Achi Chökyi Drolma



**Background**

Achi Chökyi Drolma is a great protector of the Buddha’s teachings. She is an emanation of Vajrayogini, who embodies the wisdom and activities of all the buddhas. She is the divine mother of the buddhas who manifested out of compassion in the form of the dakinis of the five buddha families. To benefit the beings in samsara, she displays a limitless number of manifestations at different times and in various space dimensions.

In the country of Uddiyana, where Vajrayana originated, is the divine palace where Vajrayogini manifested in the form of Vajradakini and made a commitment to protect the Dharma. She made this vow to the five families of wisdom dakinis.

Later, in the 8th Century, when Guru Padmasambhava was invited to Tibet to spread the Dharma teachings, he blessed many places in Tibet and meditated in many caves. Among these caves was Tidro, a cave in the area of Drigung, where Guru Padmasambhava spent seven years. This is the longest time he spent in any one location in Tibet.

During this period, Vajrayogini manifested in the form of the chief karma-dakini and promised to protect the Vajrayana teachings. These are manifestations in *jñanakaya* (wisdom body), through which she benefited the precious teachings and all sentient beings.

According to prophesy in the Chakrasamvara tantra, it is said that the head of the karma-dakinis will come to the area of Tidro cave in Drigung. This will be a nirmanakaya manifestation of Vajrayogini. Nirmanakaya is the form body manifestation through which an enlightened being helps all sentient beings.

**Achi’s Birth**

Around the 11th Century, in Shotoe in the vicinity of Drigung in central Tibet, there lived a family who could not conceive a child. In order to bear a child, they made a pilgrimage to Swayambhunath in Nepal and prayed fervently for a child. One night the woman, named



Driza Darzam, had a dream that a brightly shining sun appeared in the east and radiated light in the ten directions. The sun dissolved into her womb and radiated light that filled the whole universe, and especially illuminated the country of her birth. On the same night her husband, Nanam Chowopal, had a dream that a rosary of clear white light emanated from the Eastern Buddhafield and entered the womb of his wife. In the morning, they discussed their dreams. He said, “A special son will be born to us and we should take much care until this child is born.” They performed a tsok offering and prayed strongly for the fulfillment of their wishes. Then they returned to their native land in Drigung.

The time came for the birth, and an extraordinary daughter was born in the place called Kyetrag Thang. There were numerous auspicious signs, and her body was of purest white, radiating rays of light. As a small child of three, she was teaching mantras to others. She grew quickly and was incredibly beautiful. Her parents died when she was quite young, and then she stayed with her uncle.

**Marriage**

Many wanted to marry her, but she refused all, stating, “I will go to Kham in eastern Tibet. There lives a great yogi who is descended from the noble Kyura clan. This yogi I will marry. Our sons and grandsons, and future generations, will be extraordinary individuals who will benefit all sentient beings by spreading the essence of the Buddha’s teachings. Accompanying a merchant, she then traveled to Kham.

When they arrived at a place called Dentod Tsongur, she said to her companion, “This is the place I have to stay.” She departed and went to meet the great saint Ame Tsultrim Gyatso, to whom she said, “Although I have no attachment to worldly life, if we join together, our descendants will bear many enlightened beings who will accomplish great benefit for the teachings of the Buddha.”

On their wedding day, Ame Tsultrim Gyatso did not have any possessions to arrange for the ceremony. Drolma said, “Do not worry, I will take care of it.” So saying, she miraculously pulled a damaru from her right pocket and a kapala from her left. Beating the damaru while holding the kapala in her hand, she danced a mystic dance while gazing into the sky. Immediately, the house was filled with the finest food and drink, and the richest garments with which to clothe themselves, thus giving great satisfaction and pleasure to all the guests.

**Activities**

They lived together and in time she gave birth to four sons: Namkhe Wangchuk, Pekar Wangyal, Sonam Pal, and Kathung Trushi. These sons were exceptionally intelligent and became great learned scholars on both the temporal and spiritual levels.

At a later time, Drolma said, “I have knowingly taken birth into samsara in order to fulfill my aspirations to protect the teachings of the Buddha, and for the welfare of all sentient beings. Because of this, I will grant the ordinary and the supreme siddhis to my followers.” She led her followers to a huge cave called Ting-ring. The cave was very sacred, containing many precious *termas* (hidden treasures) and many self-arising statues of the buddhas, bodhisattvas, yidams, dakinis, and Dharma protectors appeared on the rocks inside the cave. A human corpse was brought, and she transformed the corpse into a great tsog offering. Those who could partake of that tsog were granted the ordinary and supreme siddhis.

Then she composed a text containing a sadhana of herself and promised to look after the teachings of the Buddha in general, and to protect the great essence of the Buddha’s teachings that will appear in the future. With that she said, “My activities through this body have come to an end.” She flew up to the buddha-field on her blue horse without leaving her body.

**Legacy**

Of her four sons, Pekar Wangyal gave birth to four sons named Kenpo Darma, Konchog Rinchen, Tsunpa Bar, and Naljor Dorje. Of these, Naljor Dorje became the father of the great Ratna Shri Jigten Sumgön, the great Drigungpa, who was the reincarnation of Nagarjuna.

Once when Jigten Sumgön was staying at Jangchub Ling in Drigung Thil, the sound of a damaru accompanied by beautiful celestial songs was heard. Drubthob Khamba Gyagarwa, a great yogi disciple, was there and asked Jigten Sumgön about the beautiful music. He replied, “These incomparable sounds are from Achi Chökyi Drolma, my grandmother.” Drubthob Khamba insisted that he be given a method or sadhana of Achi Chökyi Drolma. Thus, Jigten Sumgön composed a sadhana consisting of ten leaves which is contained in the *Achi Pebum*.

In the *Meche Barwa Tantra*, the Buddha says, “After limitless kalpas, in a world system called Pema Chan, she will become the perfectly enlightened bhagavan, Tathagata, arhat, samyaksam buddha,whose name will be Pema Dampepal.”

This is the life of the great Achi Chökyi Drolma, the peerless compassionate Dharma protector who committed herself to the service of the Buddha-dharma, and benefited all sentient beings. She promised Jigten Sumgön, Ratna Shri, the great Drigungpa, that she would protect the essence of the Buddha’s teachings which he brought to light and transmitted through the lineage of the Drigung Kagyu order. Because of this promise, whosoever will practice the sadhana of Achi Chökyi Drolma with full devotion and certainty will be freed from all kinds of unfavorable circumstances and obstacles in this life, and also obstacles connected with Dharma practice. Those who continue doing the practice with full faith and devotion will finally achieve the perfectly enlightened state, buddhahood.

*This abbreviated history is based on a text composed by HH the Drigung Kyabgon, Chetsang Rinpoche. It was translated and printed on the occasion of the opening of the Tibetan Meditation Center, Washington, DC, in October 1983.*