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**A Brief Liberation Account of the
Omniscient Guru, the Great Vajradhara
Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo**

Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Taye



KHYENTSE VISION
PROJECT

*kun mkhyen bla ma rdo rje 'chang chen po 'jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po'i nam thar nyung ngur
bsdus pa*

B272, D7

Kabum, vol. 2 (kha), 294.5–299.2, Dzongsar 2014;

Kabab Dun, vol. 1 (ka), 397.1–403.3, Dzongsar 2013.

Translated by Ryan Jacobson and Tenzin Choephel. Reviewed by Zack Beer. Edited by Alexander Gardner. The translation was completed under the patronage of Khyentse Foundation and the supervision of Khyentse Vision Project.

First Published UNPUBLISHED

Version 1

Generated from KVP's reading room on 16-Sep-2026

Khyentse Vision Project: Translating the Works of
Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo

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TRANSLATORS' INTRODUCTION

Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo's mastery across the major Tibetan Buddhist traditions is celebrated here by his close friend Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Taye. These verses offer an elegant overview of one of Tibet's most influential masters, a pivotal figure in the Rimé period of nineteenth-century eastern Tibet.

The writing is structured as a metered eulogy that moves through Khyentse Wangpo's accomplishments, tradition by tradition. Jamgön Kongtrul extols his friend's extraordinary qualities and lists his accomplishments in the explanatory and practice lineages, the ten great pillars, and the eight great chariots of the Land of Snows. For each lineage, he highlights specific teachings Khyentse Wangpo received, the practices he mastered, and his role in preserving and transmitting these traditions, ranging from Buddhism to Bön.

This text particularly emphasizes Khyentse Wangpo's treasure revelations and his approach of relating to all philosophical traditions with motherly love, praising those with good qualities with fatherly pride, and viewing the humble with the care shown to children—embodying the Rimé spirit of appreciating all authentic traditions. The colophon notes that Jamgön Kongtrul based these verses on Khyentse Wangpo's own account of his religious development, making it a particularly authoritative source that serves as an inspiring tribute to his many accomplishments and to his enduring legacy across traditions.

འཇམ་དབྱངས་མཁུན་བཟེའི་དབང་པོའི་རྣམ་ཐར་ཉུང་ངུར་བསྟུས་པ།

A Brief Liberation Account of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo

Namo guru!

Your name, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo,
Is so sublime it is difficult to utter.
It is illustriously renowned
Throughout this world together with its gods,
Where beings bow their precious crowns
At your lotus feet. [295]

As sovereign of the complete teachings,
You are the sole refuge of all beings,
With enlightened activity that benefits whomever you encounter—
How marvelous that such impossible qualities exist!

Worldly prestige and renown
Impress those with childish minds;
Yet these qualities are not what define the lives of sublime beings.
Though the four elements—earth, air, fire, and water—are mighty,
They cannot compare to all-pervading space.
Likewise, none who uphold the teachings in the Land of Snows
Can match your extraordinary life that surpasses all marvels.
How could a childlike mind ever plumb
Its oceanic depth with a mere strand of hair?

Not influenced by covetousness, guile, or wealth,
But by your own inherent and cultivated qualities,
You became lord of all those
Who follow the Victor's traditions in Tibet.
By this very way you embody
The second Lord of Sages in this world.

Through listening, contemplating, and meditating, you perfected
The scriptural traditions, maturing empowerments, and liberating instructions
Of the ten great pillars that support the explanatory lineage
And the eight great chariots of the practice lineage,
All that exists in the Land of Snows.

Just as birth arises from non-birth,
And transmigration from non-transmigration,
Although you already transcended all there is to abandon and realize,
You displayed these skillfully to train your disciples.

You embraced as your own inheritance
The tantras and sādhana classes of the oral and treasure traditions
Belonging to the three yogas of the Early Translation school
And expansively [296] established streams of maturation and liberation.

Due to your aspirations, karmic propensities,
The appropriate time for disciples, and the ḍākinīs' prophecies,
You unraveled the vajra seals,
Revealing for the fortunate
Jeweled treasures of profound Dharma,
Never before known in this world—
Precious earth treasures and mind treasures,
Pure visions and those of the aural lineage,
Recollected treasures from former lives,
And rediscovered treasures of previous masters—
Thereby becoming the universal king of all vidyādhara
Of the great secret Nyingma tradition, the root of the teachings.

The Tartse brothers,
The Khenchen Vajradharas¹
Who were true manifestations of
Muchen Khorlo Dampa
And Gyaltsab Sempa Chenpo,
Empowered you as the great regent of the three secrets.²

You mastered the teachings of the Gongma, the root,
And all the commentaries and instructions
Of the branch systems of Ngorchon, Gongkarwa,
And Tsarchen, along with their successors.

Cared for by deities and gurus,
You established all disciples in the realm of Khecara
And made a lasting impact on the teachings,
Becoming an unrivalled guru
Of the Sakya tradition, a singular ornament of the teachings.

