



Kyabje Domo Geshe Rinpoche
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Below is a biographical sketch of Domo Geshe Rinpoche which was written by Ursula Bernis in 1995, initially for inclusion in a compendium of biographies of great Gelugpa masters. Ursula's text is presented here in a slightly revised form.

Ursula embarked on the project of researching and writing about Domo Geshe Rinpoche's life with two purposes in mind: to document and preserve the story of one of the last great masters and exponents of traditional Tibetan Buddhism, and to share the information with others in order to contribute to a wider knowledge and deeper appreciation of the Guru's extraordinary life and deeds.

The task seemed all the more urgent because much of the biographical material on the former Domo Geshe Rinpoche was destroyed together with Dungkar Gonpa Monastery in Tibet during the Cultural Revolution and because most of those who had known the legendary master or heard tales about him had already passed away. In order to gather what information was still available, Ursula traveled once to Lhasa and twice, quite extensively, to northern India, especially

to the Darjeeling/Kalimpong area and to Sikkim. The stories, dates and places mentioned here she corroborated in interviews with literally dozens of people, verifying them where possible against the remaining documentary evidence. The result is as close as we are likely to come to a reliable and careful depiction of the events of Rinpoche's life.

Ursula considered this to be merely a summary of a more extensive work to be completed in time. Her passing away on November 7, 2000 cut short those plans.

A few editorial comments: English translations have been added to the Tibetan names and words that occur throughout the text for the benefit of readers who are unfamiliar with the Tibetan language. In keeping with Ursula's usage, the spelling "Domo" has been retained for Rinpoche's name while "Tromo" is used for the place (also known as Chumbi Valley), although the two represent a single Tibetan name (Tib. gro mo).

INTRODUCTION

MI.PHAM JAM.YANG SHING.TA CHEN.BO LA CHAG.TSEL.LO

It is not possible to present a complete biography of Gelugpa's present-day greatest Mahasiddha. Since his deeds pervade so many different realms and levels, only a fraction can be traced by ordinary beings. In addition, like the most perfect of all the Kadampas throughout history, he hides his enlightened deeds better than anyone else today does or can. Anything that could be taken as a praise of himself, he will not comment on directly. Consequently, most of what we know is from eyewitness accounts of those nearby whose vision is by no means perfect.

Material for the biography of the previous Domo Geshe Rinpoche's great accomplishments was collected from the following sources: the lineage prayer composed by Kyabje Trijang Dorje Chang; biographical material by a Western disciple, Lama Govinda, in the book *The Way of the White Clouds*; and many diverse oral sources. Commentaries to the secret biography, which is written in code, and other compilations of written information of his life and deeds all have been lost in Tibet. None crossed the border.

However, this legendary figure, whose previous incarnations are said to include Shariputra, the Mahasiddha Gayadhara, Dharmashri, Munijnana, Thönmi Sambhota, King Trisong Detsen, Dromtönpa, Milarepa, Khedrup Rinpoche, and

Tragpa Gyaltzen, is strong and alive in the collective memory of the Himalayan Buddhist culture. Famous especially for his non-sectarian attitude and his great kindness extended equally to all, Domo Geshe Rinpoche's name is known throughout Tibet and the Himalayan region from Kashmir to Assam. He traveled far and wide on pilgrimage through these areas and spread the pure teachings of the Buddha. In the process, he established the first Gelugpa monasteries in the earlier part of this century in regions where before there were none. Domo Geshe Rinpoche was the first of the Tibetans to go on pilgrimage repeatedly to the Buddhist holy sites in India when this was not yet an established tradition. Together with a Sri Lankan monk, he revived Buddhist practices at the great stupa in Bodh Gaya, an area controlled at the time by a Hindu Raja and his militant followers. Domo Geshe Rinpoche's name is known throughout Tibet from the remotest regions of Changthang to the easternmost outposts of Amdo and Kham, where he was particularly loved not only by the courageous warriors for his protective amulets but by people from all walks of life. Active in Tsang and Central Tibet, he was openly praised by both His Holiness the Thirteenth Dalai Lama and the Panchen Rinpoche. Domo Geshe Rinpoche's fame extends to Mongolia, China, Japan, India, Sri Lanka, and many Western countries.

In the Indian Himalayan region he is also known as "the precious doctor of Chumbi," since he healed so many people with a variety of methods. The famous holy pills (rilbus) he made from hundreds of holy and medicinal ingredients were of unequalled power and healed many otherwise hopeless cases. The rilbus continue to multiply by themselves. In today's Tibet (1995), especially in Tromo, many people who have never even seen him have deep and unshakable faith in Domo Geshe Rinpoche – more than in any other Lama. Many people in the Western world instantly developed deep, lasting faith in Buddhism by reading about Domo Geshe Rinpoche's deeds in *The Way of the White Clouds*. This book played a greater role in introducing Mahayana-Vajrayana Buddhism to the West than any other. Through it, Domo Geshe Rinpoche had a most far-reaching influence over the future of Buddhism in the West. Several international and particularly German Buddhist umbrella organizations today trace their charters to Domo Geshe Rinpoche's future-oriented teachings, i.e. with Maitreya Buddha as the focal point, and to his emphasis on a non-sectarian approach that embraces the complete teachings of the Buddha.

Not only have the fame of Domo Geshe Rinpoche's name and deeds spread in this unparalleled way, his monasteries, too, have their unique place in Tibetan history. Dungkar Gonpa, located on top of a mountain spur in Upper Tromo, became the first Gelugpa monastery in that area after it was entrusted to Geshe Ngawang Kalsang in 1901/02. Later, many other smaller monasteries came under Dungkar Gonpa's administrative umbrella in Tibet and across the border in

India. Dungkar Gonpa also became the seat of the famous oracle that was consulted by people from all over Tibet. The monastery hosted His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama and his government twice in the 1950s for extended periods of time. At the crossroads between India and Tibet, Dungkar Gonpa became a stopping place for most Tibetan and foreign dignitaries on their way to and from Lhasa. Thus, Domo Geshe Rinpoche's places were open to a kind of international movement unusual for Tibet at the time. The incarnation of the great Domo Geshe Rinpoche across the border in Sikkim could be taken as a sign for the direction Buddhism would take in the future. The only high Tibetan Lama ever to have taken rebirth in Sikkim, Domo Geshe Rinpoche, famous for his long-ranging vision, led the way. He was born into an aristocratic family that had facilitated the journeys of most of the early Western explorers of Tibet whom history proved to be instrumental in carrying the seeds of Tibetan Buddhism across yet many other borders and into the West. Today, the monasteries established by the previous Domo Geshe Rinpoche outside the limits of Tibet prove to be repositories of a tradition intact and unbroken. Skilled in moving across borders of very different worlds with great ease for a very long time, Domo Geshe Rinpoche, in upholding the Buddha's tradition, knows to avoid the extreme of absolute modernism which destroys the heritage of the past by blurring traditional distinctions in a syncretic hodge-podge and the extreme of a traditionalism that clings to the images of the past such that most possibilities for growth and real change become eclipsed.

In the following biographical summary, only a few examples of Domo Geshe Rinpoche's great accomplishments will be mentioned. Although his private and public visions, miracles, and power of healing and taming human and non-human beings are extraordinary in number, scope, and intensity, the focus here will be more on those events which are his own unique contribution to safeguarding and perpetuating the pure and complete teachings of the Buddha.

KYABJE DOMO GESHE RINPOCHE NGAWANG KALSANG

Geshe Ngawang Kalsang, who later became known as Kyabje Domo Geshe Rinpoche, was born in 1866 in Emagang in the Shang district of Tsang. His birth was accompanied by various good signs observed by his mother, Bungchok Kyipa, and his father, Tsüldzin Tseten, a tantric practitioner (ngag pa), as well as others. It is said that the purpose of his birth was to tame different kinds of beings. When he was four years old, Exalted Vajra Yogini herself manifested and offered him nourishment brought from the realms of the Dakinis. At the age of eight he entered the great Tashi Lhunpo Monastery. He listened, reflected, and

studied with great intensity and desire to impress the holy teachings on his mind. The name Ngawang Kalsang was offered to him by the Protector of the Western Heavenly Field, Amitabha Buddha, the all-knowing Panchen Rinpoche Tenpa'i Wangchuk, and at the hair-cutting ceremony many wondrous and glorious phenomena occurred. Later, he took full ordination from the incarnation of the great translator Lochen Rinchen Zangpo Rinpoche. Geshe Ngawang Kalsang studied at Tashi Lhunpo's Shartse College for some twenty years, where he completed the "Kachen" degree, Tashi Lhunpo's equivalent of the "Geshe" degree of Central Tibet's great monastic universities.

