

CHAPTER 6 – PURITY

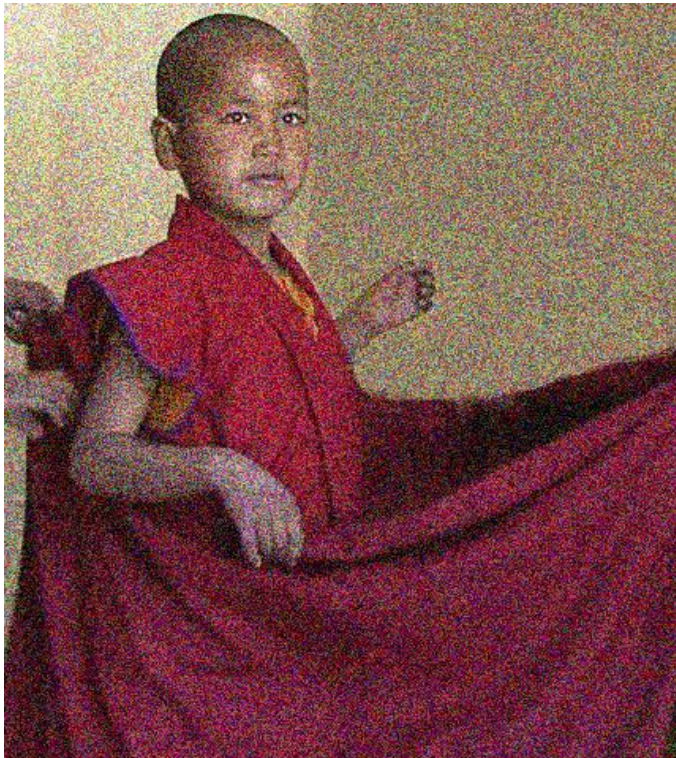
Konchog Gyaltzen had correctly identified the seven items that belonged to him in a past life from the many items that were shown to him. And he had identified from among many golden statues the one who was his root Lama. So it was clear that seven-year-old Konchog Gyaltzen was the reincarnation, the *tulku*, of the Seventh Garchen Rinpoche. But he had been living an ordinary life of a village boy. So now that he was at the monastery, he was required by tradition to be purified in certain rituals.

The first part of the purification was to wash away impurities with water. The monks took him outside and then took off his old shirt and pants and started pouring water over him. What a shock -- the water was freezing cold! It was so cold that he felt like he was being thrown into an icy river! He stood there shivering, feeling numb all over, as this blessed water was poured over his body. But he knew that what was happening was very important, so he didn't dare to back away from this icy cold shower. It was a relief when he could dry off and warm up with a towel.



Then the second important purification was performed – shaving the hair off the head, which is an important ritual. The hair is considered impure, so shaving it off is a type of purification.

Little Konchog Gyaltzen got his head shaved by a very important person - the Eighth Chagme Rinpoche, the brother of the King of Nangchen.



Then he was dressed in new dark red robes, like the clothing of Shakyamuni Buddha and his student monks, who purify their minds to become enlightened.

There was much chanting by the monks during this very important ceremony. It was for a very special person who had come back - the Seventh Garchen Rinpoche, reborn as this little boy tulku! This was his official recognition ceremony – recognizing him as the Eighth Garchen Rinpoche.

Then he took the three refuge vows: I take refuge in the Buddha, I take refuge in the Dharma, I take refuge in the Sangha. It means, I go to the Buddha for wisdom, I learn and practice his Teachings, and I join in the community of people who practice his Teachings.

Now he had to have a new Dharma name. His name was selected by Chetsang Rinpoche, the one who had helped the King of Nangchen find the new incarnation of the Seventh Garchen Rinpoche, by somehow knowing the names of the parents.

The new Dharma name chosen for Konchog Gyaltzen was a long one: Konchog Ngedun Tenpei Nyima. He got to keep his first name, Konchog, which means Precious. Ngedun means Ultimate Truth. Tenpei means Teachings. Nyima means Sun. So his full name means precious, ultimate truth, sunshine of the teachings. But he would be known from now on as the Eighth Garchen Rinpoche. Garchen means Great Gar. And Rinpoche means Precious One. So from now on, he would be called Garchen Rinpoche, the Precious one from Great Gar clan.

And what does it mean to be a Garchen Rinpoche? He has the high throne at Gar Monastery. Although there are other great lamas at Gar Monastery, only he is the throne-holder. He is not a king who rules over the land, but a spiritual master who takes care of the spiritual needs of all the people in the land, the Nangchen area of Tibet, and who teaches other monks.



Now everyone called him Garchen Rinpoche, even his mother! He was no longer her little Kon-Gyam. Dega realized that her little son was a great lama who had come back into the world by his powerful Bodhicitta from his past lives, to guide people away from their suffering and toward the path of purity and wisdom. She remembered the words of Lama Tenye, the wise old yogi-monk who had first named her little five-year-old son, who told his students, “We would be very fortunate if we could just take a seat below him!” Now she knew why he had said those words – he had known her mischievous little son was really a very wise lama. She looked at him in a new way now, with great respect and wonder.

