

LODRÖ NYIMA RINPOCHE

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One of the treasured experiences of my recent retreat-intensive was the presence of Lodrö Nyima Rinpoche at KTD Monastery. He was visiting the United States for the very first time from the area of Kham in Tibet.

Lodrö Nyima Rinpoche is the 9th incarnation of Bengar Jampa Zangpo, who lived in the 14th Century and composed the Kagyu Lineage prayer that all Kagyu lamas recite, also called in Tibetan "Dorje Chang."

I had the very good fortune to meet Lodrö Nyima Rinpoche in 2004 in Tibet at Thrangu Monastery in Kham where he is currently the main tulku (reincarnate lama). That 1,300-year-old monastery was completely destroyed by a large earthquake in 2010 and many lamas were killed. The monastery had been previously destroyed by a massive earthquake some 300 years earlier. At its peak, the monastery had over 10,000 lamas, but in the 13th Century Thrangu Monastery was seriously destroyed by the Mongolian attack.

Before this most recent earthquake, Thrangu Monastery was located near the city of Jyekundo, Qinghai, which (as I well remember) was at the end of an 18-hour bus trip from Xining that took us over desolate land that involved crossing mountain passes at 16,000 feet, and so on. At those altitudes there are no trees, so the great hawks that live there walk around on the ground with their wings extended.

The Chinese authorities refused to allow the monastery to be built a third time in this earthquake-prone spot and today Thrangu monastery is being rebuilt near the historic Wen-Chen Temple about six miles from the original monastery location.

I was amazed to find Lodrö Nyima Rinpoche at KTD Monastery in New York when I arrived there recently, as I expected never to see him again. I get so sick at high altitudes (pneumonia symptoms, antibiotics, and so on) that I will not be going back to Tibet again in this lifetime.

But there he was, as resplendent as ever as his name implies. Lodrö means wisdom/intelligence in Tibetan and Nyima means Sun, and Lodrö Nyima Rinpoche certainly shines like the Sun when you see him in person. And he is so humble.

In the Tibetan hierarchy, great attention is paid to spiritual rank and this is often measured by the height of the seat on which each lama sits. As a 9th-generation incarnate lama, Lodrö Nyima Rinpoche's seat would naturally be a high one. Yet he so respects my teacher Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche (who is not a reincarnate lama himself) that when Khenpo Rinpoche gave the White Tara Empowerment for us at

the monastery recently, Lodrö Nyima Rinpoche got down from his throne and sat in front of Rinpoche flat on the floor. I had never seen a high tulku (reincarnate lama) do this before and it brought tears to my eyes.

The whole tulku system of reincarnations is so remarkable. The contrast between it and how we do it in this country is dramatic. In the west, our brightest children have to fight to be known and many are lost along the way due to circumstances, while in Tibet, the lamas (and people) search high and low among the newborn for those infants or young children that show signs of intelligence, kindness, and compassion. When they are found they are given a special education, much like honeybees feed royal jelly to raise a queen.

When these specially raised children mature they become the hub around which the society rotates, and access to them is made available to everyone. What an efficient process of sharing the wealth of genius. Here we tend to hide our brightest ones under a bushel, so to speak.

With us it is "survival of the fittest," not elevation of the best among us.

[Here is a photo of Lodrö Nyima Rinpoche performing one of the many ceremonies he took part in while I was at KTD Monastery. He also offered all present the Chenresik Empowerment, that of loving kindness and compassion.]



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