Dagpo, Chenga, Karmapa,
Drigungpa, Taklungpa, Drukpa, and so on³—
You received the essential nectar of their instructions,
Obtained the ultimate lineage of blessings,
And attained the vajra wisdom empowerment.

You established revulsion, the foot of meditation,
And cultivated devotion, the head of meditation,
With mindfulness as your sentinel, [297] compassion as your activity,
And conscientiousness as your steadfast armor.

Obtaining the signs of warmth through the four practices of the path of skillful means,
You beheld the natural state of the vajra body.
Realizing Mahāmudrā, the path of liberation,
Phenomenal existence nakedly arose as the dharmakāya.
With the boundary between your meditative equipoise and post-meditation dissolved,
Mind and appearance merged as one.

By perfecting the dynamic energy of the yoga of one taste,
Devoid of distinction between distraction and nondistraction
And untouched by any acceptance or rejection of the two truths,
You became king among the Togden
Of the Kagyu tradition, the heart of the teachings.

The Yoga teachings—*Glorious, Peak*, and Space⁴—
Are now as rare as gold.

Yet you obtained them in full and put them into practice.
Generally through the Unexcelled Yoga—
Particularly through the maturation and liberation of Cakrasaṃvara, Hevajra,
Guhyasamāja,
Together with their tantric commentaries, you accomplished the twofold benefit.
You inspired reverence for the scriptures

Of the followers of both Butön and Dölpopa.

By reweaving the golden threads
Of noble traditions worn thin,
You ascended to the highest rank of all Dharma holders
Of Jonang and Shalu, the illuminators of the teachings.

You released a trove of fearless, confident eloquence
Through exposition, debate, and composition,
Refining the scriptural wealth of the learned ones from India and Tibet—
The two great charioteers and their successors—
The tradition with the Seven Divine Dharmas
That teaches all the words of the Buddha as pith instructions,
Their texts, instructions and advice in general, [298]
And in particular the tradition of the Renewed Kadampa,
Whose view is of the Madhyamaka tradition of Ārya Nāgārjuna
With Prajñāpāramitā of the Mahāyāna,
Whose conduct is of the Hīnayāna Vinaya complete with minor precepts,
And the *Abhidharmakośa*, mother of all teachings.
Thus, you shine majestically, like a mountainous geshe
Of the Gadenpa, the lords of the teachings.

As for the tradition of the unified and connected Gyalshen,⁵
You foresaw its preservation would increase
The benefit and common good of the teachings and beings.
You glorified those who preserved the teachings
By praising and inspiring the holders
Of the Yungdrung Bön tradition.

Furthermore, bringing any benefit or happiness
To even a single being
Is taught to be the activity of a buddha.
Hence, you never disparaged anyone
Out of pride, despite your erudition or mastery.
You loved all the philosophical traditions like a mother,
Praised all with good qualities like a father,
And viewed the meek as your children.

Thus, I have offered a brief account of your realization
And of your unique qualities—
So distinct from those of others,
Which even ordinary people can glimpse.

By this deed, may we all follow the example
Of the life and liberation of the omniscient lord guru;
May we perfectly fulfill all your noble aspirations,
And may we spread your enlightened activity limitlessly in every direction.

Not only did the precious omniscient guru agree to be a holder of these Buddhist traditions, but he was also universally recognized as an eminent preserver of each of those traditions. Above all, since he regarded me, the lowly one named Guṇa,⁶ as though a clod of dirt were gold, I was fortunate to receive the extraordinary nectar that recounted how his experiential realization came to be, and it is on account of this experience that I have expressed here a mere fraction out of my utmost faith and devotion. May it be the cause for becoming equal to this excellent guru's three secrets and enlightened activities in every life to come. May virtue and goodness flourish!

