

INDIAN BUDDHIST PANDITS
from "The Jewel Garland of Buddhist History"

Translated from the Tibetan

BY

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ཤི་བ་འཇམ་དཔལ་ལྷན་པོ་

himself in the Ganga. Many of the Brāhmins took lay and monk ordination.

At that time three Brāhmins from Kashmir, Vidyāsīmha, Devavidyākara and Devasīmha, came to see Dharmakīrti and with straightforward minds questioned him extensively on his tenets. The Ācārya demonstrated to them the perfect reasoning behind his tenets, gave them Refuge (in the Three Jewels, i.e. Buddha, Dharmā and Sangha) and exhorted them to maintain the training. They became extremely proficient in the *Seven Treatises of Logic* and went back to Kashmir where they promulgated Dharmakīrti's lineages.

The Ācārya returned south and completely revived the Doctrine where it had degenerated. He himself built about one hundred temples. The number of temples that others built spontaneously, due to his inspiring presence, is beyond counting. He brought about one hundred thousand people into the Doctrine as either monks or lay persons, but the number of those who followed him completely was not more than five.

Towards the end of Dharmakīrti's life, Shankarācārya took rebirth as the son of Bhaṭṭācārya the Second. His power of mind was even sharper than before. Sometimes his deities would appear before him and teach him logic, sometimes they would enter into him. He expounded logic that had never existed before on earth. At the age of twelve he wanted to debate with Dharmakīrti, but the Brāhmins told him, "Debate with others for a while; Dharmakīrti will be extremely difficult to beat."

"If I don't win over Dharmakīrti, everything else is meaningless," he replied. So he travelled to the south, where he met the Ācārya, staked his doctrine and debated. Dharmakīrti defeated him. This time he accepted Buddhism. From then on, this Brāhmin lived the life of a layman and made offerings to the Buddhadharma.

Finally, Dharmakīrti built a temple in the land of Kalinga, brought many people there into the Dharmā, and then passed away. His body was placed in a cemetery and burned. Afterwards it rained flowers, and there were sweet scents and music. All the ashes collected themselves together and no bones remained.

This great Ācārya lived at the same time as the Tibetan King Strongtsan Gampo (7th century A.D.).

Shāntirakṣita was born a prince in Bengal (East India). As a youth, he saw the faults of the life of a householder; so, he left his kingdom and became a monk, taking both the novice and full ordination vows from the Abbot Jñāna Garbha.¹ He was a Sarāvāstivādin² and clearly understood all the minor and major points of Vinaya of this lineage. He always practised pure ethics without faults or deviation.

Shāntirakṣita studied the Tripiṭaka and became very learned. He was taught by Ācārya Vinayasena³ who explained the *Abhisamayālamkāra* to him and the profound stages of the path in accordance with Nāgārjuna's view. He wrote a commentary to the *Madhyamikālamkāra*, showing the profound and extensive meaning of that text. His closest disciples were Ācārya Śimhabhadra and Ācārya Kamalashīla.

In Shāntirakṣita's time, the King of Tibet who was a manifestation of Mañjuśrī, passed away. His son, Trisong Deutsan, succeeded to the throne, but some evil ministers were able to take advantage of the old king's death to gain power and influence. They impeded the spread of the Doctrine in Tibet.

The young King, Trisong Deutsan, was inclined towards the Dharmā. He sent one of his ministers, Basalhang, with others on the mission to China to bring back the teachings of the Buddha to

Tibet. They accomplished their task but the evil Tibetan ministers would not allow them to open the texts they had brought back with them. So they hid them away in a safe place. The King had a private discussion with Basalnang and decided that it would be best for Basalnang to go to India to get texts and to find a teacher who could explain the Buddhist teachings in Tibet. To keep this mission secret, King Trison Deutsan appointed Basalnang governor of the province of Mangyul Kyidrong which bordered on India.

Basalnang went to India, where he visited the holy places of Bodh Gaya and Nalanda and made offerings. Many auspicious signs miraculously appeared: it rained flowers, milk flowed from the Bodhi Tree and brilliant lights appeared along with beautiful music.

Then he went to Nepal where he met Shāntirakshita who was at that time the spiritual guide of the King of Nepal. Shāntirakshita accepted his invitation to go to Tibet and accompanied him to Mangyul Kyidrong, where Basalnang built two temples for Shāntirakshita's residence. Basalnang requested teachings on Bodhicitta from Shāntirakshita. The teacher asked for offerings and Basalnang offered gold, silver, precious jewels, one cloth and all of his private possessions. He even offered his only belt. But, after giving Basalnang teachings on Bodhicitta, Shāntirakshita returned all his gifts. He patted him fondly on the head and explained that they had met in many previous lifetimes. Once Basalnang was his chief disciples, called Yeshe Wangpo, and during that lifetime also he had generated Bodhicitta.

Basalnang prostrated three times before his teacher and asked him to come to Tibet to be the King's spiritual guide. Shāntirakshita replied that he had a karmic connection with Tibet and had been waiting in Mangyul Kyidrong and Bengal for nine lifetimes because the accumulated karma of Tisong Deutsan and Basalnang was such that they could meet him again only in their present lives. If the King wanted him to be his spiritual guide, he must build a monastery near the Lohi river and call it Samye. Then Shāntirakshita returned to Nepal.

