen ma 'brug rgyal sgrol maLo chen ngag dbang rig 'dzin

Lo chen lar pa'i sging

Lo chen bsod nams rig 'dzin

Lo chen 'jigs med grags pa

Lo chen karma 'brug rgyal

54) *Aṣṭsāhasrikā prajñāpāramitā*: 'Perfection of wisdom in 8,000 lines', one of the earliest *prajñāpāramitā* sūtras which was put into writing first probably about 100 BC.

55) The story of Sadaparudita from the *Aṣṭsāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*. He was ready to sell his body in order to get the *Prajñāpāramitā* teachings.

56) Place situated in southeastern Tibet.

This is the thirteen-fold lineage of the *lo chens*. The condensed lifestory of Ratnabhadra is now finished.

HA HA HE HE / *Good luck!* May all beings be in peace!'

The text above is the most important and so far the only known source written on the origin of the Mani Lama tradition. The teachers of the MAÓI mantra were the 'sons of Chenrezi', itinerant storytellers wandering from village to village to spread the teaching of compassion, performing on market places, monastic festivals, popular pilgrimage sites. Ratnabhadra's lifestory links the origin of this storyteller tradition to Thangton Gyalpo, the great Tibetan siddha, who lived around the turn of the 15th century, though there are earlier sources mentioning Manipas, like Guru Chowang's⁵⁷⁾ biography. And though we could interpret Ratnabhadra holding the *Mani bka` `bum* in his hand in the golden grove of *Sman lding* as a reference suggesting that the origin goes back to Songtsen Gampo, the 7th century king who was a devout Buddhist and brought the Dharma first to Tibet by marrying a Chinese and a Nepali princess, and was considered to be an incarnation of Chenrezi, the *Mani bka` `bum* itself was not compiled before the late 12th century or later. We can say in general that the Chenrezi cult was on the rise from the 12th century on in Tibet, as the Dharma started spreading again⁵⁸⁾ after the desintegration of central power in the 9th century and Thangtong Gyalpo had a central role in its propagation by writing the even today most popular Chenrezi sādhana based on his visionary experiences.⁵⁹⁾

Chenrezi embodies compassion. The practitioners of his cult strive to selflessly act to alleviate suffering wherever it appears. In *The Essence of the Heart Sutra*, His Holiness the Dalai Lama wrote 'According to Buddhism, compassion is an aspiration, a state of mind, wanting others to be free from suffering. It's not

57) *Guru Chos dbang*, 1212-1273

58) *spyi dar*: later or second dissemination of the Dharma in Tibet

59) Geoffrey Samuel, *Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan Societies*, Smithsonian, 1993, p.233.

passive – it's not empathy alone – but rather an empathetic altruism that actively strives to free others from suffering. Genuine compassion must have both wisdom and loving-kindness. That is to say, one must understand the nature of the suffering from which we wish to free others (this is wisdom), and one must experience deep intimacy and empathy with other sentient beings (this is loving-kindness). Tibetans believe that the recitation of the six-syllable mantra can save people from being reborn in the lower realms, and it has special effects when the mantra is sung by the initiated in various ways (*mani dbyangs*). This is why taking a genyen vow is necessary in order to become a Mani Lama, and getting the oral instructions and precepts from a teacher, and learning the liberation stories which will constitute the main part of the performance later.

The text seems to be a compilation consisting three parts: the life of Ratnabhadra; the explanation of the symbolism of the Garden of Teaching, the iron lance, the conch shell, the teaching on cause and effect; and the lineage of *lo chens*. The lack of colophon makes it difficult to date the text and say anything of its authorship. These will be subjects of further research.

Buchen Gyurme in his last years found a generous patron, a Tibetan politician living in America, who supported his wish to preserve the Mani Lama tradition. Gyurme was even invited to the US to an event organized by the Smithsonian Institute to perform. By the generous support of Rinchen Dharlo, the director of the Tibet Fund in New York, he taught several nuns in Nepal and India to become a Mani Lama. First he was teaching in Kathmandu, in the Thukje Choling Nunnery at the Swayambhu stupa. Tsering Rhitar Sherpa produced a film about his activities there, that was showed at the International Himalaya Festival in Amsterdam in October, 2003.