It is said that in the circumambulation route (ling khor) of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery an emanation of Tara advised him that it was time to go and meet his root Guru. This was the highly realized master and ascetic Lobsang Zöpa, who was staying at the time in an isolated place called Trakar Taso, far to the west of Tashi Lhunpo. It took some time to find this master, also known as Rangjung Lama Lobsang Zöpa. Geshe Ngawang Kalsang offered him, among other offerings, a seal marked by the letter Ah. Although the Guru was pleased, since "the letter Ah is the best of all letters," he did not make it easy for Geshe Rinpoche to receive teachings. In fact, he tried to send him away several times and often scolded and reproached him. But Geshe Rinpoche was persistent and eventually received teachings, especially on the root texts and commentaries of the Ngülchu tradition.

At one point the greatly accomplished Guru Rangjung Lama refused to provide Geshe Rinpoche with books. He ordered him to find his own texts if he wanted to receive further teachings. Far away from the great library of Tashi Lhunpo, he set out to find the required texts to continue his training. In the area of Nyalam, Exalted Vajra Yogini herself manifested and offered Geshe Rinpoche a text about the lineage. When the Guru conferred upon him the great empowerment of the five-deity Heruka Chakrasamvara mandala of the Ghantapada tradition (Demchog Trilbu Lha-nga) in Milarepa's temple at Lapchi, the mandala and deity actually manifested and entrusted him with the future of the Demchog tantra. In different holy places along the Himalayan snow mountain range, in caves and isolated places, Geshe Rinpoche received teachings from the Guru, practiced, and actually saw the different meditational deities (yidam) on more than one occasion, receiving their blessings, teachings, guidance, and predictions.

Going on a pilgrimage to many holy places, the Guru and several of his disciples, including Geshe Ngawang Kalsang, expended great effort to journey to Kathmandu in Nepal in the 1890s to renovate the great stupa at Svayambhu.

The Guru Rangjung Lama received assistance from divine beings to complete this difficult task and several wondrous occurrences (yamtsen ngöjung) took place. It had been predicted that this magnificent deed would greatly benefit the disciples in the future. In further predictions, the Guru pointed Geshe Rinpoche to his future areas of practice and influence: the regions where the Monpäs live, Tromo, Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal, Dagpo, Kongpo, and India. He also foretold that Geshe Rinpoche would build three very special Maitreya Buddha statues. Accordingly, Geshe Rinpoche went to Tawang, where the Mönpas live, and to other holy places in southern Tibet. There he practiced “Cutting” (chö) in fearful cemeteries. When he meditated in a cave at Taktsang in Pharo, Bhutan, one morning at daybreak, Exalted Vajra Yogini herself in the form of a fifteen-year-old girl aroused him from sleep and urged him to turn the wheel of Dharma. This was necessary, she admonished, because the beings in the Himalayan area from Ladakh to Assam were in danger of falling down the slope of wrong views about the holy Dharma and their minds were wrapped in darkness.

When Domo Geshe Rinpoche received Vajra Bhairava (Dorje Jigje) empowerment, he directly beheld the yidam and the thirteen deities. While meditating near Gangring in Lower Tromo, Geshe Rinpoche lived on fruits, berries, and herbs found in the deep, dense forest surrounding the cave. In southern Tibet, he had survived by the practice of “taking the essence” (chü len), taking the essence of flowers, and in Sikkim, by taking the essence of stones. In Gangring, Geshe Ngawang Kalsang had many extraordinary visions. The Thirty-five Buddhas manifested directly to him, for example, and when some evil beings there tried to interfere with his practice, he arose in the form of Demchog and subdued the obstacles.

He went to Upper Tromo and meditated in a remote cave among crystalline mountains and dense forests in an area called Chagling. Here the wild animals and yeti (mi gö) came to serve him. They helped bring firewood and water. It is said that Domo Geshe Rinpoche controlled the frightful yeti with a finger snap. Jowo Chin-karwa and Kang-dzenpa offered their vow to protect Rinpoche’s life. A nomad who had lost some of his animals found Geshe Rinpoche and, in disbelief that anyone could survive on his own in this remote wilderness, was the first to offer yogurt, milk, butter, etc. It is said that Domo Geshe Rinpoche spent many years in the cave at Chagling, but nobody really knows for just how long, or how many times his yidams and other celestial beings came to visit him.

After Geshe Rinpoche left his retreat at Chagling, he fulfilled two prophecies at once when he erected a Maitreya Buddha statue at Galingkang in Tromo. Not

only had his Guru Rangjung Lama Lobsang Zöpa predicted this event, but the exalted master Dromtönpa, the main disciple of glorious Atisha Dipamkara, had foretold it hundreds of years earlier. Upon request, the best artist, Ü Döndrup Wangyal, had been sent by the government in Lhasa. The statue was fashioned of clay mixed with many ground-up precious stones and holy things. Like the other Maitreya Buddha images Geshe Rinpoche would commission in the future, it was about two stories high. When it was consecrated, gods and goddesses showered down flowers. Some of those who witnessed this amazing event later told the next generation that the lotus-like fragrant celestial flowers could actually be handled but that they disappeared after about half an hour.

Geshe Rinpoche attracted the best artists and craftsmen to Tromo. The painter Trinley from Tsang and the statue maker Wangyal from Lhasa both stayed on and settled there. Domo Geshe Rinpoche, then and now, has an incomparable sense for the greatest excellence in quality and refinement of style. He only uses the very best possible materials – and most often the rarest and most unusual ones – for offerings, for building monasteries, creating statues, works of art, or presenting and preserving holy objects.

Tromo had been described by Tibetan and Western travelers alike as one of the most beautiful places in the world. With fragrant juniper, cedar, and many other trees, countless varieties of wildflowers and wildlife, it has been portrayed as a paradise by more than one writer. Tromo, the gateway between Tibet and India, is also an old place. Padma Sambhava traveled through the valley, which is still marked with several of his spontaneous manifestations (rang jön). The First Panchen Lama Losang Chökyi Gyaltzen had spent time in retreat in Upper Tromo and, with Chomo Lhari guarding the upper entrance to the valley, it has no lack of holy places.

Upon request by the people of Tromo to stay with them, Geshe Ngawang Kalsang rebuilt Dungkar Gonpa. With a white conch manifestation (rang jön) just below the monastery and another one from which issued the sound of a conch when blown into, Dungkar Gonpa has borne that name since 1662. Even before that, there was a temple there. Long before Domo Geshe Rinpoche took Dungkar Gonpa into his care, it belonged to a monastery in Sikkim. Being located not far from Rabtentse, the former summer palace of the Sikkimese kings in Tromo, there was a period in that country's history when the King of Sikkim visited Dungkar Gonpa annually. Geshe Rinpoche enlarged the main Buddha statue of the monastery and built another great Maitreya Buddha. The axial pillar (sog shing) for the Maitreya statue is said to have come from a branch of the

Bodhi tree in Bodh Gaya that fell down and landed next to Domo Geshe Rinpoche while he was giving teachings there. Behind the monastery a spring issued forth through Geshe Rinpoche's presence and blessings. It dried up after the monastery was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. Recently, when some local people, with Geshe Rinpoche's help, started to rebuild Dungkar Gonpa, the water of the spring began to flow again.

After Domo Geshe Rinpoche enlarged Dungkar Gonpa, it attracted many more monks. Discipline was strict, and practice, in time, came to cover many more subjects than was common for a monastery its size (sixty to seventy monks then and about one hundred in the 1950s). Monks memorized many different kinds of texts and learned to perform ritual dances as well as ritual chanting with special melodies, to play many different kinds of musical instruments, to construct three-dimensional mandalas as well as the two-dimensional ones made from colored powder, to make elaborate butter sculptures, and to master many other art forms that relate to religious practice. Although small, Dungkar Gonpa had some of the best dancers and artists in Tibet. Some of the monks also learned about medicine and how to collect different ingredients of medicinal value.

High above Dungkar Gonpa, where a manifestation of a double Dharma-source (chö jung) had manifested, Geshe Rinpoche built a retreat called Ganden Khachö. There, Exalted Vajra Yogini, surrounded by countless Dakinis, actually manifested to him. In that circle, and in the presence of Maitreya Buddha, Geshe Rinpoche received blessings and transmissions from the unsurpassable master Je Tsong Khapa and his sons directly. The yidam came to him many times and also took Geshe Rinpoche to her heavenly field and, on one occasion, offered him holy gems. It is said that it was in Ganden Khachö that Tashi Tseringma from Chomo Lhari appeared and offered Domo Geshe Rinpoche the precious snow-lion milk in a turquoise vessel (yu ring), a most special container, since this substance burns through ordinary materials. To benefit all living beings, the kind Lama created a pill from many different holy substances that he collected in the Buddha's sacred places in India and in pilgrimage places in the Himalayas and Tibet, from rare medicinal herbs and other famous holy pills, from relics, and from a great variety of unknown precious beneficial ingredients, including the snow-lion milk. Transformed by means of mercury, a very poisonous substance, in a process mastered by only a few, and together with many special blessings, Geshe Rinpoche's rilbus became singularly powerful. They were said to reverse the effects of life-threatening poison and terminal illnesses, to protect against many different kinds of weapons, including bullets, and to guarantee at least seven human rebirths if administered at the right moment in the death process. No other holy pills were as effective or became as famous and sought after all over Tibet as were Domo Geshe Rinpoche's. These rilbus were not only

medicine and holy, but magical as well. Rinpoche himself carried a bag of rilbus that replenished themselves like relics in a holy place. He offered large bags filled with these holy pills to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and to the Panchen Rinpoche, and he handed them out freely to suffering sentient beings to alleviate pain and illness and to protect from danger. His great kindness and compassion became legendary.

