

Two Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoches

a paper by Lama Tendar Olaf Hoeyer

First about the flight of the alternative fourth Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Chögyi Nyima

(Appointed by the alternative Karmapa Ogyen Thinley Dorje)

The alternative 17th Karmapa Ogyen Thinley Dorje (not to be mistaken for the classical 17th Karmapa Thinley Taye Dorje, who is the ‘protector’ of Tilogaard) appointed the new alternative fourth Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Chögyi Nyima Rinpoche back in the nineties. At the same time, this appointment was recognised by the previous Jamgon Rinpoche’s labrang or administration, who is established in Pulahari Monastery near Kathmandu in Nepal.

The new Jamgon Rinpoche had a very hard childhood and youth in his own monastery with his predecessors administrators as his guardians. The boy perceived the situation as being imprisoned and dreamed only of escape. Finally this spring, when he became 20 years of age, he took off and ran away from everything.

He announced it on Facebook to his devotees, that it was over, about his guardians excesses and that he was now free. He abandoned his vows of a monk and only wants to be an ordinary person. He aims to become a doctor – something he has aspired to for a long time. He also announced, that the best thing people could do for him, would be to leave him alone. He had for too long a time done, what was asked of him, even though it was not in accordance with his feeling.

His announcement was made public on Facebook, and on the various links below you will find several Facebook addresses, where allegedly you can read the message. As it happens, none of these work for the moment, so apparently it is Jamgon Rinpoche’s organisation, that control these addresses and has removed the message. We must assume, that Jamgon Rinpoche himself would want us to be able to read his important message, since he placed it on Facebook. Otherwise, he would post another message. There has been a new post, but only with thanks to his followers support and a protest against his labrang’s censure of his friends in and around the monastery. Some of his friends have allegedly been assaulted with violence, because they were in agreement with with Jamgon Rinpoche’s exit. Since then, all messages have been removed – there are no new messages.

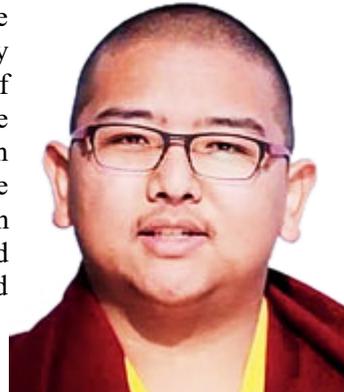
Apparently, something sinister has happened, that is not all right. We must therefore ask, how exactly Rinpoche’s exit actually happened. There is no immediate answer to the question, that I can find anywhere. There are no detailed information about it on the internet. It is maybe something very painful, that has happened. Why else stay silent? But we do not know, what exactly has passed. There must have

been both a prelude and a chain of events. Both the Tulku and the organisation let us guess about it, which I find somewhat bizarre. Why do they not just tell us, what has happened? They probably both have a different story to tell.

The organisation is in a very strange situation without their Tulku or Rinpoche. What is their reason of existence hereafter? In Denmark, an organisation is dissolved, when its purpose no longer can be served, but it should not be so in this case.

All of this happened earlier this year (2016), so it is already an old news story, but I am not so quick and first discovered this event at the end of September. Jamgon Rinpoche's labrang or organisation has reacted by announcing (on Facebook), that they are sorry about his decision and from now on, they will wait for his eventual return or his next incarnation (read the proclamation on Tilogaard's website). So, presumably this is the reason, that they do not dissolve the institution. Anyway, in this way they avoid, that they lose their jobs. In order not to throw away all credibility and perspective, they have obtained the alternative Karmapa Ogyen Thinley Dorje's support of their decision.

We might think and assume, that Lodrö Chögyi Nyima wants to say, that he does not feel as a Jamgon Kongtrul *Tulku*, and therefore does not believe so himself, but actually this is not the message. He does not say, that he is not a genuine reincarnation of the previous Jamgon Rinpoche. Probably because he does not know anything about it himself. It is Ogyen Thinley, that has appointed him, and according to theory, Ogyen Thinley should be able to know this. Of course, you may reserve some doubt about this, because Ogyen Thinley himself might be one of the Tulkus of 'convenience'. You can read about the doubts concerning the authenticity of Ogyen Thinley as a genuine Karmapa Tulku in the paper: *Two Karmapas' controversy*, on Tilogaard's website. This doubt has lingered with Ogyen Thinley ever since he was found in 1992.