NOTES

1. The two brothers based at Ngor Monastery's Tartse Labrang, Jampa Kunga Tenzin and Naljor Jampal Zangpo, were two of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo's four main gurus.
2. During a period of Sakya training at Ngor Monastery under the Tartse brothers—Jampa Kunga Tenzin and Naljor Jampal Zangpo, nephews of Tartse Khenpo Namkha Chimé—Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo received a Cakrasaṃvara empowerment from the elder brother, Jampa Kunga Tenzin, where he beheld him as the deity and thus recognized Kunga Tenzin as Muchen Sempa Chenpo Könchok Gyaltsen, an emanation of Cakrasaṃvara. Later, while receiving blessings from Naljor Jampal Zangpo, Khyentse Wangpo perceived him as Virūpa and realized Jampa Zangpo was Gyaltsab Kunga Wangchuk, an emanation of Virūpa. See Jamgön Kongtrul, *Life of Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo*, 55.
3. This list represents the founders of the larger Kagyu traditions: Gampopa, the First Karmapa, Jigten Gönpö, Taklungtangpa Tashi Pal, and Tsangpa Gyare. "Chenga" refers to an "attendant" of Jigten Gönpö. Possible figures include two of his chief disciples: Chenga Dragpa Jungne and Chenga Sherab Jungne—the latter also known as Öñ ("nephew"), as well as Chenga Drigung Lingpa; see Martin, "Won Sherab Jungne"; and Czaja, *Medieval Rule in Tibet*, 90n7. Since this Kagyu-related verse does not mention the Pagdru Kagyu, the lineage from which eight other Kagyu schools descended, the individual intended is more likely Chenga Dragpa Jungne, who served as abbot of Densatil Monastery, founded in 1158 by Pagmodrupa Dorje Gyalpo. In Khyentse Wangpo's time, Densatil housed the reliquaries of Dorje Gyalpo, Jigten Gönpö, and Dragpa Jungne, underscoring Dragpa Jungne's prominence; see Akester, *Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo's Guide*, 371, 373, and especially 375.
4. The *Glorious Supreme Primal Tantra* (*Śrī Paramādyā*) and the *Vajra Peak Tantra* (*Vajraśekhara*) are two prominent texts within Yoga Tantra, the latter serving as an explanatory tantra (*vyākhyātantra*) on the *Compendium of the Reality of All Tathāgatas* (*Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha*). This compendium, being the root tantra, contains "Space," which denotes the Vajradhātu maṇḍala, taught in chapters one through five. See Kano, "Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha," 373–81.
5. *rgyal gshen mnyam chags rten 'brel* is the Bönpo version of the more well-known *chos srid zung 'brel*, or "the combination of religion and politics." In consideration of Gyalshan, "Gyal" refers to King Nyatri Tsenpo (gnya' khri btsan po), while "Shen" denotes Shen Nangwa Dogchen (gshen snang ba mdog can). Thanks to Geshe Tri Yungdrung for this clarification.
6. The Sanskrit version of yōntan (*yon tan*), meaning "qualities," and an element of one of Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Taye's main personal names, Yōntan Gyatso (*yon tan rgya mtsho*).

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GLOSSARY

Abhidharmakośa

མཛོད། • *mdzod* • abhidharmakośa

“Treasury of Abhidharma.” A seminal Abhidharma work composed by the Indian master Vasubandhu (fourth to fifth century CE). The *Abhidharmakośa* comprises eight chapters (with a ninth chapter often treated as an addendum) written in verse that summarize the views of the *Mahāvibhāṣā*, an encyclopedic and systematic exposition of the Buddhist doctrine from the perspective of the Vaibhāṣika-Sarvāstivāda tradition. The accompanying autocommentary, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, elaborates on the verses, often including critiques from the later Sautrāntika-Sarvāstivāda school.

Asaṅga

ཐོགས་མེད། • *thogs med* • asaṅga

Asaṅga (ca. 320–390) was the Indian founder of the Yogācāra school of Mahāyāna Buddhism. He was the elder brother of Vasubandhu, both of whom converted to the Mahāyāna later in life. Asaṅga famously spent twelve years in a cave meditating on Maitreya before receiving a vision of the bodhisattva when he went to help an injured dog, who was the bodhisattva in disguise. He ascended to Tuṣita Heaven where Maitreya taught him what became known as the Five Books of Maitreya. These and compositions of his own such as the *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, the *Mahāyānasamgraha*, and the *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra* form the scriptural foundation of the Yogācāra school.

aural lineage

སྟན་ཏུ་བརྒྱུད། • *snyan du brgyud*

The oral transmission of teachings from a human master—or sometimes a deity—directly into the ear of a worthy disciple.

Butön

བུ། • *bu*

Butön Rinchen Drub (1290–1364), a Sakya lama raised in a Nyingma family, was the eleventh abbot of Shalu Monastery, from 1320 to 1356. Some enumerations list him as the first abbot, as he significantly expanded the institution. He was an important teacher of the

Prajñāpāramitā, and a key lineage holder of the *Guhyasamāja* and *Kālacakra* tantras as transmitted in the Geluk tradition, and the *Kālacakra*, *Hevajra* and *Samputa* tantras as transmitted in the Sakya tradition. He is generally credited as the creator of the first Tibetan Buddhist canon, and his *History of Buddhism* is still widely read. In addition to his Sakya training, he also studied in the Kadam and Kagyu traditions.

Cakrasaṃvara

བདེ། • *bde* • cakrasaṃvara

Literally, “Binding of the Wheels.” One of the main deities of the mother tantras of the highest class of tantra and the male consort of Vajrayoginī. Cakrasaṃvara is of central importance in the New Translation schools.

