

Cha-Yig Rinpoche

The Armour of benefit and comfort

(Guideline of Rules and Regulation for all Monasteries in Sikkim)

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All wandering beings generally (equally) do not want suffering but instead want happiness and comfort. To dispel the diseases like suffering and to accumulate the wealth of wish-fulfillment like happiness, there is only one path that of the Buddha Dharma which is like a medicine to dispel all sufferings and bestow all kinds of happiness and comfort.

For the preservation and spread of the Buddha Dharma, the Assembly of the Sanghas are mainly responsible and therefore indispensable. Hence it is very important to have orderly monks and Sanghas. So, every monastic institution should have a proper system of moral conduct and monastic vows. Monks should maintain their moral conduct purely along with proper studies and practice of meditation through the system of Sheda and Dupdra. This can only be successful if the monks are sincere practitioners and hardworking through which the Buddha Dharma will flourish far and wide.

ADMISSION

Boys of ordinary families seeking admission in the monastery are admitted by offering a one time meal to the general assembly of monks and are allowed to sit in the main shrine according to their seniority. The sons of the renowned families like Government officers and Dzungpons are admitted in the monastery after offering a whole day feast to the general assembly of the monks. They are then given the seat and allowed to sit before the ex-Ku-nyer and ordinary monks who have no responsibility in the monastic affairs but are not allowed to sit above the Chotampa -the monk disciplinarian.

VOWS

It is necessary for all monks to take the vows of individual liberation (Pratimoksa Samvara). It is appreciable if one can take the vows of Ge-long (Bhikshu) -a fully ordained monk of the highest order or Ge-tsul (Sramanera) -a novice monk who has to observe the 36 vows. Otherwise one should take the vows of Ge-nyen (Upasak) -a full-fledged ordained lay person observing all the five vows until death. All categories of monks must be fully acquainted with the rules and regulations of Vinaya and must observe them strictly. They should abstain

from doing misdeeds and accumulate the maximum of meritorious actions. All should live together peacefully like family members and should bear a collective sense of responsibility for the upliftment and overall development of the monastery. Every one should maintain a kind and friendly atmosphere without being jealous and developing ill feeling towards one another.

SEATS

In earlier times, most of the monks were uneducated and so the important responsibilities for the purpose of running the monastery were given by seniority whether they were able and qualified or not. But at present, even junior monks who are sociable, unselfish, obtained moral Vinaya vows, received all the required Empowernent and oral transmission (Wang-Lung), and acquainted with the teaching of Sutras and Tantras are eligible for any kind of prestigious posts and responsibilities in the monastery. He could be allowed to sit in the front rows headed by Ge-longs and followed by Ge-tsuls then Ge-nyen and ordinary monks. Senior monks who are uneducated may not be appointed to hold responsibilities and hence have to take the back seats in the shrine.

QUALITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

DORJE LOPON (Vajracarya): The head of a monastery should be carefully appointed. Such person must possess all the ten inner and the ten outer qualities of an ideal lama. If such a person is not available, then a monk who is fully acquainted with the three-fold practices of study, contemplation and meditation with other qualities like expertise in ritualistic practices, heedful and sincere, honest and not crafty, faithful to the Buddha Dharma and patriotic should be appointed as Dorje Lopon and Umzed.

Only an educated and fully ordained monk through merit should occupy this prestigious post of a Head Lama of a monastery. Occupation of this high post by influence of lay people or acclaiming power through family lineage, high handedness or parental right is never allowed. Without possessing proper qualities, no one is permitted to occupy this post neither can one be allowed to grab the responsibility by force.

Once appointed, they are responsible for the welfare of the general monks. They should look after the younger monks and teach them sincerely right from reading and writing of the prescribed scriptures and rituals, the holy dances - (Cham), preparation of holy Torma, etc. They have to inspire all younger monks to learn the five minor sciences and the practice of the Preliminaries right from the Refuge to the main Guru Yoga.