Basalnang went straight to King Trison Deutsan and relayed the good news of his meeting with the great master Shāntirakshita, and the master's willingness to come to Tibet. The King warned him, "If our plans become known to the evil ministers, our lives will be in danger and our excellent plan will be unsuccessful. So, Basalnang,

you should go to a solitary place for a while." Meanwhile, by skillful means, the King exerted his influence over the minds and hearts of the wicked ministers so that they would not interfere with his task of bringing the Buddhist teachings to Tibet.

The time came when King Trison Deutsan could speak openly about the Dharma. He called his ministers together and told them that the Buddhist doctrine which had been established by his forefathers had been destroyed by evil ministers, and that the statue of Jowo Shākyamuni had been taken to Mangyul Kyidrong. He ordered the statue to be brought back by the ministers and an invitation extended to a teacher from India. In front of everyone, King Trison Deutsan instructed his Minister Basalnang to go to Nepal and India to invite a teacher. Basalnang replied that Bikshu Shāntirakshita, the son of the King of Bengal, and a scholar in every field, was staying in Nepal, and that he was the most qualified teacher to invite. The King agreed to this and sent Basalnang with presents for the King to Nepal.

Basalnang journeyed to Nepal and delivered his King's formal invitation to Shāntirakshita. The Ācārya set out for Tibet with the faithful minister. In Mangyul Kyidrong they were met by three more ministers whom King Trison Deutsan had sent to escort Shāntirakshita to the Palace. Finally, they arrived at the royal Palace. Basalnang made the formal introductions between his guru and his King. Trison Deutsan offered his respects and many gifts.

The minister Shang wanted the King to test the Ācārya's qualities. Through the translator Kashmiri Ananda they asked the master to tell them his qualities. Shāntirakshita replied that he relied on the Three Jewels and had always kept his commitments and vows purely, that his sole purpose was to benefit sentient beings and, therefore, he practised all the virtuous deeds and had abandoned all non-virtues. They were all well satisfied with this answer and invited him into the Palace.

The King then offered the Ācārya a bowl full of gold dust and received his blessing. The Ācārya asked the King if he recognized him. The King wondered how he could recognize him, since they had never met before. Shāntirakshita told him that during the time of the Buddha Kashyapa⁴ there were three children who made a stupa out of sand as an offering to the Buddha. They declared, "May we three become a King, a Translator, and a Paṇḍit who will benefit sentient beings living in the most barbarous land."

"Those three children," Shāntirakshita added, "were you, Basalnang and I. Now do you remember?"

The King replied that he had a bad memory and could not recall the incident. "Please help us to illuminate the Buddha's teachings and now tell us if signs are auspicious for the spread of the doctrine." The Ācārya answered, "I am expert in reading the signs. The fact that you have offered me precious things means that the doctrine will be established in Tibet. I can tell that the doctrine will flourish in the upper part of Ngari (Tibet) because you are wearing a hat, and the size of your shoes indicates that it will flourish in the lower part of Ngari also. But you did not tie your belt and that shows that the doctrine will not remain long in the middle part of the country."

The Ācārya Shāntirakshita taught *The Ten Virtuous Actions*, *The Eighteen Elements* and *The Twelve Links of Dependent Origination* at Lungsub Palace. All the spirits and devils were disturbed by this and caused floods, destructive thunderstorms and sickness. Because of these disasters the common people revolted against the Ācārya and his students. So, the King had to ask Shāntirakshita to return to Nepal for a while, because of the lack of good karma of the people and the actions of the evil spirits. The Ācārya suggested that the King invite Padmasambhava, who was a specialist in subduing evil spirits.

Accordingly, King Trisong Deutsan sent Basalnang and four others to invite Padmasambhava. They met this great guru at Gungthang and brought him back to Tibet. Along the way, he subdued all the evil spirits he met. The King met him at Lhapori. He went to Maldrothur and subdued all the evil spirits.

Then the Ācārya Shāntirakshita returned to Tibet and together with Padmasambhava performed the ritual of purifying the land. They built Sameye monastery in the likeness of the Odantapuri monastery in India and upon its completion consecrated it together. They invited twelve monks belonging to the Mūlasarvāstavādina school and ordained seven Tibetan monks. These monks attained many siddhis such as clairvoyance etc. These seven monks were Barana Palyag, Salnang, Pago Birocana, Ngalbam Gyalwa Chogyang, Ma Kinchen Jangchub, Khon Luyi Wangpo Sung, and Lamsun Gyalwa Jangchub.

Also at this time, the King persuaded many Tibetans to train as translators. Pandit Vimalamitra and Ācārya Buddha Guhya

were invited from India. Many texts were translated and thus the doctrine flourished in Tibet. King Trisong Deutsan told the monks that they should follow the pure moral practice of their Bodhisattva abbot, Shāntirakshita, and the view of Nāgārjuna. Before Shāntirakshita passed away he told the King that conflict about the doctrine would arise in Tibet and at that time the King should invite his disciple, Kamalashīla, from India.