Tromo had been a stronghold of the Bön faith in Tibet when Geshe Rinpoche arrived there. One after another of the wealthy patrons turned to Domo Geshe Rinpoche and became Buddhist. Pembö Lama, the owner of a Bön monastery, Yungdungkang, offered it to Geshe Rinpoche. It was renamed Tashi Chöling. The Lama and his sons became patrons and they prospered. Not all saw Rinpoche as the great virtuous one that he was. Already at the end of the Younghusband expedition in 1905, when Sir Charles Bell was governor of Tromo for a year, the local Bönpos complained to him that a great oracle had come to Upper Tromo and converted everyone to the Buddhist faith. They requested the governor to stop Domo Geshe Rinpoche from taking away the wealthy Bön patrons. Bell answered that he would not interfere in the internal religious affairs of the country. When taken to the courts in Lhasa, a similar answer was given: everyone is free to practice the religion of their choice.

But there was more than one attempt on Domo Geshe Rinpoche's life. In 1918 and 1919 the Bönpos tried to cause physical harm to him repeatedly by means of black magic. Rinpoche foiled these attempts through his clairvoyance and crushed the evil by his superior powers. In one case he arose as Chenrezig Senge Tra and subdued the poisonous snake intended to kill him.

Domo Geshe Rinpoche tamed even more intractable beings. In the 1920s a Mongolian Geshe returned from pilgrimage in India and stopped at Dungkar Gonpa on his way to Lhasa. Rinpoche was away at the time and Umdze Sherab, who later became the famous abbot of Dungkar Gonpa, asked the Geshe to stay, as he had a high fever and was too sick to travel. But the Geshe did not accept the invitation. He wanted to be in Lhasa for the Great Prayer Festival (Mönlam Chenmo). On the steep road to Phari, he reached the end of his life. He sat down next to the road and the death process started. The Geshe did his practice, which was not completed when several Bönpos arrived. Well intentioned, they performed the transference of consciousness, since the dying man had stopped breathing. This interrupted the Geshe's practice on the most subtle level of consciousness and he turned into a raging spirit who killed many Bönpos in Tromo. Several Buddhist practitioners tried unsuccessfully to appease the fury of

this being. When Domo Geshe Rinpoche returned, he tamed the ferocious spirit, put him under oath, and called him Namkha Bardzin. He became a special protector for the area of Tromo.

Tromo was changed completely by Domo Geshe Rinpoche's presence. The Bönpos at Pemukang sent yearly New Year offerings to him at Dungkar Gonpa, as did the Nyingmapas from nearby Kyiruntsel, where a room was kept ready in the monastery for Domo Geshe Rinpoche. Eventually, Rinpoche instituted several practices that brought the people of Tromo together in greater harmony. One of these was a yearly joint reading of twelve collected works (sung bum) at Kampu Dzong in Upper Tromo by the different religious traditions. Another practice was a special Guru Rinpoche (Padma Sambhava) ritual. Dungkar Gonpa had acquired an especially holy Guru Rinpoche statue, said to have been blessed by Padma Sambhava himself. When the owner was on his way to India with the statue, it spoke when passing Dungkar Gonpa. "Take me to where that sound is coming from," it said, as the long trumpets sounded from the monastery on the hill. The man did, and Geshe Rinpoche gave him what he needed. Not much later, it is said, Domo Geshe Rinpoche found a Guru "fulfillment of wishes" (thug drup) text near Dawa Trag, a rock not far from Dungkar Gonpa bearing a spontaneous manifestation (rang jön) of a moon. Shortly thereafter, someone came with many copies of the same text for sale. Geshe Rinpoche bought all of them and, once a year, the Dungkar Gonpa monks performed the ritual.

When His Holiness the Thirteenth Dalai Lama returned from India in 1912, he stopped in Tromo. A meeting took place between His Holiness and Domo Geshe Rinpoche at Kangyur Lhakang in Galingkang. It is said that His Holiness mentioned to his attendants that he expected a very special visitor one afternoon. Domo Geshe Rinpoche, who always looked like a simple monk, had prepared special delicacies to offer to His Holiness. He spent a long time in private talks with him that afternoon. In the evening, His Holiness asked his attendants if they had seen the very special person who had visited him in the afternoon. Surprised, they said they had only seen a simple monk in dirty, tattered robes. His Holiness replied, "That is too bad. I saw Je Tsong Khapa himself."

Since Domo Geshe Rinpoche introduced and spread the Buddhist teachings in the Himalayan regions like Je Tsong Khapa himself, His Holiness and the Panchen Rinpoche had special respect for him. Geshe Rinpoche enjoyed a close relationship with the Panchen Rinpoche Chökyi Nyima. Once a year he would send long-life offerings to the Panchen Rinpoche. From him Domo Geshe Rinpoche had received an especially holy object that was kept at Dungkar

Gonpa: the mold for the famous image of Je Tsong Khapa called “Tsong-bön Geleg.” With it Rinpoche fashioned many holy Je Tsong Khapa statues. Some of them have survived the Tibetan holocaust and still exist in Domo Geshe Rinpoche’s monasteries in India and with some of his disciples in the Himalayan border areas.

Geshe Rinpoche had a close relationship as well with the great Kyabje Pabongka Rinpoche Dechen Nyingpo, from whom he had received many transmissions, initiations, personal instructions (mä ngag), and comprehensive teachings. They also exchanged presents. People used to say that with Kyabje Pabongka Rinpoche in Central Tibet, the Panchen Rinpoche in Tsang, and Domo Geshe Rinpoche at the border, the pure Buddhist tradition was safe and flourishing.

A very close and special relationship also existed between Geshe Rinpoche and Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche. Together they received teachings and initiations from Kyabje Pabongka Rinpoche, Lamrim teachings from His Holiness the Thirteenth Dalai Lama and, together with Kyabje Pabongka Rinpoche, they received a very rare cycle of 108 initiations in 1921 from Tagdra Dorje Chang, who later became the Regent of Tibet. The initiations spanned the four classes of Tantra, and Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche said of that event, “Thus, the traditions of past successive lineages were observed correctly without the negligence of finding easy solutions” (Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche, Autobiography, p. 94).

Domo Geshe Rinpoche often went to India on pilgrimage to the holy places of the Buddha. For some time he went every year. At first, he went alone across the high mountain passes from Tromo to Sikkim, through Phedong to Kalimpong, and then by train from Siliguri to Gaya. Later he took with him people from all walks of life and his monks. The Hindu Raja controlling Bodh Gaya was very impressed with Geshe Rinpoche and trusted him completely. The great stupa was locked up, since people came to steal the offerings. Whenever Rinpoche visited, the Raja handed him the keys and turned over the stupa to him for the duration of his stay there. Still today, the committee that administers the great stupa at Bodh Gaya consists of a Hindu majority. However, at the time Rinpoche went there on pilgrimage, Hindus were in complete control and Buddhist practice was not welcome at all. Only Domo Geshe Rinpoche and the Sri Lankan Anagarika Dharmapala, founder of the Mahabodhi Society, represented Buddhist interests and regularly performed Buddhist practices at the great stupa. It was because of Domo Geshe Rinpoche’s help and influence that the ground for a Tibetan monastery near the stupa could be purchased by a Ladakhi monk without interference from the Hindu Raja and his militant followers.

Geshe Rinpoche's disciples cleaned the area around the stupa on their visits, washed the Bodhi tree with purifying herbs and water and offered many, many butterlamps and other offerings. On the full moon of the eighth Tibetan month in 1916, after many early morning purification rituals, Domo Geshe Rinpoche performed the ritual bath offering using milk to bathe the statue of Shakyamuni Buddha and then covered it with gold. The holy body of the Buddha emitted nectar, an event witnessed by many. Geshe Rinpoche carefully collected it and used it for the benefit of sentient beings in holy objects and rilbus, it is said.

Once, when Domo Geshe Rinpoche was in Bodh Gaya and absorbed in deep meditation, five Dakinis came to take him to a Buddha field. That instant, a red Prajnaparamita, mother of the Buddhas, arose and urged the Dakinis not to do so and told them that the time for Rinpoche to leave had not yet come. Another time, towards the end of his life, at a holy lake near Chomo Lhari the Dakinis came again to beckon him to come with them. It is said that he promised them to come, but at a later date. On one of Geshe Rinpoche's pilgrimages to the Buddha's holy places, many good omens occurred on his way to Sarnath and near the stupa before he arrived there. When he did, the whole mandala of Demchog and the sixty-two deities manifested to Rinpoche. In Kushinagara, the place of Shakyamuni Buddha's maha-parinirvana, Geshe Rinpoche made extensive offerings and offered prayers. The thousand Buddhas manifested and Rinpoche had a vision of the future. At Vulture's Peak, the eight Medicine Buddhas and sixteen Arhats manifested to him, and at Silwasel, the great protector Mahakala himself.