Chenga Dragpa Jungne

སྤྱན་སྒྲ་། སྤྱན་སྒྲ་གཤམ་པ་འབྱུང་གནས། • *spyan snga, spyan snga grags pa 'byung gnas*

Chenga Dragpa Jungne (1175–1255) served nearly two decades as Jigten Gönpö’s personal attendant. During the last half of his life, he served first as abbot of Densatil, from 1208 to 1234, followed by twenty-one years as the fourth abbot of Drigung Monastery.

Chenga Drigung Lingpa

སྤྱན་སྒྲ་འབྲི་གྲུང་གླིང་པ། • *spyan snga 'bri gung gling pa*

An epithet of Chenga Sherab Jungne.

Chenga Sherab Jungne

སྤྱན་སྒྲ་ཤེས་རབ་འབྱུང་གནས། • *spyan snga shes rab 'byung gnas*

Chenga Sherab Jungne (1187–1241), also known as Chenga Drigung Lingpa, was a student and biographer of Jigten Gönpö, the founder of Drigung Til, and served for a brief period as the fifth abbot of Daglha Gampo Monastery. He compiled the core texts of the Single Intention, a philosophical cycle that revolves around key statements made by Jigten Gönpö that is still regarded as a one of the main teachings of the Drigung Kagyu lineage.

ḍākinī

འཇ་ཀི་ནི། • *DA ki nI* • ḍākinī

In the context of the Vajrayāna teachings, ḍākinīs are embodiments of enlightened wisdom, or female practitioners who have attained accomplishment through the tantric path. The term is also used to refer to the feminine principle viewed from an enlightened perspective.

dharmakāya

ཆོས་སྤྱ • *chos sku* • dharmakāya

Literally, “dharma body.” It refers to the perfectly accomplished wisdom mind of a buddha, free of the two veils of mental afflictions and cognitive obscurations.

Dölpopa

དོཔ། • *dol*

Dölpopa Sherab Gyaltsen (1292–1361) was a seminal figure in the Jonang school of Tibetan Buddhism and its distinctive other-emptiness (*zhentong*) interpretation of Madhyamaka.

Early Translation school

སྔ་འགྱུར། • *snga 'gyur*

Another name for the Nyingma tradition, which relies primarily on the translations produced during the first dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet mostly during the eighth and ninth centuries.

earth treasure

ས། ས་གཏོར། • *sa, sa gter*

Treasures either hidden in the earth by vidyādhara—such as scrolls and ritual implements—or naturally contained within it, including gold, gems, water, wood, and clay. Scrolls written in symbolic script serve as catalysts for revealing treasure teachings previously concealed in the mind.

eight great chariots

ཤིང་རྩ་ཆེ་བརྒྱུད། • *shing rta che brgyad*

The traditions of (1) “Early Translation,” or Nyingma; (2) “Precepts and Instructions,” or Kadam; (3) “Path and Result,” or Lamdre; (4) “Transmitted Precepts of Marpa,” or Marpa Kagyu; (5) “Transmitted Precepts of Shang Valley,” or Shangpa Kagyu; (6) “Pacification and Severance,” or Zhije Chö; (7) “Six Unions,” or Jordruk; and (8) “Approach and Accomplishment of the Three Vajras,” or Dorje Sumgyi Nyendrub.

explanatory lineage

བཤད་རྒྱུད། • *bshad rgyun*

The lineage that emphasizes the intellectual transmission and detailed expounding of Buddhist scriptures through study, commentary, debate, and philosophical analysis. This approach contrasts with the practice lineage.

First Karmapa

ཀུན་པ ༠༡། • *karma pa 01*

The First Karmapa, Dusum Khyenpa (1110–1193), received his title *karmapa*, “the one of buddha activity” from his teacher Śākyaśrībhadrā. A native of Kham, he was initially ordained and educated in the Kadam tradition. When he was sixteen, a group of *ḍākinīs* gave him a hat made from the hair of 100,000 *ḍākinīs* that is visible only to the most advanced practitioners. After spending thirty years in U-Tsang studying with Gampopa and other disciples of Marpa and Milarepa, he returned to Kham where he remained for twenty years, establishing a number of monasteries, including Karma Göṅ. At the age of seventy, he returned to Tibet and established Tsurpu Monastery in Tölung, the seat of the subsequent Karmapas and the Karma Kagyu tradition. He predicted the conditions of his rebirth, charging his disciples to find and train the boy, thereby initiating the Tibetan institution of the tulku, or “incarnate lama.”

Gadenpa

དགའ་ལྷན་པ། • *dga'ldan pa*

Another term for the Geluk school in reference to Ganden Monastery, established by Tsongkhapa in 1409.

geshe

དགེ་བཤེས། • *dge bshes* • kalyāṇamitra

A good and virtuous friend, that is, a spiritual teacher who serves as a guide. This person should be generous, honorable, trustworthy, learned, patient, wise, and loving.

Gongkarwa

གངས་དཀར་བ། • *gangs dkar ba*

An epithet for Kunga Namgyal.