In his last years Buchen Gyurme was teaching nuns in Dolmaling, near Dharamsala, India. He passed away in 2004 after a short illness, and he was cremated in the nearby Hindu holy place, Haridwar. Not knowing about his sudden illness I went to visit him a few months after he passed away. I found

only his nephew in his house in Dekyiling, who gave me a box, to see if any of his photos or other things he kept could be of any use for my research. Among his little treasures I found the catalogue of Demons and Protectors' published by the Hopp Ferenc Museum of East-Asian Arts, Budapest, that was given him by me. I remembered the moment when I gave him the book the year before. By hearing about my arrival he ran out of a Dekyiling house where he was conducting a ritual. When he saw his photo in my article, he started joyfully shouting on the street, calling the neighbours to show them the book. His whole life was governed by the wish to pass on to us the tradition of Mani Lamas. Sarva mangalam.

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라트나바드라 전기 - 티베트 구술 전통의 기원

부첸 규메(1930-2004)를 기념하며

조카 겔레 / 동서 연구소

처음 인도를 방문할 당시 마니 라마라 불리는 티베트 이야기꾼의 유형을 주위에서 찾아내리라고 기대한 것은 아니었다. 티베트 사람들 가운데도 그의 이름을 익히 알고 있는 사람은 없었다. 라사나 다른 장터에서 그가 바르코르에 관한 이야기를 암송하는 것을 본 사실을 기억하는 사람도 드물었다. 영화와 텔레비전 같은 현대 매체가 그 기능을 장악함에 따라 거의 대부분의 사람들이 티베트의 구술 전통이 사라져버렸다는 사실에 동의하고 있었다. 나는 그러한 사실을 거부하고 사람들에게 계속 묻고 있었다. 인도 라즈푸르의 사카 승원의 한 승려가 나의 질문을 듣고 있다가 흔쾌히 머리를 끄덕이며 여기서 4킬로미터 떨어진 곳에 한 마니 라마가 살고 있다고 말하는 것 아닌가. 곧 대부분의 사람들이 그 분을 알고 있는 티베트인 정착촌인 데키링을 방문하여 라마 전통의 마지막 대표자인 부첸을 만났다. 그는 우리를 자신이 검소한 집이 초대하였고, 우리는 그의 삶과 소명에 관해 논의하는 데 합의했다.

부첸 규메는 1930년 에베레스트 부근 티베트 남부 토셀카에서 태어났다. 그의 가족은 닝가마 불교 학교를 수학했으며, 자틀 도르제 창 린포체는 그의 가족이자 라마로서 그 지역의 유명한 환생으로 1902년 텅그리 언덕에 룡 공파를 설립하였다. 이 지역에서는 많은 라마들이 부첸이라 불리고 있으며, 이러한 이유에서 규메 역시 일찍이 이 이름을 사용해왔다. 그가 8세였을 때, 그의 삼촌은 그에게 남타르, 불교적 자유 혹은 전기 이야기를 가르치기 시작했으며 처음 공연을 한 것은 13세였다. 이후 그는 티베트 가운데 특히 남부를 순방하며 배낭에 탕카(티베트 불화)를 휴대하며 그의 이야기들을 들려주려 다녔다. 그는 자주 티베트의 4대 명산 가운데 하나인 치브리산을 방문하였다. 규

르메에 따르면 많은 라마들이 성스러운 산인 치브리 산에 가서 첸레지(옴 마오이 파드 매 흠)에 입문한다고 한다. 그는 이 지역을 전통적인 방법으로 묘사하고 있으며, 티베트인들은 가시적이거나 비가시적인 차원에서 이 지역을 그려보게 된다. “이 곳의 암석들은 기이한 형태를 띠고 있고 산을 순례하는 데는 닳새가 걸린다. 순례길에 108개의 곰파(티베트어로 사원)가 있으며 4개의 큰 사원과 4개의 큰 봉우리가 있다. 산을 경계짓는 4개의 큰 강과 네 개의 거대한 암석이 깨달음 얻은 듯한 모습으로 서있고 108개의 묘지가 있다. 네 개의 종교의식 겸의 모습을 하고 있는 푸르바에 자리 잡은 치브리는 영원할 것이다. 이곳에는 먼 곳으로부터 순례자들이 많아 찾아와 조프랄두스첸 같은 축제에 참가하기도 한다.