In the Indian Himalayan region, especially today's Himachal Pradesh – formerly the principalities and kingdoms of Khunu, Lahul-Piti, Bashar, etc. – Domo Geshe Rinpoche established Gelugpa monasteries and temples where there were none at all. In Rampur the Hindu Raja built a Gelugpa temple and a library with many collections of priceless Buddhist texts, including Kangyur and Tengyur, upon Domo Geshe Rinpoche's request. This was an expression of gratitude, since Rinpoche's practices and blessings had ensured the childless Raja a son. In Kanum, Domo Geshe Rinpoche built Lhundup Gephel Gonpa on an ancient holy site. It was adorned with exquisite wall paintings and contained statues of sandalwood and other precious materials, and an extensive library. This was in 1911, according to one Indian scholar. Rinpoche later built and consecrated another monastery in that area. In Khunu Domo Geshe Rinpoche also meditated in a cave called Sur-pug for close to a year. Not far from there, in the village of Poo near Shipki pass, Domo Geshe Rinpoche restored to life a dying young girl while the whole village bore witness. His popularity and fame knew no bounds

and everywhere he went he was requested to teach and to confer empowerments and pratimoksha vows. Upon the request of the King of Piti, for example, Geshe Rinpoche gave Lamrim teachings to thousands of people who had come from near and very far away and conferred long-life and other empowerments. Domo Geshe Rinpoche is singularly credited, not only by his followers but by the Tibetan government as well, for having spread Je Tsong Khapa's teachings especially throughout the whole Himalayan region.

In a small monastery at 18,000 feet near a mountain pass from Ladakh into Tibet a disciple of Domo Geshe Rinpoche had a vision of Maitreya Buddha. Afterwards he found out that the chapel in which he had seen the vision had been consecrated by Geshe Rinpoche to the future Buddha.

At Tso Pema, Padma Sambhava's holy lake, Domo Geshe Rinpoche broke the ground for the main monastery. During the ritual, the lotus flowers growing in the lake, which had not moved in a very long time, started to move towards Rinpoche. The monastery belonged to Domo Geshe Rinpoche until the early 1960s, when its monks were persuaded that he would not return from prison in Tibet and thereupon offered it to Dūdjom Rinpoche. The first time Geshe Rinpoche arrived in Tso Pema the lake's water had receded significantly. Upon request by the local people and the pilgrims, Rinpoche helped bring enough rain that year to replenish the lake. Since then, the local people recite Chenrezig's mantra as follows: "Domo Geshe Rinpoche Om Mani Padme Hung." In other Guru Rinpoche holy places, such as Sikkim for example, he is seen by many as an incarnation of Padma Sambhava. Domo Geshe Rinpoche unites in himself those qualities and actions that allow for many people to believe him to be a manifestation of Je Tsong Khapa while others believe him to be a manifestation of Guru Rinpoche.

Domo Geshe Rinpoche visited these Himalayan areas more than once and crossed the high mountain passes to Mount Kailash, to historical places built by Lotsawa Rinchen Zangpo, and other holy places on both the Indian and Tibetan sides of the snow mountains. Domo Geshe Rinpoche's name even served to legitimate the work of documenting the remains from the ancient kingdom of Guge by two foreigners whose travel papers did not permit such work and who were in danger of being expelled from Tibet.

These are just some highlights of Domo Geshe Rinpoche's activities among the snow mountains of the Himalayas, where his name is known from Ladakh to Assam and deeply respected by everyone, regardless of religion or Buddhist orientation. His Holiness the Thirteenth Dalai Lama called Domo Geshe Rinpoche a "realized one who is completely tamed" (trup.pa'i dül.jug) and a "great scholar" (kä.pa chen.bo) and referred to him as someone who is "Lama to people inside and outside of Tibet and whose widespread fame resonates like the sound of a great bell."

Domo Geshe Rinpoche's accomplishments and visions were abundant. Even those known to us are too numerous to mention here individually. The most famous vision occurred on one of Geshe Rinpoche's many pilgrimages. At nineteen thousand feet on the northern slopes of Kanchenjunga, Chörten Nyima has been a very special holy place since at least the time of Padma Sambhava. It is considered the "gate" to the "hidden land," Sikkim, and one of the chörtens contains a crystal stupa that miraculously came to earth from the sky. There Domo Geshe Rinpoche manifested a vision for all to see within a radius of miles. From among white clouds first appeared a white horse leading the procession that moved from east to west and then, from among many rainbows, a great variety of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and different holy beings and signs appeared, made from light and rainbows. Only Domo Geshe Rinpoche saw the whole extent of the vision, while those in his retinue saw parts according to individual capacity and karma. Some saw Khedrup Rinpoche's five visions of Je Tsong Khapa, some Je Tsong Khapa and his two main disciples, while others saw the Medicine Buddha, Amitayus, or different pure lands. Everyone could see the eight auspicious signs. Rinpoche's cook stood watching spell-bound, spoon in hand, his mouth agape. Even the animals turned their faces towards the sky and seemed to be able to see something. The vision remained for a long time, so Rinpoche's disciples could point out to each other in minutest detail what they saw. The only other vision of that magnitude made public in the same way occurred at the time of Shakyamuni Buddha, and an account of it can be found in the Surangama Sutra.

Domo Geshe Rinpoche was offered a new retreat house at Ghoom Yiga Chöling Monastery by a patron from Darjeeling and was requested to take care of the monastery. Rinpoche enlarged it and built another famous two-story Maitreya Buddha statue with the help of Wangyal, the same artist who had fashioned the ones in Tromo. Between his eyes a huge diamond reflected the light of the many butterlamps. Humans and non-humans had offered the precious materials for it. When the Maitreya statue was consecrated, gods and goddesses showered down flowers from Tushita, and many people, even as far away as Darjeeling, said they heard very beautiful music.

In 1919 Tashi Chöling Monastery in Kurseong near Darjeeling was completed and consecrated by Geshe Rinpoche, and Tharpa Chöling Monastery in Kalimpong was finished in 1922. This monastery had been built with the support of and requests from the Maharani of Bhutan, an influential Chinese merchant and his Tibetan wife, a group of Tibetans living in Kalimpong, and many others. A beautiful Gesar Ling statue from China was offered to Rinpoche and downstairs from his residence a Gesar chapel (lha khang) was consecrated. The Chinese community came to worship there especially during their New Year's celebrations. Today, it still functions as a place for divination and people come from all over to seek answers to their questions.

By the time Tharpa Chöling was completed, Dungkar Gonpa had already built or taken under its administrative umbrella several other monasteries in Tromo and Phari. Until 1959 the Dungkar Gonpa monks took turns in administering these places as well as the monasteries across the border. In addition, there were a number of small temples and chapels in the Himalayan border area offered to and consecrated by Domo Geshe Rinpoche. Still today the only two Gelugpa temples in Sikkim were established by Domo Geshe Rinpoche during this time. The Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Guru Padma Sambhava, who offered his protection, had prophesied that Geshe Rinpoche would build all these monasteries so that the pure Dharma of the Buddha --- and especially of Je Tsong Khapa and his lineage – would flourish in the border areas, and that they would develop well with the blessings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Rinpoche.

Domo Geshe Rinpoche was genuinely most humble and completely without pride of thinking that he knew anything, say those who knew him. No photograph exists of him. His humility did not let anyone take a photograph of him, which was, in those days, something reserved for famous people, like heads of state, and those of high social status. When pictures were taken without his permission, he is either not there or blurred beyond recognition. The only likeness we have of the previous Domo Geshe Rinpoche is a statue fashioned after the preserved body that was placed in his stupa.

Senior monks who knew the previous Domo Geshe Rinpoche say that he never acted as if to draw attention to himself. They say he built monasteries, gathered monks, and created the foundation for practice and that he taught most often by giving practical advice as to what to do and what not to do. This was far more

effective in his prime area of influence than spending much time sitting on a throne and giving extensive teachings, they say. Many of the people in the border areas, where Geshe Rinpoche was most active, would not have understood elaborate teachings although he also gave many formal teachings, empowerments, and transmissions. He taught precisely according to the capacity of each individual, something only a highly realized master can do. Today, Geshe Rinpoche maintains the same style of teaching.

