

His Holiness Karmapa in Manchester

Christmas time 1977 was a time for dharma celebration for Kagyu Ling when HH the 16th Karmapa (1923 - 1981) , head of the Karma Kagyu tradition, made his one and only visit to Manchester. Invited by Karma Thinley Rinpoche and Lama Jampa Thaye, His Holiness spent three days at Kagyu Ling, which had been established two years earlier as Manchester's first Tibetan Buddhist centre.

On this historic visit His Holiness Karmapa was accompanied by Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche and a large group of attendant monks as well as Lama Ole Nydahl and Akong Rinpoche. Somehow this party was squeezed into Kagyu Ling, located at that time in an end of terrace house in Reynard Road, Chorlton. The whole of the house was a whirlwind of activity animated by the blessings radiating from His Holiness.

An outside venue had to be found for teaching and the choice fell upon the church hall attached to the church of the Holy Innocents in the suburb of Fallowfield. Sadly, nowadays this place is a 'student' drinking den with the baleful soubriquet of 'The Queen of Hearts', but just for a moment in time it blazed with the magnificence of His Holiness' teachings. Having performed the Black Crown ceremony for the public, His Holiness bestowed the initiations of Milarepa and Karma Pakshi upon members of Kagyu Ling. Kongtrul Rinpoche found the time to give the initiation of Manjushri and the teaching of the Four Dharmas of Gampopa.

Looking back on His Holiness' visit over thirty years later, Lama Jampa says:

'This visit of His Holiness was the pinnacle of achievement in the early years of Kagyu Ling. Auspiciously, it came at a time when Rinpoche and I were completing his definitive work The History of the 16 Karmapas of Tibet, and the blessings that it left behind endowed Kagyu Ling with the strength to survive the coming years.

Rinpoche had originally instructed me to invite both HH Sakya Trizin and HH Gyalwa Karmapa. However, although HH Sakya Trizin has blessed us many times with his presence, unfortunately, due to the passing of HH Karmapa in 1981, I would not have another opportunity to invite him again.

Therefore I am now delighted that His Holiness the 17th Karmapa (1983 -) has graciously accepted my invitation to visit Kagyu Ling during his forthcoming trip to Europe'