부첸 규메는 1959년 중국 침공 이후 인디아로 피신하였다. 나는 R. A. 스타인의 책에서 당시 저자가 찍은 그의 늙은 흑백 사진을 보고 전율을 느꼈다. 훗날 그는 테리링에 정착하여 그가 배운 구술 전통을 살리려 노력하게 된다. 매년 4월 25일 그는 텔리링의 중앙광장에서 그의 기나긴 그러나 잔잔한 이야기 발표 시즌을 시작한다. 대부분 그는 수키 니마, 낭사 그리고 쿵가 랑골 이야기를 암송한다. 이야기 전체를 구술하는 데는 일상적으로 하루나 이틀 정도 걸린다.

부첸 규메는 단순히 이야기꾼이 아니라 그의 정착촌 닝마 커뮤니티의 중요한 지도자이기도 하다. 마니 라마가 된다는 것은 전문적인 정신적 지도자로서 그 일원에게 충고의 말을 전하고 환자를 위해 기도하고 다른 사람들에게 예언을 해주기도 한다. 초상 집에 가서 고인이 죽음의 세계에서 길을 찾을 수 있도록 의례를 올려주기도 한다. 7주 동안 그는 마지막 7제를 올릴 때까지 사자들의 이야기를 들려준다.

부첸 규메는 나에게 말하길 1980년대에 다람살라에 있는 티베트 구술 담담 작품 보관소(LTWA)에서 모든 현존하는 마니 라마를 초대하여 녹음을 시도하였다고 한다. 하지만 단지 4명을 발견할 수 있었다. 인터뷰는 훗날 나를 돕게 된 당시 사서 타시 테링이 맡았다. 1998 그 가운데 오직 두 분만이 현존해있었다. 내가 처음 만난 부첸 규메와 2000년 남부 인도를 방문 하여 만난 그의 오랜 친구 콜레갈의 부첸 노르게. 다른 두 사람 마니 라마 다와와 부첸 포롱파는 이미 작고한지 오래였다. 하지만 다행히 그녀의 딸은 만날 수 있었다.

부첸 규메는 18개의 이야기를 알고 있었지만 다람살라에서는 단지 열 개의 이야기만을 녹음했다고 했다. 타시 체링에 의하면 그는 어느 하나 암송하지 못했으며 그저 텍스트를 읽기만 했다고 한다. 다음의 이야기들이 부첸 규메에 의해 도서관에서 녹음

된 것들이다.

1. 드리 메드 쿤 이단: 잘 알려진 자비로운 왕자 이야기. 이하모 오페라로도 공연된다. 원래 자타카에서 유래하며, 현대는 티베트 경전 탕규르의 일부가 됨.

2. 스낭사 사 오드 데 붐: 델록(피안에서 돌아온 사람) 낭사 오봄의 전기. 실제 사실에 근거한 이야기로서 그 기원은 12세기 창 지역 시대로 거슬러 올라간다.

3. 쿤 다 랑 그롤: 델록 쿡가 랑들의 자서전. 부첸 규메가 애호하는 작품

4. 다스 로그 파드마 초사 스키드

5. 파드마 오드 바: 그루 린포테의 전생 이야기. 이하모 오페라로도 공연된다. 기원은 페마 카탕.

6. 노르 장: 잘 알려진 노르상 왕자 이야기. 이하모 오페라로도 공연된다. 인도에서 기원한 것으로 티베트 경전 카규르에 포함됨.

7. 그죽스 키 니 마: 대중적인 수키 니 마 브라만 이야기. 이하모 오페라로도 공연된다. 인도에서 기원한 것으로 칼리다사의 샤쿤달라 본. 현재는 티베트 경전 카규르에 포함됨.

8. 그로 바 장 모: 드로와 상모 이야기, 이하모 오페라로도 공연된다. 네팔 북동부 몬파 족에서 유래한 것.

9. 다스 로그 카르마 방 진: 잘 알려진 델록 카르마 왕진 이야기

10. 르가 루 이드 므드제 조드 파이 드방핑

부첸 규메는 석가모니가 열반을 얻는 보드가야도 자주 방문한다. 여기에서 달라이 라마는 매년 티베트 달력 10월 설법을 한다. 1998년 나는 달라이 라마의 법문을 들러 론 순례자들에게 연주를 하는 부첸 규메를 만났다. 그 해 규메는 쿡가 랑들을 이야기하였다. 그는 하루에 서너 시간을 노래부르고 암송하였다. 그의 먼 조국에서 찾아온 아이들, 유목민들로 구성된 청중을 위하여 그는 열심히 노래하였고 청중들은 이야기 한 절 한 절이 끝나면 6음절 만트라 음 마오이 파드메 흠을 따라 불렀다. 델록들의 지하 세계 경험담을 통해 그는 덕을 지닌 삶을 살 것을 청중들에게 가르치고 있었다. 규메는 항상 나에게 이 책들을 번역해 달라 요청하며 그가 소중히 여기는 책들을 내게 보여주곤 하였다.