The alternative fourth Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche

All Jamgon Rinpoche is saying is, that he would rather be a doctor and that he does not want to associate with the former Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche's institutions.

He is not the only Tulku with such thoughts and emotions. In this connection it is probably completely unimportant, whether he is a genuine Tulku or not. His actions are a complete denial of the institutions, that surrounded him and were his guardians, while other people of the same age had a normal childhood and youth. Bad for him and shame to the guardians.

On the face of it, it seems quite strange, that Jamgon Rinpoche's organisation does not follow him. They ought to support his education as a layman and doctor. There should be no problem here. Rinpoche is not a monk any more. That should not be a problem either. Why does

Jamgon Rinpoche not want to work with his own organisation, and why does his organisation not want to support him?

It is just as strange, that Jamgon Rinpoche has not just replaced his administrators, when apparently he does not like them. Since he is now 20 years old, he should be of age and in a position to take charge of his own organisation. Why did he not do that? It could be though, that he just wanted to leave and he could not delay.

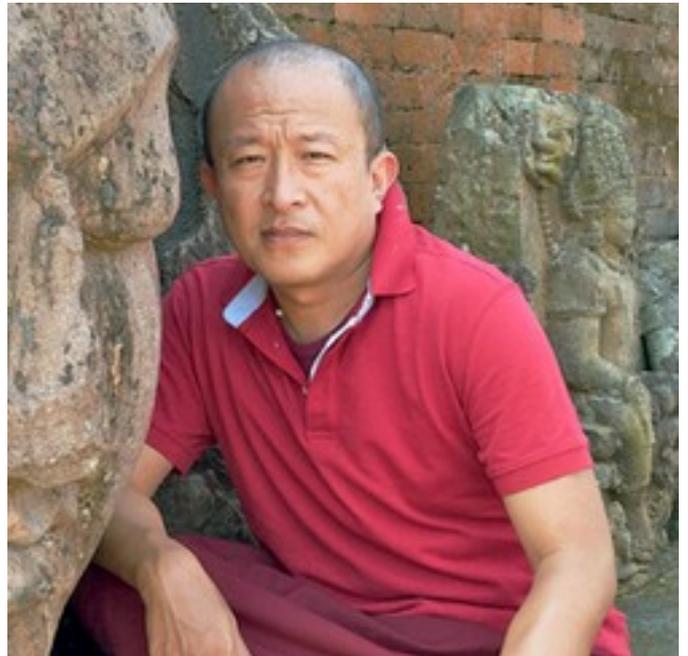
Apparently it is Jamgon Rinpoche's organisation, that owns the Tulku institution. They certainly still govern the organisation, and Rinpoche has just left his work, and peace be with that, they seem to think. Maybe he will return, when he discover, how difficult it is to survive on the 'outside'.

Why do they not instantly ask for forgiveness for, what they have done to him? *And what it is actually, that they have done to harm him?* The humble person here is obviously the runaway Tulku. All kinds of respect for him, and may he become a good doctor.

Both Vasubandhu and the 11th Shamarpa were doctors. What would the world have been like without them?

Apparently Jamgon Rinpoche was a prisoner – or he felt like one – involuntarily forced into his role by circumstances. This story has of course caused several reactions. Most remarkably is Dzongsar Jamjang Khyentse's paper about the Tulku children's loneliness, erroneous upbringing, insufficient education and the alienating religious social class divisions. The shadow and disease of Tibetan religious culture.

([Link to his paper below.](#))



Dzongsar Jamjang Khyentse Rinpoche

Most Tulkus sit involuntarily on their thrones and do not like to be treated as princes and gods. Neither is it healthy for them. They will lack the experience of being an ordinary person. They are always separated from others by belonging to a higher social class. Neither do they have any recollection of their former lives. Only a very few know about that. Dzongsar Khyentse also lament, that we today have more Tulkus than ever before in the history of the Tibetans.

