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Lama Changchup Chuldim (1924-2016) and the Monastery of Taksindu¹

Stories based on his reports by Passy and Kusang Lama



The Lama Changchup Chuldim was born in Chulemu in 1924 as the son of Phinchok and Rita Sherpa. Before his birth, both parents had special dreams. The father saw two suns shining in the sky, the mother a snow leopard jumping from mountain to mountain. Another time she saw a leopard playing on a forest meadow.

Chuldim was born early in the morning and was named Nuru Chering. He already had three older sisters. Later, three younger brothers were born. At the age of six, his father taught him to read and write. Later his father sent him to Chialsa (south of Salleri) to Lama Chewang for training in various

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subjects. His father already had the wish to build a Gomba for monks in Taksindu.

At the age of 18 Chuldim pilgrimed to Bauddha in the Kathmandu valley, where at that time there was only the Samdenling Gomba. Also in Mustang there is said to have already been a monastery. Chuldim continued his pilgrimage to Sakat and Nya in Tibet, where he studied with Lama Pema Chewang Changchup Kunga. His parents once questioned a fortune teller who told them that their son would not stay with them one day. They thought maybe he would die earlier. So they tried to marry him at the age of 19 to a girl named Pemba Lhamu. But he refused.

Then he went with four other young men again to Tibet to study, where they took a vow in the Sakat Khontrul Gomba. Lama Changchup Kunga gave him the name Changchup Chuldim. The others also received the nickname Changchup. The five young men finally became monks. In Tsibri they studied Buddhism with Nya Rinboche and Natrul Rimboche, whose reincarnation now lives near Bauddha.

At that time, people from the Sherpa region often went to Tibet. When they had nothing to eat there anymore, they just went begging. At that time there were already monasteries in Tengboche and Chiwong in the Sherpa region.

At that time in Taksindu there were only small meadows apart from rhododendron forests. In the beginning the young monks only built a few bamboo huts. In 1944 they got the Lama Tokten Chuldim as a teacher from Tengboche. Six people agreed that a Gomba should be built in Taksindu. They took some soil from Taksindu and went back to Tibet to ask their local Lama if the place was good. Tokten Chuldim was angry about it. He said it was embarrassing to bother a great Lama with this matter. When they started to build the Gomba, the teacher only wanted to construct a small building, but the workers had already started with a much bigger structure, which made Tokten Chuldim very angry.

The Rimboche of Nya is reported to have said that the place in Taksindu was well suited for the construction of a Gomba. The small lake nearby is a protector for the monastery. This lake is called Detong Yutso and is located directly below the ridge. It is not very big and has neither an inflow nor an outflow above ground. However, its water level is always the same both in summer and in winter. The people in the area know this and show great respect. They are afraid of punishment if they pollute the lake or cut down trees near it.

The first members of the Sherpa clan of Salaka had settled in Ringmo-Pangoma. They cultivated the area and built manis and stupas. As more Salaka families followed, they searched for more productive soils and moved on to Chulemu, Deku, Yawa and Mopung. At that time there were no celibate monks, only married lay Lamas. They were very devout and had good morals.

In the beginning, there were only five monks in the newly founded monastery of Taksindu, but this number gradually doubled. All the monks came from the surrounding area and had no accommodation in Taksindu. During the day, they learned in the monastery and in the evening they went home to sleep in their villages. When the monastery was finally finished in 1945/46, the people were all thrilled.

Yawas Phuri Pemba Nurawa brought Chang for the opening puja and gave it to the teacher. All people danced and were happy that they finally had a Gomba. But the monks had in the meantime decided the rule that they were no longer allowed to drink alcohol. When the teacher drank alcohol, one of the monks complained to Getku Samden, the head of the monastery. Then the teacher became very angry. He had taught the monks everything and now he should obey his disciples not to drink alcohol anymore?

Lama Changchup Chuldim went to Kalimpong to buy colours for the painting of the Gomba. The trip lasted a month. Since it was very dangerous to go to Salwo, everyone was very happy when they arrived in Share Sherpa after 28 days. They brought the colours to the Gomba.