1. 네팔 울모 벨리에서 유래한 델록 이야기(영인본 LTWA Acc. No. 2454)

2. 델록 낭사 오봄 이야기. 대중적인 티베트 이야기. 이하모 오페라로도 공연됨.
3. 델록 교과서. LTWA 영인본.
4. 유명한 티베트 델록 이야기(목판)
5. 마니 라마 기원 이야기. 불완전한 수고, LTWA 영인본
6. 델록 쿵갈 랑들 이야기

마니 라마의 기원에 관한 글인 라트나바드라의 전기는 부첸 규메의 중요한 작품으로 여겨진다. 그 작품은 이야기꾼들의 소명의 기원 다양한 수단의 상징을 묘사하고 있기 때문이다. 하지만 위의 목록에서는 이 책을 발견할 수 없는데 그가 원본을 소장하지 못하고 영인본만을 지니고 있는 까닭이다. 시킴에서 구입한 폴리오 10-14 쪽이 빠진 불완전한 텍스트이다. 처음 나는 이 책을 번역하여 부다페스트 호프 페렌 동서 예술 박물관 전시회 카탈로그에 발췌 번역하여 실었다. 부첸 규메에게 누락된 부분의 내용을 물으니 그는 내게 카트만두로 가서 그가 전에 스와얌부 스투파 발치에 살고 있는 비구니들을 만나 그들이 제작한 레코드를 구해보라 했다. 거기에는 누락된 것이 없는 전 생애가 수록되어 있기 때문이었다. 다음의 라트나바드라의 전기 번역은 재구성된 것이다. 카트만두에서 녹음된 텍스트들이 수고의 번역에 삽입되어 있다.

라트나바드라의 생애, 역자/ 일체 중생의 이익을 위하여

옴 마이 파드메 흠 흐리/나모 구루

라트나바드라의 생애는 다음과 같다.

인도 땅에 다르마바드라가 태어나고, 티베트 중부 지역에 퉁 미 삼보타가 태어나고, 스만 르딩의 황급 숲에 위대한 스승 툴큐 라트나바드라가 태어났다. 인도 사람들은 그를 라트나바드라라 부르고, 티베트 사람들은 그를 린 첸 장포라 불렀다. 라트나바드라의 삶을 밝히는 거울은 다음과 같이 그의 이야기를 묘사하고 있다.

제1장은 라트나바드라가 발산하는 옴 마오이 빠드메 흠에 관한 이야기이다.

이렇게 내가 들었다. 옛날 옛적 행복의 땅 동쪽에 드박 포 카라 시스 집이 있었다. 그 주인은 크라 시스 르남 르갈이라 불렀다. 이들은 모든 부귀영화를 누리고 있었지만 재산을 상속할 장자가 없었다. 그는 자신의 대를 이을 아들이 필요하다는 생각을 갖게 되었다.

이런 생각에 그는 부인 스칼 장 코스 키 스그롤 마에게 “우리는 아직 젊지만 아이가 없으니 늙기 전에 아이를 위해 위대한 성자 탕 스통 그갈 포에게 찾아가야 할 것 같소” 라고 자기 생각을 털어 놓았다.

이들은 성대한 선물을 준비하여 성자 탕 스통 그갈 포를 찾아갔다. 성인이 말하길 “오 성스러운 부부여, 젊은 시절 그대들은 아이가 없었소. 이제 머리가 세기 시작하면 거룩한 보살 첸레지의 발현처럼 큰 자비로 아이가 태어날 것이오. 오 성스러운 부인이 시여 감염된 의식을 피하고 집을 깨끗이 하고 고요한 곳에 앉아 명상에 들기 바랍니다.”

이러한 충고와 함께 그들을 돌려보냈다. 이후 거룩한 부부는 집으로 돌아가 목욕재계하고 성스러운 정갈한 장소에서 명상에 들어간다.