Gongkarwa Kunga Namgyal

གོང་དཀར་བ་ཀུན་དགའ་རྣམ་རྒྱལ། • *gong dkar ba kun dga' rnam rgyal*

Gongkarwa Kunga Namgyal (1432–1496) was the founder of Gongkar Chöde, a Sakya monastery on the south bank of the Yarlung Tsangpo river. Born into an aristocratic family, he studied under Sharpa Yeshe Gyatso, Dragtöpa Sönam Zangpo, and others. He is also known as Dorjedenpa, after the formal name of the monastery, Gongkar Dorjeden.

Guhyasamāja

གསང་། གསང་བ་འདུས་བ། • *gsang, gsang ba 'dus pa* • guhyasamāja

Literally “Secret Assembly,” one of the central tantric deities of the New Translation schools. An emanation of Akṣobhya, he is dark blue with three faces and six arms, in union with Sparśavajra. His maṇḍala has Vairocana in the east, Ratnasambhava in the south, Amitabhā in the west, and Amoghasiddhi in the north.

Gyaltsab Sempa Chenpo

རྒྱལ་ཚབ་སེམས་དཔའ་ཆེན་པོ། • *rgyal tshab sems dpa' chen po*

An epithet of Kunga Wangchuk, meaning the “Mahāsattva Regent.”

Hevajra

དཀྲེས། • *dgyes* • hevajra

A principal wrathful deity of the highest class of Buddhist Tantra from the new translation period. He is central to the Sakya Lamdre tradition and also important in the Kagyu school, though to a lesser degree.

Hīnayāna

ཐེག་དམན། • *theg dman* • hīnayāna

Literally, “Lesser Vehicle.” The foundational system of Buddhist thought and praxis, distinguished from the Mahāyāna based on their authoritative scriptures and philosophical tenet systems, as well as their paths and results. The Hīnayāna encompasses two vehicles—Śrāvakayāna and Pratyekabuddhayāna—and two tenet systems: Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika.

Jamgön Kongtrul

འཇམ་མགོན་ཀོང་སྐུ། • *'jam mgon kong sprul*

Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Taye (1813–1899) was one of the greatest scholars in the history of Tibet. A Karma Kagyu lama and model of Rimé ecumenical activity, he collaborated closely with the Sakya lama Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo and the Nyingma treasure revealer Chokgyur Lingpa in the opening of sacred sites, treasure revelation, and collecting and codifying sacred literature. His prodigious literary output, categorized as the Five

Treasures, covers the entire range of Tibetan Buddhist theory and ritual as well as numerous other topics, from medicine to art and history. Based primarily at Palpung Monastery in Derge, he built the nearby hermitage of Tsādra Rinchen Drak, which became his personal seat.

Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Taye

འཇམ་མགོན་ཀོང་སྐུ་བློ་གྲོས་མཐའ་ཡས། • *'jam mgon kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas*

Lodrö Taye was one of the names frequently used by Jamgön Kongtrul, given to him in 1839 by the Ninth Tai Situ as part of a bodhisattva ordination ceremony.

Jampa Kunga Tenzin

བྱམས་པ་ཀུན་དགའ་བསྟན་འཛིན། • *byams pa kun dga' bstan 'dzin*

Jampa Kunga Tenzin (1776–1862) was the forty-seventh abbot of Ngor Monastery. At the end of his tenure, he served as court chaplain in Derge and gave lay ordination to Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, at the age of three or four.

Jampa Namkha Chimé

བྱམས་པ་ནམ་མཐའ་འཛིན་མེད། • *byams pa nam mkha' 'chi med*

Jampa Namkha Chimé (1765–1820) was the forty-fourth abbot of Ngor Evam Monastery. Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo is his reincarnation, an identification made when he was twelve years old by Jampa Kunga Tenzin.

Jigten Gönpö

འཇིག་རྟེན་མགོན་པོ། • *'jig rten mgon po*

Jigten Gönpö Rinchen Pal (1143–1217) is credited with the founding of Drigung Til Monastery in 1179 and the establishment of the Drigung Kagyu tradition. He was a close disciple of Pagmodrupa and briefly administered Densatil following Pagmodrupa's death.

Khecara

མཁའ་སྤྱོད། • *mkha'spyod* • khecara

Literally, “Space Faring.” A pure land associated with ḍākinīs, and specifically the realm of Vajrayoginī and Cakrasaṃvara. Unique among pure fields, it can be attained by advanced practitioners without abandoning their body.

Kunga Wangchuk

ཀུན་དགའ་དབང་ལྷུག། • *kun dga' dbang phyug*

Kunga Wangchuk (1424–1478) served as the fourth abbot of Ngor Monastery, from 1465 to 1478. He was a relative of Ngorchon Kunga Zangpo, the founder and first abbot of Ngor.