The title of Tulku ought to be a protected title – a concept that the Tibetans cannot conceive. They have appointed all too many 'political tulkus' for too long a time. Now they have difficulty to distinguish between 'tulkus of convenience' and the real kind.

It is of course nothing new, that there are politically appointed Tulkus. They are normally appointed to preserve an institution, that had lost their Tulku because he died, but they were unable to find the genuine reincarnation. Then they have done, what they considered second best and appointed a 'suitable' candidate. There is of course something inflationary about such a seductive and misleading attitude, if not to say a lie, and it is of course not acceptable for modern people with a deep respect for the centuries old Karma Kagyü tradition.

This tradition is all about *Mahamudra* and not about Tulkus, even the Tulkus in the course of history mostly have been worthy heirs. You could call it a Tibetan coincidence, that it became the Tulkus, who mastered the transmission of Mahamudra for over 800 years. In the previous 1600 years the transmission took place completely without any Tulku institutions.

Maybe the Tulku institution was a good idea 800 years ago. Now the blessing is a bit mixed, and young Tulkus like Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Chögyi Nyima have become involuntary victims of the prejudice and incompetence of their guardians.

This is a completely different subject than questions about Tulkus being genuine. In is on the mind of everybody to provide the best life and development possible for children. It is not decent to place children in such a self-contradicting situation, where they are supposed to be like – or in any case to appear like – saints, and it is not decent to let them be brought up to engage in the role as a saint-Bodhisattva, whether they are like that from their birth or not.

Links to this event:

[www.tilogaard.dk/english/
Jamgon_Kongtruls_exit_messages_on_Facebook_august_2016.pdf](http://www.tilogaard.dk/english/Jamgon_Kongtruls_exit_messages_on_Facebook_august_2016.pdf).

Some news media:

<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/monk-announces-renunciation-on-facebook/1/738911.html> &
www.telegraphindia.com/1160812/jsp/frontpage/story_102067.jsp

Dzongsar Jamjang Khyentse's letter:

[www.tilogaard.dk/
Dzongsar_Khyentse_om_den_4_Jamgong_Kongtruls_abdikation.pdf](http://www.tilogaard.dk/Dzongsar_Khyentse_om_den_4_Jamgong_Kongtruls_abdikation.pdf)

Ken McLeod reflections on Dzongsar Khyentse's letter:

<http://tricycle.org/trikedaily/reflections-on-dzongsar-khyentses-how-we-raise-tulkus>.

Here is then a completely different story about the
fourth Jamgon Kongtrul Karma Mingyur Dragpa Senge

(recognised by the classical Karmapa Thinley Taye Dorje)

Beru Khyentse Rinpoche's son was recognised by the classical Karmapa Thinley Taye Dorje, who is the 'protector' of Tilogaard, when they met first time in Bodhgaya. In contrast to the alternative incarnation, the story of whom is told above, Karma Mingyur Dragpa Senge has grown up in a normal family setting, though the family is not quite ordinary. His father, Beru Khyentse Rinpoche is very soft and renowned for his great mindfulness. So the son has not suffered manipulation nor alienation.

Beru Khyentse Rinpoche has had his own 'scandal' (in the eyes of some Tibetans) by giving up his monk vows, marry and start a family, when he was young himself. Maybe this is the reason that Jamgon Rinpoche appears so healthy, fresh and unencumbered.

The fourth Jamgon Kongtrul Karma
Mingyur Dragpa Senge

He has also come of age and have been travelling in Europe last year as a Dharma-teacher. He is in the process of acquiring the whole Karma Kagyü transmission and does not seem to seek alternative occupation like his brother-in-name with the undeserved Dharma-blues and unhappy childhood and youth.

Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche entered a classical 3 years retreat in 2018. He successfully completed the retreat in May 2022.

Link:

www.khyenkong-tharjay.org/jkrp3.htm.



Children as monks are an unethical cultural habit

This story about the two Jamgon Kongtrul Tulkus is possibly a major important event. It invites us to question all Tulkus, if their childhood and youth was all right or not.