After returning from his last long pilgrimage to the Buddha's holy places in India in 1935/36, he called his close circle of disciples at Dungkar Gonpa to his room. Afraid of losing him, they did not want to listen to his last instructions. They quickly prostrated and requested him to live longer. During this time a lady wearing beautiful jewelry came to visit Geshe Rinpoche several times. His attendants did not see her enter Rinpoche's room and when one of them approached her, she vanished. It was Tsering Chenga from Chomo Lhari who requested Rinpoche again and again to come to her abode. Rinpoche's human followers requested him again to stay longer but he answered that he had already promised her to come. When it became clear to all that Geshe Rinpoche was leaving, they requested his last instructions. He told them that since they did not want to listen before, he had nothing to say now. But just before he passed away, he held up three fingers. This is said to have meant either, "You will see me in three years," or, "I will be a three-day walk away from here." Both turned out to be true. After he had passed away, two long rainbow clouds in the shape of offering scarves (kata) left his window and stretched out in the direction of Gangtok. On that day, the sky was filled with rainbows and many different colors and signs. Dungkar Gonpa was so thickly wrapped in rainbow clouds that it was hidden from view even from those approaching from the large open meadow, Lingmathang, just below the monastery. Not only Rinpoche's followers but even the Bönpos were amazed at the marvelous spectacle. The rainbow clouds continued to appear throughout the next forty-nine days, whenever the monks performed the ritual for Rinpoche's speedy return. Still today, the passing of Geshe Ngawang Kalsang is commemorated each year with butterlamp offerings in the Ganden Ngamchö style on the fourteenth night of the ninth Tibetan month at Tharpa Chöling Monastery in Kalimpong. Rainbow clouds around the full moon on that occasion have been observed as recently as 1991.

The Dungkar Gonpa administration requested the Central Tibetan government for permission to embalm the body of Domo Geshe Rinpoche, who sat absorbed in meditation for an unknown length of time. Only the bodies of Je Tsong Khapa, the Dalai Lamas, and the Panchen Lamas were customarily embalmed and sealed in large stupas. Permission was granted. The Regent Reting Rinpoche's decree read, "In Southern Tibet, including Sikkim, etc., Domo Geshe Rinpoche's

activities were exactly like those of Je Tsong Khapa. In accordance, we will allow Rinpoche's body to be preserved."

People came from near and far to offer precious stones, metals and other objects for the stupa built to house the body of Domo Geshe Rinpoche. About a year before passing away, Rinpoche had told his abbot about a dream he had had of a red temple with a stupa in the west that contained relics from the time of Buddha Chenleg and from which much water was gushing forth. It took a long time to finish the red temple and Domo Geshe Rinpoche's stupa. Only upon completion did the abbot recall the dream and he was joyful in believing they had acted in accordance with Rinpoche's wishes.

The stupa was two stories high and entirely covered with silver. It was studded with diamonds, pearls, turquoise, coral, and lapis and contained many other rare and precious holy objects in addition to Domo Geshe Rinpoche's body. After receiving repeated requests to come and consecrate the stupa, Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche consented and arrived in Tromo in early 1938 for this purpose. Planning to wait for the New Year to do the ceremony, he went on his first pilgrimage to the holy places in India. When performing the ceremony upon his return, many special signs occurred. Later, a "mushroom" (shamo) relic grew directly on the silver of the stupa. While these types of relics have also grown near the stupas of other similarly consecrated holy bodies, only in the case of Domo Geshe Rinpoche did the "mushroom" relic grow directly on the bare metal of the stupa.

KYABJE DOMO GESHE RINPOCHE

NGAWANG GYALTEN JIGME CHÖKYI WANGCHUK

I pray at the feet of the Great Lord of Speech [Manjushri],

Gyalten Jigme Chökyi Wangchuk,

Who rejuvenates the supreme Dharma, like life's renewal in spring,

Through his fearless and unequalled analyses

Of all the Conqueror's teachings, including the Sutras, Tantras, and commentaries.

– composed by Kyabje Trijang Dorje Chang

The supreme incarnation was born on January 22, 1937, at 8:30 a.m. in the Enchey Kazi family estate at Lingdum outside of Gangtok in Sikkim, three days' walk from Dungkar Gonpa in Tromo. Many beautiful flowers grew around the house during that time and even on a tree that does not normally bear flowers. The membrane covering the child was intact at birth, and later his father told friends that many miraculous signs and events surrounded the child's birth and early years. The father, Enchey Kazi Rabten Phüntso, the most influential and wealthy of the Gangtok Kazis at the time, belonged to the Barphungpa family. They trace their recent descent (seventeenth-eighteenth century) to Changdze Karwang, who was related to the Chögyal, the King of Sikkim, and who became a national hero in defending Sikkim against Bhutan. Rinpoche's mother, Chomo Yanki Dölma, was from the family of Yangthang Kazis in West Sikkim. They trace their descent to the minister of the Tibetan who came to crown the first Chögyal of Sikkim in 1633 and, more recently (eighteenth century), to Deba Dragkarpa, a great national hero who fought with Changdze Chothub, also called General Satrajeet, to expel the Gurkhas from Sikkim.

Domo Geshe Rinpoche's grandfather, Enchey Lama Kazi, was also landlord of Lingdum and Rumtek. He built Enchey Monastery in Gangtok and the temple at the royal palace to their present-day size. His son, Enchey Kazi Rabten Phüntso, was a deeply religious man. Like his Tulku son later on, he helped many poor people. With magisterial power of the first class, he often represented the poor and disenfranchised in court. A poet and writer, master of several languages including English, he was considered the best-educated man in Gangtok. Enchey House was the first Western-style house in Gangtok, located directly on the road to Tibet. Here Enchey Kazi hosted many famous Western explorers, among them Lama Anagarika Govinda and later his wife; Madame

Alexandra David-Neel, whose companion, Lama Yongden, was from Lingdum and had been a servant at Enchey House; the famous musician and writer Marco Pallis; Professor Tucci and the Italian explorers who accompanied him; and Dr. Schäfer and his German expedition. Enchey Kazi helped them through his excellent connections with Tibet, by teaching them Tibetan language and customs or, sometimes, he accompanied an expedition himself. Enchey Kazi had met the previous Domo Geshe Rinpoche, who had visited Gangtok on his frequent pilgrimages to India. An orthodox Nyingmapa, Enchey Kazi and the other Gangtok Kazis of the Barphungpa family, Madzong and Khenzong, went out of their way to establish beyond any doubt that Enchey Kazi's son was, in fact, the incarnation of the famous Tibetan Gelugpa Lama from Tromo.

When Rinpoche was not yet two years old, just before his mother passed away, he gave her some medicine and told her not to worry. She took it as a blessing, even though he was not yet recognized as an incarnated Lama. While she had been pregnant with him, a monk came to Enchey House one day and offered her a text of the "Recalling the Kindness" (ga.trin söl.deb) prayer of Domo Geshe Rinpoche and then vanished.

Kyabje Pabongka and Trijang Rinpoches in Lhasa had drawn a map of the place where the incarnation of Domo Geshe Rinpoche was born, without ever having been to Sikkim.

The child had announced to his father beforehand that his monks were coming to take him to his monastery. The young Tulku amazed everyone when he called the monks by name as they approached Enchey House. He called each by the name the previous Domo Geshe Rinpoche had used. He did so with the members of the first search party and, again, with the monks of a larger group that came to take him back to Dungkar Gonpa. When one of the monks pulled out a rilbu, Rinpoche took it and said, "my rilbu." He picked out his former possessions with ease from a group of different objects mixed with his own and even recognized a mule that had belonged to the previous Domo Geshe Rinpoche. When he put his little hand on the animal's head saying, "My mule does not look well," it shed tears.

At age three, one day when his father called him "Phuchung," Rinpoche informed him that he was now called "Jigme." As was later discovered, it was on the same day that Kyabje Pabongka and Trijang Rinpoches had made offerings at Je

Tsong Khapa's golden stupa at Ganden, and from that stupa Domo Geshe Rinpoche's name self-manifested: Gyalten Jigme Chökyi Wangchuk. At the time of Rinpoche's ordination, "Ngawang" was added to this name by the ordaining master, the Regent of Tibet, Tagdra Rinpoche.

His Royal Highness Sir Tashi Namgyal, the King of Sikkim, had sent offerings to the previous Domo Geshe Rinpoche with an official invitation to Sikkim in 1936 on Rinpoche's last journey through Kalimpong. At that time Geshe Rinpoche had sent offerings in return and a message that he would come, but at a later date. Before the young incarnation was taken to meet the King, he told his father that he would not prostrate to the King of Sikkim. When they arrived at the palace, the Chögyal rose from his seat and greeted Rinpoche. He expressed his joy that Rinpoche had come to be born in his country and kept his promise to visit. He urged Rinpoche's father, who initially had been reluctant to let his son go, not to interfere with Rinpoche's future and gave his official permission for the young Tulku to leave Sikkim for Tibet. The King also performed rituals to keep some of the fortune in the country. It was believed that the loss of someone as precious as Domo Geshe Rinpoche was very great and might otherwise deplete the national fortune.

Protocol demanded that the Regent of Tibet also be consulted about the authenticity of the incarnation found in Gangtok. The names of all twelve candidates were submitted to him and he, too, confirmed the accuracy of the choice. Kyabje Pabongka Rinpoche, in a telegram from Lhasa in November 1940, again confirmed to Enchey Kazi that his son was Domo Geshe Rinpoche and advised him to wait until the New Year to take the young Tulku to Tibet. Thus, Domo Geshe Rinpoche was taken to Dungkar Gonpa on the tenth day of the first Tibetan month in 1941.