Land of Snows

གངས་ཅན། • *gangs can*

A poetic name for Tibet.

liberating instructions

གྲོལ། • *grol*

One of the two principal aspects of the Vajrayāna path: the practice instructions of the path itself. The other aspect is the ripening empowerment bestowed by a master to grant the disciple access to this path.

listening, contemplating, and meditating

གསལ་བསམ་སྒྲུབ། • *gsan bsam sgom* • śruta, cintā, bhāvanā

The threefold process for the gradual development of wisdom.

Lord of Sages

ཐུབ་དབང་། • *thub dbang* • munīndra

An epithet of Buddha Śākyamuni.

Madhyamaka

དབུ་མ། • *dbu ma* • madhyamaka

Literally, the “Middle.” Generally considered the pinnacle of Mahāyāna philosophical systems in Tibetan literature, Madhyamaka is often identified with the style of explanation stemming from Nāgārjuna’s Collection of Arguments, especially the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, and major Indian commentators like Buddhapālita, Candrakīrti, and Bhāvaviveka. This approach emphasizes the second turning of the wheel of Dharma and the freedom from all mental constructs, including the existence of any entity by way of its own nature (*svabhāva*). This can also be referred to as “self-emptiness” (*rangtong*) Madhyamaka or Niḥsvabhāvavāda (“Proponents of No Intrinsic Nature”) Madhyamaka. The label “Madhyamaka” is also used in Tibetan literature to describe the style of explanation stemming from the Five Books of Maitreya and commentators such as Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, which emphasizes the third turning of the wheel of Dharma. This is referred to as “other-emptiness” (*zhentong*) Madhyamaka and asserts the presence of a wisdom that is empty of the duality of perceived and perceiver, but not of its own nature.

mahāmudrā

ཕྱག་རྒྱ་ཆེན་པོ། • *phyag rgya chen po* • mahāmudrā

Literally, “great seal.” The term for ultimate reality for the New Translation school.

Mahāyāna

ཐེག་ཆེན། • *theg chen* • mahāyāna

Literally, “Great Vehicle.” The system of Buddhist thought and practice based on the Mahāyāna scriptures and distinguished from the Hīnayāna on the basis of their authoritative scriptures and philosophical tenet systems, as well as their paths and results. One of the key distinguishing features defining the Mahāyāna path is bodhicitta, the altruistic intention to gain true and complete awakening for the benefit of all beings and the practices motivated by this resolve. The Mahāyāna encompasses two systems of practice—Pāramitāyāna based on the sūtras and Secret Mantra Vajrayāna based on the tantras—and two philosophical tenet systems: Cittamātra and Madhyamaka.

maturation and liberation

སྒྲིབ་གྲོལ། • *smin grol*

The two principal aspects of the Vajrayāna path: the ripening empowerment bestowed by a master to grant the disciple access to this path, and the ensuing practice instructions of the path itself.

maturing empowerments

སྒྲིལ། • *smin*

One of the two principal aspects of the Vajrayāna path: the ripening empowerment bestowed by a master to grant the disciple access to this path. The other aspect is the ensuing practice instructions of the path itself.

mind treasure

དགོངས་པའི་གཏེར། • *dgongs pa'i gter*

Treasures concealed in a disciple's mind during meditative absorption through the seal of entrustment, in which the master's mind integrates with the disciple's, often supported by symbolic script or sound.

Muchen Khorlo Dampa

མུས་ཆེན་འཁོར་ལོ་སྤྲོམ་པ། • *mus chen 'khor lo sdom pa*

An epithet of Muchen Sempa Chenpo. “Khorlo Dampa” is a Tibetan rendering of Cakrasaṃvara.

Muchen Sempa Chenpo

མུས་ཆེན་སེམས་པ་ཆེན་པོ། • *mus chen sems pa chen po*

Muchen Sempa Chenpo Könchok Gyaltsen (1388–1469) was a Sakya master born in the Mu valley of U. Late in his long life he became the second abbot of Ngor Monastery, which was founded by his teacher Ngorchon Kunga Zangpo. He founded Linga Dewachen Monastery in 1437 and Musu Yama Monastery in 1459, and was important in the transmission of the Sakya Lamdre teachings. “Sempa Chenpo” is a Tibetan rendering of *mahāsattva*, or “great being.”

Nāgārjuna

ཁྱུ་སྒྲུབ། • *klu sgrub* • *nāgārjuna*

Nāgārjuna was an Indian Mahāyāna Buddhist philosopher who may have lived around the second century CE. He is most famous for his treatises explicating the doctrine of emptiness and the Prajñāparamitā sūtras, which he is said to have recovered from the realm of the nāgās. Works such as the *Root Stanzas of the Middle Way*, or *Mūlamadhyamakakārika*, set forth the Madhyamaka school of Buddhist philosophy, which posits a “middle way” between eternalism and nihilism. He also composed advice to kings such as the *Letter to a Friend* (*Subhṛllekha*), and supplications to the Buddha. A later Nāgārjuna who was a tantric master at Nālandā Monastery should not be confused with the Madhyamaka master.

