

## Notes & Topics

OBITUARY: གསལ་སྟོང་ཤལ་གློ་མ་གྱུ་ལྟོན་སྤུ་སྤུ།

Lama Sal-Tong-Shva-Gom, popularly known as Gyaston Tulku, was born 63 years ago near Khyung-Po in Kham. Recognised as the incarnation of Gyaston, he entered the Dva-Phel Gompa while a child yet. The child was the inheritor of a very ancient lineage of Kargyu sect. The lineage began with the celebrated Yogi Khyung-Po who preceded by a generation, the celebrated scholar Gampopa (Dvag-Po Lhaje 1107-1153 of Christian Era). The first Tulku Sal-Tong-Shva-Gom was one of the three principal disciples of Gampopa, known as Three Men of Kham (Khampa Misum). The deceased was also the incarnation of JamPalShesnyen (Manjusri Mitra, the Indian Siddha), SangyeYeshes (a Tantrik Siddha of the House of Nub Rig) and Tshondu Senge among others.

After his early schooling with Palpong Situ, Gyaston Tulku distinguished himself as a foremost disciple of Khentse Rimpoche who also passed away in 1959 in the same temple—the Royal Tsukla-khang. For years Gyaston Tulku practised meditation and retreated into the hermitage of Ma-Ling. He was DubPon (Master of Dub-Da) of the Yoga school in Khyung-Po. The serene and kind appearance on his face reflected the experience of the meditation of the Dhyani Buddha Amitabha (Opame), for he had accomplished in his own solitude Dung-Chur (that is, one hundred million meditation of Opame). Opame is the Dhyani Buddha of Limitless Light leading to Life Eternal. Gyaston Tulku had indeed tasted the nectar of Eternity (Amrita) for he entered into the Final or Absolute meditation on March 22 morning with absolute though quiet preparedness for the journey hereafter. His figure in the posture of Vajra Dhara remained in meditation for 48 hours or more before he was embalmed.

Gyaston Tulku had come to Sikkim following the trail of Khentse Rimpoche and the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology was fortunate in enlisting his scholarship for the then new project. The project was undoubtedly new for the whole world for it was an exclusive assignment

for Northern Buddhist studies recorded in Tibetan language. His services were readily forthcoming not only for scholarly dissertations but also for routine cataloguing of collections. He was of great help in the matter of publication, though with his true modesty he desired his name not to be publicised. One such publication which does not bear his name but which earned credit for the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology was the verification of the original version of RED ANNALS. Besides research scholars interested in Khampa dialect as well as Kargyu tradition much profited from his advice.

In 1966 he fell ill rather seriously. Modern medical diagnosis was that it was the effect of excessive breathing exercises and inadequate nourishment forced by the diet habits and fastings of the Yogi. He was very ill indeed and he was apprehensive whether his vow to do a pilgrimage to ancient shrines of Nepal would be possible. That desire was fulfilled in December 1969—February 1970. He made extensive rounds of pilgrimage and performed Tongcho (Sahasra Puja) in which he made charities which clearly suggested that he was renouncing all the desires and treasures of this mundane world. On the eve of entering the Final Meditation he expressed to the Chogyal Chempo his last desire, that is, how the body should be cremated and where cremated, who would perform the cremation rites and how his scriptures, images and such objects be distributed and among whom? In compliance with his Testament, the body was taken to Tashiding for cremation and for the enshrinement of the relics into a Chorten in the neighbourhood of the Chorten containing the relics of Khentse Rimpoche.

Gyaston Tulku's passing away is mourned by innumerable admirers who found in him a good friend in their own lives. The Namgyal Institute of Tibetology has lost a friend and a counsellor. The President and members of the General Council mourn an irreparable loss. I take this opportunity to record my own acknowledgements to a saintly teacher.

Nirmal C. Sinha