At Dungkar Gonpa, Rinpoche learned quickly whatever he was taught. In accordance with the previous Domo Geshe Rinpoche's wish to study at Sera Monastery, he was taken there in the fall of 1942. Several years earlier, a monk by the name of Kalsangla from Bati Khamtsen at Sera Je College had predicted Domo Geshe Rinpoche's arrival. Kalsangla seemed to be a simple monk, but he had very accurate divinatory and other powers. Facing north, the house he lived in was so close to another building that no sunshine ever hit the door. One day, he pointed out a marigold flower that had miraculously grown on the door lintel without sun and earth. He said, "This is a sign that Je Tsong Khapa has taken birth." The monk from upstairs, Thubten Rabyang, asked him what he meant by that. Kalsangla answered, "Just watch! In two or three years he will come here

from the south.” When Thubten Rabyang saw the young incarnation of Domo Geshe Rinpoche in a procession on his way to Sera Monastery, he remembered the simple monk’s prediction.

When Domo Geshe Rinpoche came to Sera Monastery, the government bestowed the rank of the fourth level on him to honor the great deeds of the previous Domo Geshe Rinpoche. Both Tsangpa Khamtsen and Bati Khamtsen wanted Domo Geshe Rinpoche to join them. It took some time to resolve the dispute. The administration of Sera Je College finally decided that Geshe Rinpoche would belong to both houses (khamtsen). Because of this issue, Rinpoche did not start to debate until the age of ten or eleven.

From a long list of eminent teachers, Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche had chosen Geshe Jampa Chömbe, the most famous scholar at Sera at the time, to teach Rinpoche. Extremely gentle and soft-spoken, Domo Geshe Rinpoche debated in the most subdued manner. He did not clap his hands or shout, as was the custom during debates, or ever act in even a slightly aggressive manner. Many monks thought that Rinpoche did not care about his studies since they did not see him study a lot. However, without fail, Rinpoche always knew the answers. He did not get nervous – like many, even famous Geshes did – before or during big, public debates. He did not seem to prepare but always knew the answers. According to senior monks from Sera who spent time with him then, Domo Geshe Rinpoche understood everything he read very quickly and in a most amazingly profound way. Geshe Rinpoche was very attentive and carefully learned in great detail everything about the administrative structure of the monastery, even though he did not participate in it. Close friends with Sera Je’s Chant Master (umdze), Geshe Rinpoche unofficially learned all the melodies. He mentioned at an early age that he would need this knowledge in the future. During his studies at Sera Monastery, Domo Geshe Rinpoche went to Tromo Dungkar Gonpa twice. In 1947/48, he did his first strict retreat there at age eleven, and when he gave initiation in Ghoom Yiga Chöling Monastery that year, a rainbow arched through the air ending in his lap.

Domo Geshe Rinpoche was best known at Sera for his unwavering Guru devotion and for his perfect behavior. The picture of Tibet’s Regent, Tagdra Rinpoche, Geshe Rinpoche’s ordination master, was placed on the altar at Tromo Labrang. Since Geshe Jampa Chömbe was Guru to many other scholars, large numbers of the Sera monks came to Tromo Labrang. During and after the time of conflict between the regent and ex-regent, many of those monks made terribly derogatory remarks upon seeing Tagdra Rinpoche’s picture. But Domo

Geshe Rinpoche, barely a teenager then, never got angry at them. He just laughed and did not respond in any negative way. Nor was he the slightest bit intimidated by the older monks' behavior. Those who knew him well said that he never criticized anybody and in the conflict between the regent and ex-regent that divided Tibetans politically, Geshe Rinpoche never took sides but consistently maintained a religious perspective and kept good connections with both. As history has proven, this is a rare and unusual accomplishment.

Geshe Jampa Chömbe often appeared to be angry with Geshe Rinpoche. At times he did not talk to him for days. But this did not discourage Rinpoche. Ever so gently he would walk into his Guru's room without being noticed and serve him tea or the delicacies people had brought from Tromo and India. Although his Guru was so unusually strict with him, Rinpoche did not complain even once. Consistently pleasant, cheerful, and gentle, his Guru devotion was held up as an example for everyone else to emulate. There was no one as gentle as Domo Geshe Rinpoche, yet "it is in his nature not to be controlled by anyone," a senior Sera monk pointed out.

Not only was his Guru devotion exemplary, but his behavior was too. As an example many monks cite the fact that during summer sessions in the debating courtyard (chöra), Geshe Rinpoche sat in the hot sun in his woolen cloak, sweat running down his body, without ever moving even slightly. None of the other high incarnate Lamas was able to do that. Geshe Rinpoche observed the monastic code in perfect detail. He never missed a debate session and attended all other monastic functions with great interest. While still a child, his eyes did not wander during prayer sessions and when his Guru was away, he studied just as hard. His very exceptionally composed behavior and calm nature showed that he was someone very unusual. Many famous and influential people came to see him. They often were afraid of Rinpoche despite his very young age, because he was so serious. Domo Geshe Rinpoche always acted, and still acts, like a simple monk. He does not show off his knowledge or any other of his remarkable accomplishments. This exceptional and truly praiseworthy trait he has maintained consistently over decades and through times of great challenge. The profound meaning of Geshe Rinpoche's manner of acting is best captured in a verse composed by the great sage and philosopher Nagarjuna that expresses the truth of the dependently related nature of all phenomena:

No matter how deeply thoughts are hidden

In the innermost recesses of the heart,

They will show in external behavior

Just like fish in the ocean's depth are eventually made visible

By the movement of currents and waves.

During one of the winter study/debating sessions at Jamyang Konchö in which Domo Geshe Rinpoche participated (1955 and 1956), it so happened that at the moment when Rinpoche was sitting on the throne to give answers, the full moon rose above Manjushri's mountain. This beautiful coincidence is the poetry of Rinpoche's life. Many such coincidences and wondrous occurrences have taken place, and continue to do so, in and around Domo Geshe Rinpoche's existence. They are too numerous to list here.

When Geshe Rinpoche was selected to enter the Lharam class, his Guru Geshe Jampa Chömbe was most pleased. His classmates in the Lharam class said of Domo Geshe Rinpoche that he had great understanding (kowa chenbo), since he deeply understood the meaning of whatever he read. Rinpoche spent two years in the Lharam class, when in 1958 he requested to graduate sooner. Since from Sera Je College Phagpa Lha Rinpoche was ahead of him, there was no chance for Geshe Rinpoche to graduate soon as a Lharampa Geshe. Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche immediately approved Geshe Rinpoche's request and His Holiness gave his permission as well. Only Geshe Jampa Chömbe was disappointed. But he, too, had to accept Geshe Rinpoche's choice. On Lhapab Düchen in 1958, Domo Geshe Rinpoche graduated as a Lingsä Geshe just before the Communists put an end to the religious system in Tibet. Geshe Rinpoche took that occasion to make very elaborate offerings to the monasteries and the Sangha. This became a famous event. By that time, Domo Geshe Rinpoche had received an astounding array of teachings, transmissions, and empowerments from Kyabje Trijang Dorje Chang, Tagri Dorje Chang, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and Gonsar (Dema) Rinpoche. Some of these were extremely rare and precious. Tagri Dorje Chang, who spent half of his life giving oral transmissions, is reported to have said at that time that Domo Geshe Rinpoche most likely had more transmissions, etc., than he had received himself. Today, Domo Geshe

Rinpoche, a lineage holder, has more transmissions, especially of rare texts, and empowerments than anyone else in the Gelugpa tradition.

In 1950/51, after the Chinese Communist invasion of Tibet, His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, his tutors, the ex-Regent Tagdra Rinpoche, and a number of government officials went to stay in Tromo. In case of an emergency His Holiness could have quickly crossed the nearby border. In addition, Tromo is a valley that could easily be sealed off and controlled. For reasons of His Holiness' personal safety, the Cabinet and Assembly had insisted that he travel there. His Holiness stayed at Dungkar Gonpa for more than eight months. During this time, the government conferred the official rank of abbot, "Khenchung" – usually reserved only for the big monastic universities – upon Dungkar Gonpa's abbot, and the "Tsedung" rank of "Lädzim" upon the Dungkar Gonpa oracle. Representatives of the Mahabodhi Society arrived from India to bring a golden urn containing a holy relic of the Buddha to His Holiness. His Tutors and the government officials circumambulated the relics (kudung) of the previous Domo Geshe Rinpoche and offered butterlamps and other offerings there. They advised the local people that doing so was as powerful and beneficial as going on pilgrimage to the holy sites in India.