Meanwhile, the King of Nangchen was very happy to hear that his lama was found again. He couldn't meet the young tulku at the time of the recognition ceremonies, but he ordered some special clothes to be made for the new tulku and given as a gift on this important occasion. The clothes were expensive, and made of the finest silk.

But the king had never seen the young Garchen Rinpoche, and so did not know his size. The king's tailor had to guess how big a typical seven-year old boy is, and made the clothes that size. The clothes were sent to the young tulku, and when the box was opened and the silk clothes pulled out, little Garchen Rinpoche was amazed at how beautiful, shiny, colorful and royal they looked. For a little village boy to have this kind of clothing to wear was a big sensation. He carefully put them on, but he had to pull the shirt over his body with some force to get it on. It was tight on his body. And the sleeves were too short! They didn't cover his arms. He put on the lower piece that covered his legs, but that too was small! It didn't cover his ankles. His mother and the lamas smiled at the sight of the boy stuffed into the beautiful silk clothes. Of course, no one would dare to tell the king that the clothes were the wrong size, as they didn't want to say something disappointing to their dear king who had such a good heart.

The next year, when Garchen Rinpoche turned eight years old, he had to go to Gar Gon, the monastery where he lived in former lives, and officially take his seat – a throne - in a big elaborate ceremony. He, an eight-year-old boy, was going to his *own* monastery! But he was still too young to ride a horse on his own for such a long trip.



So he rode on a horse with his mother.

They started their journey very early in the morning.

It was a long day of riding through wide green valleys, between beautiful rugged mountains, hearing only the clop-clop, clop-clop of the horse's hooves.



Finally they arrived, and were greeted by a huge crowd, including riders on colorfully decorated galloping horses.



There were senior monks and family members all lined up in a ceremony to welcome him. There were monks blowing through conch shells, which made a long, loud sound.

Blowing through a conch shell is done at the beginning of an important occasion in many eastern countries.



And there were monks playing drums, cymbals, and the long trumpet called a *gyaling*.

After the long tiring ride with his mother through the silent valleys, all these loud sounds, bright colors and new people were overwhelming. The sounds echoed all around, making an important announcement that the Eighth Garchen Rinpoche was here to officially take his seat on the throne at the great Gar Monastery!

And there were thick clouds of burning juniper powder and incense spreading all around, purifying the surrounding air for the great ceremony.



When they went inside the monastery, the ceremony began. The monks put a big red hat on his head, like the one on the statue he saw of his lama from so long ago, Jigten Sumgon. The sounds of drums and the other musical instruments faded out, and then there were just the sounds of the monks chanting. The chanting made everyone's minds peaceful and pure, without negative thoughts.

But it went on and on, for so long! For a little eight-year-old boy, it seemed to last forever. And his seat, the throne that he sat on in his past lives, was beautiful and colorful, but it seemed much too large for him.

[Garchen Rinpoche on the throne, much later in life]

He looked down over the huge room full of monks. It was so grand and important, so he knew he had to sit still. The monks performed a long mandala offering to the young Garchen Rinpoche, in which they presented to him a Buddha statue, a long book of scriptures, and a *stupa*, representing the Buddha's body, speech and mind.



After that, the many monks, family members and laypeople stood in a long line to offer him a white silk *khata* scarf. Each person laid the scarf on his table and bowed to him, and he reached out and touched the person on the head and put the *khata* on their shoulders as a blessing.

The offering of the white *khata* symbolizes purity and deep respect, the pure heart of the person giving it.

A few days after the ceremony, the officially enthroned Eighth Garchen Rinpoche rode back on the horse with his mother for a short visit to his village, Dong-go drong, the place that never would really be his home again.

QUESTIONS:

1. How was Garchen Rinpoche purified at the first ceremony? (by being washed with cold water, by shaving his head, and by chanting to purify the mind)
2. The monks' red robes are like the robes of what very famous teacher from long, long ago? (Shakyamuni Buddha)
3. Why did Garchen Rinpoche and his mother go to Gar Monastery? (so he can officially take his seat on the throne of the previous Garchen Rinpoches)
4. How did the lamas at Gar Monastery purify the air for the ceremony to welcome Garchen Rinpoche? (burning incense and powdered juniper)
5. What three items did the monks offer Garchen Rinpoche in the mandala offering? (Buddha statue, scripture and stupa)
6. What did these three items symbolize? (body, speech and mind of Buddha: statue represents body of Buddha, scriptures represent speech of Buddha, stupa represents mind of Buddha)
7. What did everyone line up to offer Garchen Rinpoche at the end of the ceremony, and what did it symbolize? (a *khata*, symbolizing purity, deep respect, pure heart of the person offering it)