그때 성인 첸레지 왕칭이 포탈라산 동쪽에서 일체중생을 위하여 사마디에 들어가 아래 들어가 크고 작은 대륙을 굽어보고 있었다. 윤회에 빠져 참을 수 없는 고통을 겪고 있는 육도 중생을 위하여 생각했다. “삼악도에 빠지게 하는 아상의 잘못을 보는 것은 얼마나 고통스러운가?” 이들에게 나의 기도가 발현되리라. 중생의 무지를 없애고 덕목을 쌓을 수 있도록 하리라.

그리하여 성스러운 첸레지는 혜성처럼 빛나는 황금 광선을 부인 스칼 장 코스 키 스그롤 마의 마음에 들어가게 발광하였다.

젊고 아름다운 시절이 가고 이제 나이가 들은 두 부부에게 라트나바드라 탄생의 징조가 나타나기 시작한다. 부인에게 첸레지가 보낸 황금빛이 도달하게 되는 데 이 같은 현상이 부인에게 꿈으로 전달된 것이다. 꿈에 그녀가 포탈라 산을 오르자 거대한 자비의 성인을 만나는데 그가 마음으로부터 황금 빛을 쏘아 자신의 두뇌에 투입한 것이다. 크리스털 말라를 한 손에 들은 대성인이 그에게 다가와 “나를 그대 몸에 머물게 하여 주시오” 하는지라 승낙한 것이었다.

부인의 말을 들은 남편은 그 꿈의 아름다움을 찬탄한다. “당신의 약속을 실현하고

계속 선정에 들도록 하시오,”

그녀는 계속 선정에 들어 존경하는 타라를 명상한다. 9개월하고 열흘이 지나 위대한 기적의 날, 무지개가 하늘을 덮고 꽃비가 내리고 아름다운 음악이 하늘에서 들리는 가운데 아이가 태어났다. 탄생의 순간 아나는 ‘옴 마오이 파드메 흠 호리’라고 말하며 “보호받지 못하는 사람을 보호하고, 수호하지 못하는 사람을 수호하고, 포탈라 산의 대지에 사는 내 부모들인 일체 중생에게 길을 보여주겠다!”고 말하였다.

이러한 말을 들은 부모와 주민들은 아이의 탄생을 축복하였다. 아이의 이름은 린 첸 장 포라고 지었다. 아이는 태어났을 때 이미 다섯 학문에 정통하였다. 세 살이 되자 아버지는 아이에게 인도식 이름을 지어주려고 생각한다.

당시 인도의 성인 담파 상가가 명상에 잠겨 있었다. 그는 티베트에 통 미 삼보타가 태어난 것을 알았다. 그리하여 바람의 날개를 타고 올라 스완 이딩 황금 숲에 도착하였다.

문 앞에서 밀크를 짜던 스칼 장 코스 키 스그를 마는 성인이 다가오자 남편에게 이 사실을 알린다.

그에게 집안을 방문해줄 것을 허락하고 음식물을 대접하며 아이에게 이름을 지어달라고 요청하였다.

인도 성인이 말했다. “티베트의 어둠 속에 아이가 태어났는데 이 아이는 빛나는 램프와 같은 존재이다. 그의 이름을 라트나바드라라고 지으리라.”

이렇게 라트나바드라라는 성인의 이름이 유래하게 되었다.

아이가 열 살이 되자 드박 포 크라 쉬스 르남 르갈 성인은 그를 그 지역의 올바른 소유주로 만들었다. 열세 살 때 그는 천상에서 들려오는 무형의 아름다운 찬가를 듣는다. “츄보리에 사는 탕 스통 르갈 파를 찾아가 대자 대비한 보살도를 얻기 위해 그에게 지나의 전기를 들려달라고 부탁하고 중생의 이익을 위해 그 복사본을 얻으라고 교시한다.

부모의 허락을 받은 라트나바드라는 천상의 목소리에 끌려 성인을 방문하고 다르마의 길을 걷겠다는 서원을 세우고 츄보리 마을을 방문하여 중생을 가르침을 얻고 중생을 위한 마오이 진언을 펼칠 것을 서약하였다.

탄통 갈포가 라트나바그라의 머리를 삭발해주었고 새로운 이름 로첸을 부여하였다.

그는 대자대비에 입문하는 복을 누리게 되는 데 이때부터 로첸 계보가 시작된 것이다.