During His Holiness' stay in Tromo, Jigme Ngabo, as the head of the Tibetan delegation in Beijing, signed the Seventeen-point Agreement under duress. While the seal of state presumably was with His Holiness at Dungkar Gonpa, the Chinese forged it to give legitimacy to the document. The Dungkar Gonpa oracle was consulted about His Holiness' return to Lhasa or flight to India. His Holiness decided to return to Lhasa. He did so in August of 1951 soon after meeting General Chang Chin-wu, who was sent to Tibet via Tromo to meet His Holiness there. In 1956/57, while on pilgrimage to India on the occasion of the Buddha Jayanti and by invitation of the Indian government, His Holiness passed through Tromo again and once more visited Dungkar Gonpa.

On the second day of the war, on March 22, 1959, Domo Geshe Rinpoche was taken prisoner by the Chinese Communists together with many other people. From the Norbulingka gardens where they were all held for several days, he was taken to army headquarters. Since Rinpoche was a Sikkimese, it was expected that he would be let go immediately. However, he was not released until more than two years later. According to the Indian Consul in Lhasa at the time, Domo Geshe Rinpoche was too important to be let go. The Chinese Communists hoped to convert him to their views and use his tremendous popularity for their own ends. Another reason for Geshe Rinpoche's imprisonment was that all the

resistance fighters used the famous rilbus and other objects blessed by Rinpoche as protection against weapons. It is said that when some of the Chinese used Geshe Rinpoche's protection, which made many fighters bullet-proof, it worked for them as well. Domo Geshe Rinpoche and the monks of his Labrang, who had handed out rilbus freely to anyone "who went south," were considered part of the resistance and were all imprisoned.

The first few months of Geshe Rinpoche's imprisonment he was forced to perform the dirtiest of all jobs, such as cleaning out pig sties or sewers and washing dirty laundry; or the heaviest, such as carrying huge concrete slabs as the youngest person among a group of old ailing people. His back was badly injured when a huge chunk of concrete fell on him. This injury would continue to bother Geshe Rinpoche for many years to come. Rinpoche never complained about the work or the difficult conditions; he was a good worker. Once when he was taking care of the pigs, a Chinese officer tried to force him to shoot one of the animals. Rinpoche refused. The soldier just cursed and left.

Later, Geshe Rinpoche no longer had to do the back-breaking dirty work, but the Communists tried to break him through re-education sessions. When after more than a year he had still not changed his mind, they took Domo Geshe Rinpoche to Trapchi prison and kept him in solitary confinement in total darkness for several months, in a cell too small even to stretch out in. For the last year of his imprisonment Geshe Rinpoche shared a cell with the Tibetan general Sampho Tenzin Thondup, who described how he developed complete trust in Rinpoche. In prison this was a most special gift. In his book, the general talks about how happy he was that he could trust someone completely.

In the meantime, many Tibetans outside of Tibet repeatedly petitioned His Royal Highness the Chögyal of Sikkim to facilitate Geshe Rinpoche's release, as he was not a Tibetan national. The Chögyal, as well as thirty-eight different organizations, petitioned Pandit Nehru, Prime Minister of India, to bring pressure on the Chinese Communists to free Domo Geshe Rinpoche from the illegal imprisonment. Later, the Indian newspapers reported: "His Holiness Domo Geshe Rinpoche has been detained by the Chinese at Lhasa since 1959 on suspicion of being involved in the Tibetan uprising" (Hindusthan Standard, August 10, 1960).

Finally, Domo Geshe Rinpoche was released from prison on the tenth day of the Tibetan New Year in 1961. For the next few months he traveled by bicycle all over Lhasa and its outskirts collecting texts and precious holy objects to be smuggled out of Tibet. He did so at the risk of his life. He gathered texts too rare to exist anywhere outside of Tibet, among them a number of very precious manuscript collections (pembum). Perhaps most important were the sets of textbooks used by the different colleges of Sera, Drepung, and Ganden. Without these textbooks, it would have been impossible to continue the tradition of the great monastic universities in exile. They came out with “Katsara” traders, the only people then permitted to travel across the border.

While Geshe Rinpoche traveled around Lhasa collecting holy objects, he found his outer robe (chögö), which he had received from Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche and in which this great master had given many teachings, as well as his ordination Buddha. This was considered an auspicious omen (temde). Many of the precious objects Geshe Rinpoche collected, like thangkas and other art works, did not reach their rightful owners. A large number of them got stolen while waiting near the border of Sikkim or on the way across. However, the collections of books, which had no monetary value, remained untouched. Only these precious things collected by Domo Geshe Rinpoche came out of Tibet at the time; the border was very tightly sealed.

Later that summer of 1961, Geshe Rinpoche arrived in Gangtok. The Chinese authorities in Lhasa had finally become aware that Rinpoche would not, after all, work for them. They escorted him from Lhasa to the border through Tromo – and past Dungkar Gonpa – secretly. They were worried that if Rinpoche were recognized, the local people would not let him leave and create an uprising. At Nathula, Rinpoche turned facing Tibet to say prayers. At that moment, his meager bundle fell to the ground. In it had been his only valuable possession, a wooden bowl used during government-sponsored dinners. He heard a crack: a chip had broken off the bowl's delicate rim. Thus Domo Geshe Rinpoche came out of Tibet without any possessions at all. From the terribly dirty food in prison and other privations, he arrived in Sikkim and India quite sick.

At Tharpa Chöling Monastery in Kalimpong, a dispute that had started in the late 1940s was still festering. The monks sent from Dungkar Gonpa in Tibet to rotate the administrative offices took their personal offerings back to Tibet and offered them at Dungkar Gonpa. This created animosity among the locals which escalated into a deep conflict. Both sides tried to resolve it by presenting their grievances to the Indian and Tibetan courts. This is a case famous for its

uniqueness. Neither the Tibetan nor the Indian government could solve the problem. Only Geshe Rinpoche, upon his return from Tibet, resolved the lingering crisis mainly by means of his non-partisanship and fairness, his equal treatment of all, and his uncompromising attention to all the details of monastic discipline. It is said that the following lines from Je Tsong Khapa's praise of Buddha Shakyamuni known as "Kapsumpa" describe well this particular accomplishment of Domo Geshe Rinpoche's:

Through the power of insight and compassion alone you conquered the hosts of evil, leaving none unvanquished; ten million legions of evil forces conquered not by weapons of war but by yourself alone, like a black cloud driven by the force of a wrathful gale.

When the Indian Government officially handed over Tharpa Chöling Monastery to Domo Geshe Rinpoche in a formal ceremony in 1966, auspicious signs and unusually shaped clouds were observed. Later that year, together with Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche, Domo Geshe Rinpoche instituted an annual Ganden Ngamchö procession in Kalimpong and Darjeeling on the anniversary of the passing away of Je Tsong Khapa in which a statue of Je Rinpoche is carried through the town for blessings, and people offer katas. The offerings for the first celebration, although made by Geshe Rinpoche, were done in the name of a British monk, Sangharakshita, without his knowledge. Domo Geshe Rinpoche often makes elaborate offerings or extends crucial help in someone else's name. Almost nobody knows all the amazing ways he has helped and benefited others as individuals and in groups.

Shortly after Geshe Rinpoche came out of Tibet, he and people in his immediate circle founded the Ü/Tsang Association in Kalimpong, whose headquarters only much later were transferred to Dharamsala. This association helped many of the Tibetans escaping from Tibet and also took care of the poorest in Kalimpong. Whenever a Tibetan had difficulties with the local authorities, who were harassing Tibetans at the time, the Ü/Tsang Association came to the rescue. It was very effective in taking care of the needs of the local Tibetans and those passing through after escaping from Tibet.

In 1962, while Domo Geshe Rinpoche was in Bodh Gaya, His Holiness requested him to start a Tibet House in New Delhi. An artist himself, Domo Geshe Rinpoche is a great expert on Tibetan and other Buddhist art. Through his

connections with so many aristocrats and old families, Geshe Rinpoche was able to collect many precious, holy, and old works of art. They were exhibited at the Tibet House Museum. When registering these wonderful collections of thangkas, statues, and other invaluable works, in order to save them from the inevitable fate of the marketplace, Geshe Rinpoche had a great number of them labeled, "On loan by His Holiness the Dalai Lama." Today many of these can be seen at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamsala. On Lhapab Düchen of 1965, Tibet House was inaugurated with many illustrious guests present: His Holiness and his two Tutors, Prime Minister Nehru, and Indira Gandhi, to mention just a few.

In his autobiography Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche speaks of the wonderful collection of Tibetan texts at Tibet House at the time. He also mentions that he received special collections and rare texts from Domo Geshe Rinpoche from Kalimpong several times, on one occasion, in 1963, to give transmissions to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. This had greatly pleased him, since the very continuity of the tradition depended on them. Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche said on more than one occasion that he and Domo Geshe Rinpoche are exactly the same, are of one mind. During the years when Geshe Rinpoche was the Director of Tibet House, Kyabje Ling and Trijang Rinpoches usually were accommodated at Tibet House while staying in New Delhi. The two Tutors took refuge there during the Pakistan air raids in 1965. During his Tibet House years, Rinpoche also took a Tibetan art exhibition to Japan as a cultural ambassador for His Holiness and the Tibetan government. While working for the Tibetan government, Domo Geshe Rinpoche visited twelve countries in Asia, Europe, and North America.