They should be caring and reward those monk students who are sincere

and hardworking in their studies and punish those who do not follow the rules properly. But they should be very kind enough to show the right path and lead them properly.

CHOTIMPA : the main responsibility of the Chotimpa is concerned with discipline. Hence, he should be very straight forward and must not ignore any kind of misdeeds by any monk which may harm and spoil the moral rules but instead be very firm and strict in taking decisions to maintain a high moral discipline.

MONKS: they should abstain from any kind of activities that are against the monastic rules at all times and under all circumstances. They should refrain from wearing caps and clothes that are not permitted to monks. They should always be decent, polite, and respectful to Dorje Lupon, Umzed, Chotimpa, teacher etc, and listen to their good advises. They should treat all the members of the Sangha as one family.

RESTRICTIONS

Passion and wine are the sources of misdeeds, so women are not allowed to stay inside the compound of a monastery. If wine is required during Tsog Offerings, only one bottle of wine is permitted to be taken inside the monastery and poured into a Kapala during the Puja. During Tsog Offerings, only one spoonful of Amrit (wine) should be distributed to each monk.

RECORD AND UTILISATION OF OFFERINGS

Any kind of offerings (cash and kind) from generous patrons (Jinda) to the monastery should be received in the presence of Dorje Lupon or Umzed or Chotimpa or Nyerpa and a proper record should be maintained. At the end of each year, the amount should be divided into two parts. The first half should be used to perform a general Puja of Shi-tro or Thug-chen and the remainder after this Puja should be distributed to all the monks in the end. The second half should be kept for purchasing necessary objects like mandala, Chod-kong, Kha-phen, Gyaltsen, mattresses for the main shrine, etc. It is necessary to note all of them in a proper record book to make sure that these are not misused or misplaced, which may cause problems in the future.

Records of all capital amounts received from the devotees and well-wishers for the performances of special rites like the reading (recitation) of Gyalwai Kagyur, Shi-tro rituals, Tse-chu offerings, Nye-sol offerings etc, must be properly maintained so that no one may be blamed for utilisation and destruction of funds as well as valuables. Monthly rituals must be performed in time without any carelessness as

it is our tradition. Interest on the capital may be used for the monthly rituals to keep their tradition alive.

COMPOUND RULES

Dairy farming and rearing of any kind of animals within the inner compound is strictly prohibited. Women are also prohibited to reside in the inner compound, which is against the monastic rules. Even in the outer compound of the monastery residence is not allowed without proper consent of the managing authority. These rules are also applicable to all Tsam Khangs.

GENERAL RULES

During important Dup-choe including Due-tor, all members of the Sangha should report in time without fail. They should not ignore the rules and everyone should attend such religious activities. Any kind of leave during such times should not be entertained even by the Chotimpa. Should there be any absentees, they must be punished by charging a fine of (Rs 5).

At the royal Shab-ten at Phodang, only selected monks who are well read, expert in performing rituals, well groomed and in a complete dress of a monk can take part. Dresses that are not permitted are strictly prohibited. (Enclosed herewith are separate documents which mentions all about punishments against each offence committed as cited above)

Monastic discipline is above everything for all monasteries and all members of Sanghas must follow the rules of moral discipline strictly as mentioned in the Vinaya. All members should spend time in studies, contemplation, and meditation. Everyone should be faithful, sincere, kind to oneself and Buddha Dharma and try to win the hearts of Gurus and Masters through ones sincere actions.

Buddha once said that just being kind hearted or compassionate for a while in this degenerate age is far more beneficial than a great service done to Buddha Dharma during the fortunate aeon. Therefore all should follow the good advises mentioned in the rules with deep respect and always keep it in mind.

This Cha-yig should be read clearly by every existing Chotimpa once every month before all the monks for their general understanding and information. Thus may all concerned be always mindful of these precious rules and regulations of monastic life.

From Gangtok Phodang Khamsum Zilnon on 16 Rabjung, Iron Horse year, 7th Month and 18th Day.

SARVA MANGALAM.

Translated by Khenpo Chowang from the original text of Cha-yig.