

Biography: Jetsun Rinpoche Dragpa Gyaltzen

Jetsun Rinpoche Dragpa Gyaltzen [1147-1216], the third of the three lay Founding Masters of the Sakya tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, was born in 1147, the fire rabbit year, to Sachen Kunga Nyingpo and Jomo Machig Od-dron. As a young child Jetsun Rinpoche delighted in solitude, was free from mundane desires, diligent in practicing virtuous qualities and was free from childish conduct.

He received lay vows from Bodhisattva Dawa Gyaltzen when he was eight years old. His conduct was more disciplined than that of the monks. He never touched meat or alcohol apart from the meat and alcohol used as samaya substances in the ganacakra feast offering.

His principal Gurus were his father, Sachen, and his elder brother, Master Sonam Tsemo. He received many teachings of the three baskets and four classes of tantras from numerous Tibetan, Indian and Nepalese masters, such as Nyan Tsugtor Gyalpo, Shang Tsultrim Drag, Nyag Wang Gyal, Jayasena, the translator Pachog Dango Dorje and the yogi Avadhutipa.

Jetsun Rinpoche began teaching at eleven years of age, and taught the Twenty Vows and the extensive Hevajra sadhana to the astonishment of all, after his father passed away.

At thirteen, he received the three tantras of the Hevajra cycle in a dream and comprehended the reality of all things. He also sponsored a great Dharma gathering in memory of his late father and gave many teachings. The entire audience was amazed that he was able to recite the Hevajra Root Tantra from memory. Jetsun Rinpoche continued his studies, practices and teachings in Sakya as commanded by his elder brother. Master Sonam Tsemo then departed to continue his studies at Sangphu in Central Tibet.

Jetsun Rinpoche was never separate from the Samadhi of the two stages, creation and completion. When he went to give teaching he meditated Hevajra, and when he settled on his throne, he concluded his practice up to the seal of the lord of his Buddha family. The general offerings represented the daily tormas offerings. The dharma teaching substituted for mantra repetitions. When he left to return to his residence he meditated Cakrasamvara. In this way, in one twenty-four hour day, Jetsun Rinpoche meditated seventy different deity mandalas.

As a sign of Jetsun Rinpoche's attainment, when the Kashmiri Pandita Shakyas Shri-bhadra announced an eclipse of the Sun, because Jetsun Rinpoche performed a yogic practice, the eclipse did not occur. The Pandita said, "To prove me wrong, Jetsun Rinpoche must have gone through every difficulty." When the Pandita arrived to see Jetsun Rinpoche, Jetsun Rinpoche stood up suddenly, and left his vajra and bell hanging in space. Because his signs of accomplishment were beyond comprehension, the Kashmiri Pandita Sakya Shri-bhadra praised Jetsun Rinpoche saying, "Mahavajradhara

Guhyasamaja!” and received the nectar of the teaching. Jetsun Rinpoche became the crown ornament of all the Arya Vajradharas.

At fifty-six, Jetsun Rinpoche received the special instruction of the extremely close Path and Result lineage, The Clear Meaning of Signs, from the manifestation of his father’s wisdom body at the Tsangkha monastery in Nyemo Rutsam at night in the state of clear light.

When Jetsun Rinpoche was sixty-eight and sixty-nine, he blessed his own life to extend it by rejecting the invitations of the Dakinis from Sukhavati who came again and again.

Through explanation, debate and composition, Jetsun Rinpoche spread Buddhism, and in particular, he liberated many fortunate beings through the Path and Result teachings. In this way, Jetsun Rinpoche benefited limitless sentient beings throughout his seventy years and died in 1216, the fire rat year.

His main students were his nephews Sakya Pandita and Zangtsa. Further, he had eight disciples with the last name of ‘Dragpa’ and four disciples who held the teaching of Vajrapanjara. He had four great Vidyadhara disciples, and many others. Jetsun Rinpoche himself predicted he would be reborn as the son of a Cakravartin King of the world ‘Golden’ where he was to accomplish most of the paths and stages, and at his third rebirth will become a Buddha.

Jetsun Rinpoche Dragpa Gyaltsen was fully conversant in all aspects of Buddhist learning, but for he most part, his writings focused on the Vajrayana systems he received from his father and other teachers. These writings consist of commentaries on tantras, sadhanas, and initiation rituals, from the Hevajra system and the Cakrasamvara system including Vajrayogini.

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