Only two older sisters of Changchup Chuldim had married in the meantime. All the other siblings had become monks or nuns. After the father had died, Chhangchup Chuldim went again to Tibet to attend a Chos course. In 1947, at the age of 22 years, he went together with Lama Sange Tenzing

from Selotjung to Kham in East Tibet to study there. On the way they met Taktor Gelwu. Their shoes were soon worn out and they ran their feet bloody. Time and again, they had to beg for food. Sometimes people were very generous, but elsewhere they had to hide from robbers. Some areas they could cross only with horses. After six months they finally arrived in Kham.

If there was no other way, they went begging a bit. If they wanted to learn at night, they had to blow incense sticks to recognize letters or words. When they wanted to sleep, they bent forward and supported their heads with their hands. At night they sometimes had to go to places where many people had died before to prove that they were not afraid.

After 18 long years, Changchup Chuldim was able to answer all his teachers' questions and interpret the Nyingma teachings. He passed all examinations with distinction in 1966 and received the title Geshe. At that time there were only two Geshe in Solu and Khumbu. The other one was his fellow student Sange Tenzing; Tokden Chhuldim had died in the meantime.

In 1966 Changchup Chuldim returned to Taksindu, where he relocated the lonely nunnery to the vicinity of the monastery. Seven nuns each had their own little house; three were there only occasionally as nuns. In the early 1970s Changchup Chuldim founded a monastic school with 17-18 students, some of whom later went to India. In 1982 he was appointed to teach at the Khenze Gomba in Bauddha. He took some of his students there with him.



Cremation of Lama Changchup Chuldim at Taksindu in November 2016

In 1987 Changchup Chuldim was invited to Japan for a month for a Cham event. He then returned to Taksindu, where he taught new students together with other teachers. He also tried to establish a new generation of nuns, but this was not quite successful.

Changchup Chuldim Geshe died in 2016 at the age of 92. His body was cremated after 49 days. A few skull remains and some coloured stones were found in the ashes, which are kept today in the Taksindu Gomba. It is said that such stones can only be found in the ashes of lamas who have prayed a lot in their lives.

Changchup Chuldim has spent his entire life dealing only with Buddhism and has been a good example to his disciples. His statement was: We Buddhists don't missionize other people. Those who have an interest will come up with it themselves. If one has no interest, nothing can be told. Buddhism is the teaching of emptiness. You have to think about the soul. When you go one day, you only take your knowledge and your deeds with you, like a shadow. Apart from the soul, everything is mortal. As a thinking person, you can't take back the time when you're wasting your chance.

As long as you live, you must work to have a roof over your head, to eat and drink. Maybe you also raise children. The other living beings do the same, but unfortunately they cannot think any further. The thinking person should wake up. When he wakes up, he realises that everything was just a dream. Buddha said that I can't abolish the misery of the world and that I can't teach others what I know. Everyone has to come up with it himself. I show you the way, whether you follow it is up to you. One does not find god and happiness outside; one must seek it in one's own soul. It is not about the known ego-subject, but about the light within you.

We consist of five elements: Earth, water, fire, air and the sky as space. When the clock of nature has run out, only an inner ray of light remains. There are rainbows, but you don't always see them. There is no hell, but only one's own conscience that persecutes one. There should be no one out there but one's own imagination, which does not recognise itself and always runs away.

Four days and three nights you fall asleep and you don't notice anything. Then there are rays of light in different colours. One only needs to recognize one of the colors, then one has returned to the divine origin. Knowledge and ignorance are like light and shadow. One is in this world because one is confused in ignorance. You have something divine in you that awakens at some point and we think, "Who am I and where am I going?" We have many lives behind us and we will still have many lives ahead of us, if you don't pay attention, also not exactly desirable lives.

Knowing Buddhists would prefer not to come into this world again. If so, then it is to help all other living beings to gain knowledge as well. Because the lot of ignorance is stronger, the majority of people go there without asking a question when their time is over. Whether one has worked a lot or has many relatives, it is of no use to him. In a dream you may do all kinds of things, but can't you hold on to them or show them to someone else? If you abolish egoism, greed, jealousy, indifference and anger, then the world looks quite different. These are the qualities of human nature that are of no use to the general public or to one's own soul. This ego person is not supposed to exist in Buddhism at all. In a world where people are very egocentric, it's not easy. There are people who know a lot and think a lot. You have to re-educate your soul and your mind a little so that you can find the right way better. This world is not the only world. We will surely see it when we travel as rays of light.