In 1965 Domo Geshe Rinpoche made the famous rilbus again. It is said that the rilbus Rinpoche put together in India contain even more holy ingredients than those of the previous Domo Geshe Rinpoche. He made the famous rilbus twice in India. Domo Geshe Rinpoche also continued his pilgrimages. He went to the four famous Guru Rinpoche caves in Sikkim, as had the previous Rinpoche, and to the Buddha's holy places in India, Nepal, and the Himalayan areas that are still accessible. Rinpoche also went on a pilgrimage to Indonesia and Sri Lanka. The monks who accompany Domo Geshe Rinpoche say that he usually leads the way on these pilgrimages, especially in remote areas. He always knows the way exactly.

On his return from Kalimpong once, while he still worked at Tibet House, the road below the Tista bridge was blocked and Rinpoche decided to take the long way to the train station through Ghoom and Kurseong. In Sepoydhura, he

unexpectedly stopped at the house of Tsewang Norbu, who had been a monk at Geshe Rinpoche's monastery, Samten Chöling, in Ghoom. Since Rinpoche is not known to stop anywhere unannounced, this was most unusual. The recently born child in this family turned out to be the present Pabongka Rinpoche. The parents offered Rinpoche milk which was seen as a good sign. Domo Geshe Rinpoche thus found the incarnation of Kyabje Pabongka Rinpoche and later helped with his enthronement, as he did with the enthronement of Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche's incarnation.

During his stay in Delhi Rinpoche helped many poor Tibetans. In particular, he helped some students get started in successful business careers. Geshe Rinpoche also helped many poor Indians there who are still devoted and thankful to him. Of course, Geshe Rinpoche helps many poor people in Kalimpong as well as in every place he goes. He helps send children to good schools and girls to college. Next to Tharpa Chöling in Kalimpong is a school for small children of the poorest people in the area, mostly Nepalis. The building belongs to the monastery, and the children are given a daily lunch from the monastery kitchen. Through his extraordinary kindness, power, and knowledge, Geshe Rinpoche is constantly healing sick people and those who are mentally disturbed and he takes care of those most destitute. In the U.S. and other countries, too, a great number of people can trace their wealth, well being, and often their very lives, to Domo Geshe Rinpoche's help. When asked what they know of Geshe Rinpoche, almost everyone who meets him mentions that he pays the same amount of attention to rich and poor alike. All agree that Rinpoche never favors a rich patron over a poor person. His even-mindedness is constant and has become legendary.

In the early 1970s when the big monasteries were resettled in South India, Tashi Lhunpo Monastery encountered great difficulties in obtaining land there. Domo Geshe Rinpoche went to Dharamsala to ask the Tibetan government-in-exile for land on behalf of Tashi Lhunpo, upon their request. He was successful and it is said that he presented the case very well. As an example of political enemies becoming friends again, he mentioned US/China relations which were starting to warm up at the time. "Things change, and not all monks were against the Tibetan government, so why should they all be punished." He also reminded them that the Panchen Rinpoche was a Tibetan.

In 1976, Domo Geshe Rinpoche established the Dungkar Gonpa Society in New York. That year he was offered a large tract of land in the Catskill Mountains in New York, which was named Gangjong Namgyal. It is said that Rinpoche had

seen the land, perhaps in a vision, before he actually went there. He already knew that it had lions (at the gate), peacocks (at another gate), a “vase” (bumpa), a river, a lake, an “earth lotus” and a “sky lotus.” Almost single-handedly Rinpoche took care of this land with heavy physical labor, caring for the wildlife, plants, buildings, and water, and effecting spiritual transformation. Now it is a holy place, and people, many of whom teach others, come from all over the world for advice, oral transmissions, explanations, retreats, and so many other kinds of help and, when the time is right, there will be a monastery.

Domo Geshe Rinpoche hosted His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama in Gangjong Namgyal in the summer of 1981. His Holiness enjoyed the beautiful and peaceful surroundings for a restful week and mentioned that the place was of great inspiration and that Dharma understanding came easily there.

Wondrous occurrences (ya.mtsen ngö.jung) are not limited to the past, as so many people today seem to believe. They continue to happen in Domo Geshe Rinpoche’s presence now just as they did before. In 1981, for example, a “mushroom” (shamo) relic with an extremely sweet fragrance grew on a plastic surface in Geshe Rinpoche’s Labrang in Kalimpong. When Rinpoche started to rebuild Tharpa Chöling Monastery in 1993, the old building had to be torn down to the foundation. The main Buddha statue on the altar is made of clay and its size is no more than four to five feet tall. When the statue was to be moved so that the construction could begin, it became so heavy that it could not be moved even by a large number of strong men. The Buddha refused to leave the grounds. A little shack was built around him and the construction went on with the Buddha statue present.

Perhaps it is not surprising for people with faith to see holy objects in Geshe Rinpoche’s surroundings produce relics or multiply, or that the beautiful old statue of Padma Sambhava in Kalimpong in his closed altar, which had not been opened for decades, moved on its own axis to face Rinpoche’s seat more directly in 1991. What is surprising in today’s world is that Domo Geshe Rinpoche has never asked anyone for money, has never solicited financial help from anyone for his multiple responsibilities in India, Sikkim, Tibet, and Western countries. He neither advertises his teachings nor does he charge for them, a custom commonly practiced by Buddhist teachers or their organizations, especially in the West. Neither Domo Geshe Rinpoche nor his Labrang own any business. He depends solely on donations without ever soliciting them or allowing his attendants to do so. When a man from Switzerland came to visit Tharpa Chöling Monastery and asked Domo Geshe Rinpoche for several receipt books to raise

funds back in Switzerland for the rebuilding of the monastery, Geshe Rinpoche asked his attendants not to give him any. Unless the offering comes from individual initiative, he does not accept it. According to Vinaya, someone with vows is not permitted to solicit money. However, whatever amount is offered, small or very large, this person is obliged to accept it.

Although he lives up to the prediction of the Yidam who entrusted him with the future of his Tantra, Geshe Rinpoche always acts in the manner of a perfect Kadampa. He is someone who has renounced the eight worldly dharmas exactly like Je Tsong Khapa. Domo Geshe Rinpoche does not use his famous name to obtain favors or financial gain for himself and also does not allow his monasteries to use it for those reasons. Many Tibetans remember that “the sweet smell of morality” surrounded the previous Domo Geshe Rinpoche wherever he went. Today, in Gangjong Namgyal in the United States, people still notice the same phenomenon in Rinpoche’s presence. The rules and vows of the Buddha, the holy teachings – especially of Je Tsong Khapa and his two main disciples (yab.sä.sum) – unmixed and pure, and the different levels of practice are safe with him. This is more surprising to find today than anything else. Geshe Rinpoche took birth in the “hidden land.” It was predicted more than a thousand years ago that at the time of great crisis for the Dharma, help will come from there.

Geshe Rinpoche teaches in the same way as his predecessor did. The main difference between their ways is that Geshe Ngawang Gyalten Jigme Chökyi Wangchuk has become an even greater master of hiding his good deeds – perhaps because the times have changed. But if we are concerned with the continuity of the holy teachings, the time has come to distinguish between those who invent their own personal histories to make themselves stand out among others and those who hide their good deeds while working ceaselessly to safeguard the Buddha’s true teachings. Now is the time to distinguish between those who seek to praise only themselves and those praiseworthy ones who praise only the Buddhas through their pure deeds.

From among the many people who helped in compiling this information, Venerable Lotenpala, Cargyal Kalsang Dorje, Nagthang Ngawang Jigme, Phu Tseringla, and Karuna have been of very special help.

August 2006

It is with great joy that we announce that the Reincarnation of Kyabje Domo Geshe Rinpoche has been found.

Ever since the passing of Kyabje Domo Geshe Rinpoche in 2001 it has been the heartfelt wish as well as the duty of his disciples to find his true reincarnation.

Early in 2002 the Ghoom Dun Samten Choling Association, the umbrella association of Domo Geshe Rinpoche's monasteries in India, established a Reincarnation Search Committee. In an official meeting convened at Samten Choling Monastery by this Committee in November of 2002, representatives of Domo Geshe Rinpoche's monasteries, representatives of the Dungkar Gonpa Society and other lay devotees, unanimously resolved to request Kyabje Trijang Chocktrul Rinpoche to coordinate the search for the Tulku and to identify him according to the tradition. This decision came naturally as an acknowledgment of the exceptional relationship that existed between those two great masters in their previous lives. Kyabje Trijang Chocktrul Rinpoche kindly agreed to our petition and for the next four years the process of the search progressed as intended.

In the early summer of 2006 from the list of names gathered by the Search Committee, Kyabje Trijang Chocktrul Rinpoche selected one child, a boy born into a Sikkimese family. The Tulku is now three years old. Representatives from Domo Geshe Rinpoche's monasteries have already been to visit the young family and to meet the precious Rinpoche and his parents.

(from Dungkar Gonpa society website)