Naljor Jampal Zangpo

རྣམ་འབྱོར་འབྲུགས་དཔལ་བཟང་པོ། • *rnal 'byor 'byams dpal bzang po*

Naljor Jampal Zangpo (1789–1864) served as the fifty-first abbot of Ngor Monastery, from 1835 to 1842. He was the nephew of Jampa Namkha Chimé and the brother of Jampa Kunga Tenzin. He and his brother were both important teachers of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo.

Ngorchon

ངོར་ཆེན། • *ngor chen*

The title of Ngorchon Kunga Zangpo.

Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo

ངོར་ཆེན་ཀུན་དགའ་བཟང་པོ། • *ngor chen kun dga' bzang po*

Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo (1382–1456) was one of the most famous and influential Sakya teachers of the fifteenth century. A student of Sharchen Yeshe Gyaltsen and Buddhaśrī, he played an important role in the revitalization of the Sakya tradition following the collapse of Yuan patronage, with the establishment of Ngor Monastery in 1429, and the cultivation of support from Mustang and the Rinpung family in Shigatse. He famously engaged in a polemical debate with Khedrubje over the authenticity of the Sakya Hevajra teachings. Among his disciples were Muchen Sempa Chenpo, Gorampa Sönam Senge, and Śākya Chogden.

Noble Land

འཕགས་ཡུལ། • *'phags yul* • āryāvarta

An epithet for India.

oral and treasure traditions

བཀའ་གཏེར་སྒྲོལ། • *bka' gter srol*

The two primary transmission lineages of the Nyingma school. Teachings handed down through a long, unbroken oral lineage (*kama*) and through the direct lineages of discovered treasures (*terma*).

path of liberation

སྒོལ་ལམ། • *grol lam*

One of the two paths of the higher tantras, in which the practitioner does not rely on physical or mental supports in practice; the other being the path of skillful means.

path of skillful means

ཐབས་ལམ། • *thabs lam*

One of the two paths of the higher tantras, in which the practitioner relies on physical or mental supports in practice; the other being the path of liberation.

practice lineage

སྒྲུབ་བརྒྱུད། • *sgrub brgyud*

The lineage that emphasizes the direct personal realization and meditative experience of the teachings. This approach contrasts with the explanatory lineage.

Prajñāpāramitā

ཤེར་ཕྱིན། • *sher phyin* • prajñāpāramitā

“Perfection of Wisdom.” A foundational body of canonical Mahāyāna literature centered on the doctrine of emptiness, based on discourses delivered by Śākyamuni Buddha mainly at Vulture Peak in Rājagṛha. Retrieved from the realm of the nāgas by the Indian master Nāgārjuna (ca. second century CE), the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras cover over twenty percent of the entire Kangyur.

pure vision

དག་སྒྲུང་། • *dag snang*

Teachings received through visionary encounters with deities or masters in dreams, meditation, or waking life.

recollected treasure

རྗེས་བྲལ། • *rjes dran*

Treasures revealed through memory or recollection, often from a former life or past transmission.

rediscovered treasure

ཡང་གཏོང། • *yang gter*

Treasures once revealed and hidden again, destined to be rediscovered by another revealer.

Renewed Kadam

བཀའ་གདམས་གསར་མ། • *bka'gdams gsar ma*

The Geluk school started by Tsongkhapa.

Rimé

རིས་མེད། • *ris med*

An approach that values and preserves the full range of Tibetan Buddhist teachings without sectarian bias. While not unique to any one figure, it is particularly associated with Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo and Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Taye, who emphasized maintaining the integrity of each lineage while recognizing their shared wisdom and ultimate unity in purpose.

Seven Divine Dharmas

ལྷ་ཚོས་བདུན་ལྟན། • *lha chos bdun ldan*

The seven teachings of the Kadam tradition are the four deities (Śākyamuni, Avalokiteśvara, Acala, and Tārā) and the three sections of the Tripiṭaka.

signs of warmth

རྩོད་རྟགས། • *drod rtags*

Signs indicating advanced levels of realization attained through the tantric practices of generation and completion. Outer warmth includes a feeling of lightness and the absence of disease, inner warmth includes control of the subtle winds, and secret warmth manifests as the diminishing of mental afflictions.

Taklungtangpa Tashi Pal

སྟག་ལུང་ཐང་པ་བླ་མ་པཎ་སྟོན་པ། • *stag lung thang pa bkra shis dpal*

Taklungtangpa Tashi Pal (1142–1209/1210), one of the main disciples of Pagmodrupa, founded Taklungtang Monastery in about the year 1180, and with it the Taklung Kagyu tradition.

tantra and sādhanā classes

རྒྱུད་དང་སྒྲུབ་སྟེ། • *rgyud dang sgrub sde*

The two divisions of Mahāyoga: the class of tantra and the class of ritualized meditation practice.