라트나바드라가 북부 스만 황금 숲에 앉아 명상할 때, 하늘에 검은 구름이 일더니 갑자기 땅에 가려있던 암석들이 드러나더니 연꽃들의 향기가 퍼져 나오기 시작하였다. 숲 한 가운데 라트나바드라가 앉아 한 손으로 무드라의 형상을 한 손에는 마니 브카 붓을 들고 수도승의 모습을 하고 관세음보살에게 기도하였다. “육도의 일체 중생이 포탈라산 동쪽에 태어나게 하소서.”

그로부터 지나에 대한 극상의 깨달음과 역사를 배운 그는 스만 르딩 황금 숲에서 나와 키롱으로 갔다. 기적을 행하는 보름날 가르침의 정원으로 간 그는 소라고동을 불면서 마을 사람들 모두를 불러 모아 범왕 드림 쿤덴에 관한 이야기를 들려준다. 키롱의 성주 초왕라는 그에게 “당신의 가르침은 아름답소, 가르침의 정원이 무엇을 의미하는지 설명해주시오”라고 청하였다.

라트나바드라가 허락하고 설명하기 시작한다.

이렇게 전지하신 라마의 가르침은 시작되었다. “성주여 귀 기울이시오. 비단 같은 보호 천장은 아키니스의 무지개 궁이라 하는데 아래 부분은 비단 로프로 되어 있소. 두 축은 가르침의 축이오. 두 수레 가르침으로 이끄는 데 유용한 길이오. 두 쇠뿔은 하늘의 빛이라 하오. 현인의 이름은 팍파 첸레지 왕이오. 가르침의 정원이란 신들의 신성한 장소인 것이오. 나는 법을 실행하도록 용기를 주는 로첸이오...부정한 많은 사람들이 정화된다는 것을 만다라를 통해 알 수 있소.”

이어서 그는 황금창의 비유를 설명하며 옴 마이 파드메 흙 흐리를 통해 마음의 자유를 설명한다...창의 각 부분의 세사한 의미는 매우 정교하게 다르마의 길을 인도하고 있다. 이렇게 긴 창에 대한 설명에 이어 범음[비유된 소라고동에 대한 의미를 설명하고 행동의 인연에 대한 설명이 이어진다. 그는 글링 자 초 스키드, 밀라래파, 드리메드 쿤 이단을 통해 자신의 설법을 마친다...

로첸 계보는 다음과 같다.

Lo chen O rgyan bstan 'dzin

Lo chen dvags lha sgam po

Lo chen bkra shis dar po

Lo chen O rgyan rig 'dzin

Lo chen blo gsal rgya mtsho

Lo chen 'jam dpal rang grol

Lo chen bstan 'dzin 'brug rgyal

Lo chen ma 'brug rgyal sgrol maLo chen ngag dbang rig 'dzin

Lo chen lar pa'i sging

Lo chen bsod nams rig 'dzin

Lo chen 'jigs med grags pa

Lo chen karma 'brug rgyal

이렇게 라트나바드라의 축약된 전기가 마무리 된다.

하하 히히 HA HA HE HE / 행운이 깃들기를/ 만물에 평화가 깃들기를 기원합니다.

이상은 마니 라마 전통의 기원에 관해 기록된 것의 간략한 소개이다. 자비의 가르침을 전하기 위해 이 마을에서 저 마을로 순례하는 이야기꾼들은 장터를 형성하기도 하고 수도자들의 축제와 순례자들의 모임을 형성하기도 한다. 라트나바드라의 일생을 담은 이야기는 티베트의 위대한 현인 탕통 갈포(15세기)의 기원과 관련이 있기도 하다. 구루 초왕의 전기 같은 마니파를 다루는 이전의 기록들이 있기는 하지만 말이다. 마니 카 붐을 들고 있는 황급 숲속의 라트나바드라의 모습은 송첸 감포(7세기 티베트 왕으로서 중국 공주, 네팔 공주와 결혼하고 불교를 티베트에 도입한 진실한 불자로서 첸레지의 환생으로 여겨진다)의 기원으로까지 거슬러 올라간다고 생각할 수도 있지만 마니 카 붐 자체는 12세기 말 이전에는 형성되지 않았으며 그 이후의 일이다. 일반적으로 첸레지 숭배는 티베트에서 12세기, 혹은 9세기 이후 중앙 권력이 분할되면서 다르마가 다시 전파되고 탕통 갈포가 현재에도 가장 잘 알려진, 그의 경험에 의거하여 쓴 첸레지 수행 전파에 중심 역할을 하면서 시작된 것이라 말할 수 있다.

