

## Short Teaching on commemoration of the 803th Mahaparinirvana of Lord Jigten Sumgön

This Saga Dawa's Festival marks the Sakyamuni Buddha's 2564th birth, enlightenment and maha parinirvana anniversary and on 25th of this month falls the 803rd Maha Parinirvana anniversary of Lord Jigten Sumgon the founder of the Drikung Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism.

If we reflect on Lord Jigten Sumgon's influence of spreading the Buddha Dharma in Tibet by means of the Vinaya practice, there was none to equal him in Tibetan history. During summer retreats, more than one hundred thousand fully ordained monks alone were recorded to receive retreat tooth-stick. This is how we can comprehend what a great expounder of Buddha Dharma with Vinaya Discipline. Shantideva says, "The root of the doctrine of the Buddha is Bhikshu." Thus, he contributed preserving the doctrine of the Buddha immensely by means of Vinaya Discipline.

The core essence of the doctrine of the Lord Sakyamuni Buddha is study and practice of the Buddhist teachings. To perpetuate the Buddhist doctrine of learning, one must engage in study and contemplation. Looking at Jigten Sumgon's teachings, the teachings of the Buddha have flourished. Through methods of study and contemplation of his teachings we are easily convinced that no other master appeared equal to him having the largest number of disciples.

Lord Jigten Sumgon's life account called "maja sengge" says,

*In the forest of glorious Drikung,*

*Hundred of thousands of disciples dwell.*

Thus, he presided over hundreds of thousands of disciples at gatherings. How would it happen? People would not gather for a conventional reason of food and drinks. Nor would they gather to labor work. He would sit in the big gathering to grant profound and extensive Buddhist teachings of sutra, tantra and pith instructions. So, during his lifetime the center of learning was the largest ever to be recorded in Tibetan history. No other lineage masters succeeded to this level of accomplishment and feat.

Talking about his influence by means of practice, during his time in Drikung Thil Monastery he sent many practitioners to Tsari, Lapchi and Mount Kailash. At later part of his life he sent a maximum number of practitioners numbering 55,525 each to Tsari, Lapchi and Mount Kailash at a time. The total figure was 166,575 retreatants were sent by him to the three holy mountain places at a time. Those retreatants were all advanced practitioners, not beginners.

The sole purpose of their long journey to the holy mountains was to pursue strict retreat. As it is considered that the essence of the Buddha's doctrine is the practical application of what you have studied. Such a massive number of practitioners did not occur in any lineages of the Tibetan Buddhism to this day.

Hence, on 25th of this lunar month- on his Maha Parinirvana day a grand offering puja will be conducted in his honor for his lifetime dedication in the service of Buddha Dharma. For many years his followers in the East and West have been commemorating his day enthusiastically. I heard that this year the North American Drikung Kagyu Association (NADKA) and monastic and lay followers of Drikung Kagyu Lineage are organizing the 803rd maha parinirvana grand offering puja to be led by H.E. Garchen Rinpoche. I congratulate and extend my gratitude to the organizers, sponsors and all supporters who are contributing towards this grand event and to make it happen. Thank you!

— teaching by Khenchen Nyima Gyaltzen Rinpoche

—translated by Khanpo K. Sherab