It also invites us to ask into the situation for all underage Tulkus. Are their conditions all right? Have the parents been manipulated in an unrighteous way to let go of their children and deliver legal custody to some monks without understanding of children and some worldly foundation caretakers? Are the rights of these children violated? In many Tulku stories, this seems to be the case.

Why should small children be taken from their parents to begin with? Why should it be necessary for the children to live in a monastery in order to bring them up and educate them? What is wrong with a normal home with father, mother and siblings? Would you give up your child to a monastery, that you probably do not even know? Would you? I guess not. The line of thought belongs to the Middle Ages, when children had no rights. It is simply unnatural and manipulating, and there ought to be a law against it.

Besides we may ask, if the guardians of the Tulkus possess the right qualifications? Which guidelines should be applied, when they anyway will continue to do, what they do? (I do not think, that they will stop, just because a Danish Lama in the faraway West writes something on the internet.) Who will keep an eye on it? The parents lose most of their influence, once the child has left home. The Tibetan religious cultural convention makes it almost impossible for the parents to remove the child from the monastery, if things go wrong and disturb the development of the kid. It can only be in very special cases, that it is in order to send children to boarding schools. The monastery schools should be closed, and the money spent on study grants instead. There is no reason to continue a Middle Age custom, for which time has run out.

My own retreat-master Gendune Rinpoche was an unusual child. He wanted absolutely to become a monk, even when he was just a little boy, and he was no Tulku. He was just a child with a strong interest in Dharma. Having accomplished the usual monastery training, he spent 30 years in closed retreat, first in a cave above the monastery in Tibet, and later he continued in Kalimpong, India. So we cannot make a rule, that there should be no children in a monastery. It is the monastery schools and the traditional Tulku education and upbringing, that is problematic. In our time, you get a much better education in ordinary schools with the ordinary subjects. I suppose, that a Dharma education may take place in a parallel way, and it is not necessary to confine it within the antique frames of a monastery. A life in a monastery ought to be the volunteer choice of persons, who already have come of age, and it is only something for children in very rare cases.

What should we then do in our own part of the Dharma world – in our own religious *samsara*? This complex of problems belongs naturally to the Tibetans, first of all. They are just as modern and contemporary

as us in the West, when all comes to all, but the rest of us also share some responsibility by participation in the tradition, even we do not directly send our own children to monastery schools.

The least, we can do, is to let it be known, what we think about this and to ask our Lamas and Dharma-teachers about their opinion. With time, hopefully these deplorable and inadmissible conditions for children and youngsters may change for the better. No one should be appointed to a life, that excludes the experience of being just an ordinary human being. It is an obsolete cultural convention, that it should be like that. In the Tibetan Middle Age, that just ended in 1959, this convention may have made some sense. It is really a shame, that it is like this in our modern and informed time.

Besides, no one should be able to receive the vows for monks, before they come of age. It is and remains unfitting to ordain children before the age of nine. That was the age of Buddha Sakyamuni's son Rahula, when he became the first novice monk in history.

A possible solution: Karmapa's new boarding school in Kalimpong

Karmapa Center of Education (KCE).

Karmapa Thinley Taye Dordje is of course aware of this problem. His new boarding school project illustrates that. In stead of abandoning the monastery schools, he has developed a vision for modern education of children and youngsters, that traditionally was reserved for the monasteries. The boarding school has been formed as an independent institution without any direct link to any particular monastery. In stead, the emphasis is on the location of the school in the vicinity of both Karmapa's residence as well as the Shedra, the institute for higher studies in the Dharma, both in Kalimpong. The curriculum of the school covers both traditional Buddhist knowledge and ritual, 'normal' school subjects of study as well as, what Karmapa calls 'holistic' subjects.

The vision of this school is, that it may become a prototype for many other boarding schools in the whole region of Himalaya. It is for poor children, so education, clothes, books, board and lodging is free of charge – paid for by foundations. In this way, the vision of Karmapa address the role, that monastery schools traditionally have played, which is a free boarding school for poor children. The new form is, that the school has moved out of the monastery and has incorporated a 'normal' curriculum, creative crafts and practical skills. In our time and in that place, such initiatives are maybe the right way to solve the problems of the monastery schools.

Read more about this on the following link: <http://karmapa-education.org/education.html>.