DHARMA DISCUSSION – PURITY

“As long as you have negative thoughts in your mind, no matter how much you attempt to be pure, you cannot become pure. It is said that ...within every sentient being dwells the Buddha....But if you hold a biased view of attachment and aversion, your mind is miserable and you will slander others.... We have to purify our own minds....” Garchen Rinpoche, *Quote 29.*

“If we recognize afflictive emotions and unwholesome thoughts as they arise, this mindful-awareness is the Buddha.” Garchen Rinpoche, *Quote 4.*

“A person with love in their hearts can easily sever the flow of afflictions.” Garchen Rinpoche, *Quote 5.*

“It is up to you whether you will go up to the pure lands of the Buddhas or down into samsara [unpleasant, suffering] states. When your own mind is purified, you will become a Buddha. If you do not purify your mind, you will be a sentient being. Where you go will be determined by your present actions.” Garchen Rinpoche, *Quote 12.*

In this story, we heard a lot about purification and purity:
Garchen Rinpoche getting purified with cold water and shaving his head,
the burning of incense and juniper powder to purify the air,
chanting to make everyone's minds pure, without bad thoughts, and

the white khata being a symbol of purity, offering it with a pure heart.
And we mentioned that monks purify their minds to become enlightened.

You do things to purify your body – how do you clean your body?
You take a shower or bath, wash your hair, wash your hands, brush your teeth.
Our bodies always get dirty so we need to clean them. Every day we clean them.
But what about our mind? Don't we need to keep our mind clean?
Yes! Purifying the mind is most important as Buddhists.

What do we do to purify our mind? Chanting and meditation help.
But it's very important to know *what* is impure in our mind so we can clean it out.
What do we mean by impurities in the mind? Thoughts that are unkind or selfish in some way.
We all have impurities in our minds. If we didn't, then we would be already enlightened!
It doesn't mean that we are bad. Actually, it's really good to know what our impurities are!
We have to see what is there in our minds so we can clean it up!
Like if we're cleaning a floor- if we can't see where the dirt is, we don't know where to clean.

When we practice mindfulness, we notice things more easily that we wouldn't otherwise notice –
so many things about our breathing, the sensations in our body, and the gentle sounds around us.
Then we can more easily and quickly notice our thoughts, and whether they are unkind or selfish.

We can also notice our behavior - what we say and do that is unkind or selfish.
Maybe we speak and act very nicely when we are with friends or at school, but what about when
we are at home with our sister or brother? Or with someone who is misbehaving?
Or when we are tired, hungry, bored, irritable or in a bad mood?
That is when our impurities are more likely to pop up – for example, unkind words, anger, or
disrespectful behavior.
When we're feeling angry or emotional, we don't want to admit that we are angry.
But it's important to just notice when we are being unkind, angry, disrespectful or selfish.
Because the more often we notice our impurities, the easier it is to get rid of them!
If we can just notice when we are having bad thoughts, saying unpleasant words, or doing negative
actions, then we are well on our way toward being able to stop them!
So then we can correct it before it gets us in trouble, upsets someone, or becomes a bad habit.

How do we correct it?
We notice when we say, do or think something bad, and quickly replace it with something good.
We substitute kind words for unkind words, good actions for bad actions, loving and
compassionate thoughts for bad thoughts. That's how we purify our minds!

So, to review, how do we clean our minds?
Chanting and meditation, practicing mindfulness,
and being aware of when we are being unkind, angry, disrespectful, jealous, or selfish,
and substituting kind acts, words and thoughts for bad ones.

PRACTICE THIS WEEK: When you take a shower, think of purifying the body, mind and speech.

ACTIVITY – SELF ASSESSMENT

Put a check mark next to each item that you remember doing, saying or feeling at least one time in your life. Circle 5 items that you do most often. Remember, all of us have done most or all of these things before. It doesn't mean that we are bad. It's good to be aware of what our impurities are! Then we know how we can improve ourselves and purify our minds. So be honest!

Lying

Dishonesty

Cheating (on a test, in a game)

Not doing what I said I will do

Angry words

Unkind words to someone

Gossip (speaking negative things about someone)

Talking too much about unimportant things

Talking too loud or at the wrong time

Complaining

Arguing

Acting bossy

Teasing or annoying others

Laughing at other person's mistakes

Criticizing others (without loving-kindness and compassion)

Judging others (thinking of negative things about others)

Selfishness (ignoring others' feelings or needs)

Arrogance (disrespectful, thinking of others as less important)

Not helping someone who wanted help

Not obeying parent or teacher

Avoiding a task that a parent or teacher asked me to do

Joining in misbehavior with others

Impulsive behavior (grabbing things, doing what I want without thinking first)

Possessiveness (not sharing)

Taking something that is not mine and was not given to me

Jealousy

Wanting what others have

Feeling upset when someone else is successful

Revenge (wanting to hurt someone in return for upsetting me)

Ill will (wanting to hurt someone I don't like)

Too many desires (likes and dislikes)

Impatience

Laziness

Showing off

Fear

Worry