Tartse Khenpo Namkha Chimé

ཐར་རྟེ་མཁན་པོ་ནམ་མཁའ་འཛི་མེད། • *thar rtse mkhan po nam mkha' 'chi med*

A title of Jampa Namkha Chimé of Ngor Monastery's Tartse Labrang.

ten great pillars

ཀ་ཆེན་བུ། • *ka chen bu*

The ten individuals who supported the explanatory lineages are the following: (1) Tönmi Sambhoṭa (b. 619), (2) Vairocana (eighth century), (3) Kawa Paltsek (eighth century), (4) Chogro Lu'i Gyaltsen (ninth century), (5) Zhang Nanam Yeshe Dé (mid eighth century–early ninth century), (6) Rinchen Zangpo (958–1055), (7) Dromtön Gyalwe Junge (1004–1064), (8) Ngok Lotsāwa Loden Sherab (1059–1109), (9) Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga Gyaltsen (1182–1251), and (10) Gö Khugpa Lhetse (eleventh century).

three secrets

གསང་གསུམ། • *gsang gsum*

The awakened body, speech, and mind of a buddha.

three yogas

ཡོ་ག་རྣམ་གསུམ། • *yo ga rnam gsum*

Mahāyoga, Anuyoga, and Atiyoga.

Tsangpa Gyare

གཙུང་པ་རྒྱ་རས། • *gsang pa rgya ras*

Tsangpa Gyare Yeshe Dorje (1161–1211) was the founder of the Drukpa Kagyu tradition, named after Druk Monastery, one of three institutions he established. He also founded Ralung Monastery, in 1180, which was the seat of the Drukpa Kagyu tradition. A member of the Gya clan that would continue to control Ralung until the seventeenth century, he was the most important disciple of Lingrepa, a student of Pagmodrupa. He is counted as the first in the line of Drukchen incarnations, although the second Drukchen would not be born until a few centuries after his death, when the Gya family line ended. As an author, Tsangpa Gyare is best known for his spontaneous songs of realization, rich with spiritual advice. He discovered a treasure cycle written by Tipupa for Rechungpa, The Six Cycles of Equal Taste, which is still an important teaching of the Drukpa Kagyu today.

Tsarchen

ཆར་ཆེན། • *tshar chen*

An abbreviation of Tsarchen Losal Gyatso.

Tsarchen Losal Gyatso

ཆར་ཆེན། • *tshar chen*

Tsarchen Losal Gyatso (1502–1566) was an important tantric Sakya master from the Mangkhar Valley in the Tibetan province of Tsang. He became the thirteenth abbot of Shalu Monastery, and in 1543 he was appointed as abbot of Dar Drangmoche, an addition to Chökhör Yangtse, the palace monastery of the ruling family. He established Lamdre Lobshe as a distinct teaching tradition and his closest students wrote down the instructions. After he passed away, the Tsarpa tradition was named after him and became a subschool of the Sakya.

two great charioteers

ཤིང་རྩ་ཆེ་གཉིས། • *shing rta che gnyis*

Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga, associated with the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra traditions, respectively.

two truths

བདེན་གཉིས། • *bden gnyis* • satyadvaya

The two categories used to determine the nature of phenomena and perception: conventional reality and ultimate reality. These are interpreted differently according to the various tenets.

twofold benefit

དོན་གཉིས། • *don gnyis*

Benefit for oneself and benefit for others.

Unexcelled Yoga

ལྷ་མེད། • *bla med* • yogottaratantra

The highest of the four classes of Buddhist Tantra according to the New Translation schools of Tibet, the other three being (1) Action Tantra, (2) Performance Tantra, and (3) Yoga Tantra.

vajra body

རྡོ་རྗེ་ལུས། • *rdo rje lus* • vajrakāya

The body united with wisdom. It is no longer an ordinary body but one with the qualities of the vajra, such as being unchanging, indestructible, and so forth.

Victor

ཁྱེལ་བ། • *rgyal ba* • jina

An epithet of the Buddha, symbolizing victory over the four māras. It is also translated as “conqueror” or “victorious one.”

vidyādhara

འཛིན་པ། • *rig 'dzin* • vidyādhara

Literally, “knowledge holder.” This title is given to accomplished practitioners of Vajrayāna. Also translated as “awareness holder.”

Vinaya

འདུལ་བ། • *'dul ba* • vinaya

One of the three collections of the Buddha’s teachings that focus on ethics, discipline, and the rules of monastic conduct.

yoga of one taste

རོ་གཅིག་རྒྱལ་འབྱེད། • *ro gcig rnal 'byor*

The third of the four yogas of Mahāmudrā; the others being (1) one pointedness, (2) freedom from elaborations, and (3) nonmeditation.

Yoga teachings

ཡོ་གའི་ཚོས། • *yo ga'i chos*

The teachings of Yoga Tantra.