첸레지는 자비를 실현한다. 그에 대한 숭배를 실천하는 사람들은 이기심을 떠나 장소를 막론하고 세상의 고통을 완화시키려 매진한다. <반야심경의 본질>에서 달라이 라마 성하는 “불교에 따르면 자비는 염원이며, 마음의 상태로서 다른 사람들이 고통으로부터 벗어나기를 기원하는 곳이다. 그것은 수동적이지 않다. 그것은 감정이입이라기보

다는 감정이입적 이타주의로서 남을 고통에서 구원하고자 실제 행동으로 노력하는 것이다. 다시 말하면, 우리는 다른 사람의 고통을 벗어나게 해주려고 노력하면서 고통의 본성을 이해해야 하는 것이다. 그리고 다른 중생들과의 깊고 친밀하면서도 감정이입적인 경험을 쌓아야만 한다(이것이 자-애이다). 티벳인들은 이 여섯 음절 만트라를 염송하면 더 악한 육도로의 환생을 막을 수 있다고 믿고 있다. 그리고 만트라를 염송했을 때의 그 특유한 효력은 여러 다양한 방식으로(mani dhyans) 낭송되고 있다. 마니 라마가 되기 위해 왜 이러한 뛰어난 서원을 하고, 스승으로부터 구술적 가르침과 교훈을 필수적으로 배워야 하는지 그리고 훗날 깨달음을 이루는 중요한 몫을 이루는 데 기여할 자유에 관한 이야기를 배워야 하는 그 이유가 바로 여기에 있다.

책 내용들은 세 부분으로 구성되어 있는 것처럼 보인다. 라트나바드라의 일생; 가르침의 정원의 상징성에 관한 해설, 쇠창, 소라고동, 인연의 가르침; 그리고 로첸의 계보. 간기의 누락은 책의 연대와 저자의 추정을 어렵게 하는데 이것이야말로 우리에게 풀어야 할 과제인 것이다.

부첸 규메는 생애 말년 무척 관대한 보호자를 만나게 된다. 미국에 거주하는 티베트 정치인인 그는 마니 라마의 전통을 스호하려는 그의 염원이 실현되도록 지원을 아끼지 않았다. 급기야 규메는 스미소니언 연구소가 주최하는 한 행사를 위하여 미국에 초대된다. 뉴욕 티베트 재단 이사장 린체 달로의 관대한 지원을 받아 그는 네팔과 인도의 비구니들을 가르쳤다. 처음 그가 가르친 곳은 카트만두, 스와얌부 스투파의 독제 출렁이었다. 체링 리타르 세르파는 그의 행적을 영상으로 기록하였으며, 그 필름은 2003년 10월 암스테르담 히말라야 국제 페스티벌에서 상영된 바 있다.

말년에 이르러 부첸 규메는 인도 다람살라 부근의 돌마링에서 비구니들을 가르쳤다. 가벼운 병 병환 증세를 보이다 2004년 작고한 그의 시신은 힌두 성지 하리드와에서 화장되었다. 그의 갑작스러운 병환을 모르는 채 그의 사후 수개월 후 그를 만나러 간 나 그의 집에서 질녀만을 만날 수 있었다. 그녀는 내게 상자를 하나 주었는데 나의 연구에 도움이 될만한 사진이나 다른 자료들이 있는지 확인시키려는 의도에서 그런 것이었다. 그의 작은 보물들 가운데 부다페스트 호프 페렌 동서 예술 박물관 이름으로 출간된 <아귀들과 수호자들>의 목록을 발견하였다. 그 전년도에 그에게 이 책을 선물한 순간이 떠올랐다. 나의 소실을 전해들은 그는 의례를 집전하던 데킬링 하우스를 나와 나에게 달려왔었다. 그는 내 기사에 실린 자신의 사진을 보고 거리에서 그 책을 보여

주려 이웃들에게 큰 소리로 외쳐댔다. 그의 전 생애는 마니 라마의 전통을 우리에게 전하려는 염원으로 충만한 삶이었다.

사르마 망갈람 Sarva mangalam 모두에게 행복이 깃들기를...