



Radiant Sunlight of the Victors' Teachings

A Brief, First-Hand Account of the Liberating Life-Story of the Great Emanated
Treasure Revealer

by *Chokgyur Dechen Lingpa*

*To the sublime masters who have guided me on
The path to liberation, I pay homage!*

Thanks to the compassion of Pema Tötrengr Tsal,
Who looked after me through my successive lifetimes,
I have obtained the supreme freedoms and riches,¹ joined the Buddha's teachings,
And, driven by karmic propensities, coursed in the Dharma of Treasures.
Until the age of thirty-five, under obscurations' influence,
My childish mind made me inconstant in view and behavior.
Now that I am somewhat familiar with the nature of mind,
I make sure that my view and conduct always conform to the Dharma.
In my present situation, then, why am I writing my life story?
Well, it is so as not to disappoint the faithful.
In the vicinity of Namkha Dzö,² I entered human existence.
At the foot of Sangyel,³ I was born from my mother's womb.
At the foot of Yegyel,⁴ I was raised and grew up,
And in Yarkhilmé,⁵ the wish for Dharma arose.
My guiding Master, Künzang Choktrül⁶ gave me the refuge vows,
And thus I crossed the threshold into the Buddha's teachings.
I obtained authorization⁷ for White Tara and the Peaceful Guru.
In Shedrup Ling,⁸ I met with Tsewang Trinlé and,⁹
During the preparation for the Guru empowerment, feeling intense faith,
I had a vision of the guru, who in his kindness bestowed the four empowerments.
In my home area, Könchok Döndrup¹⁰ and others
Acted as my tutors and taught me to read and write.
Instructed by Tengyé,¹¹ I did my first retreat,
Practicing the approach for White Tara and the Peaceful Guru.
From the mantra-holder Rikdzin Pal,¹² I received practical instructions
For mantric rituals, and then headed to Central Tibet.
I saw then that I was under the care of the three roots,
And a mantrika guru pacified an illness-causing spirit.
In Palmé¹³ monastery, I stayed as a monastic recruit¹⁴
Under the care of Lord Chönyi Norbu.¹⁵

I obtained empowerments and instructions¹⁶ for the *Eight Pronouncements* of the
 Sugatas,¹⁷
 And trained well in the practices of ritual dance, mandala proportions, and
 melodies.
 For ten years, I joined the monastic assembly of Tsechu monastery,¹⁸
 And sublime masters bestowed upon me countless empowerments and
 instructions.¹⁹
 I trained in everything from the highest Great Perfection
 Down to the simplest dance,
 And I realized the immense kindness of my preceptors and instructors.
 From Tendzin Chöki Wangpo²⁰ I received
 Direct instructions for Mahāmudrā and Dzokchen and
 The pith instructions of sublime masters on
 The Heart Essence of the Great Perfection suffused my heart.
 I trained in the Nyingma melodies and dances from Püntsoḳ Ling,²¹
 And received ordination from the great Vinaya-holder, Taklung Rinpoché,²²
 Who taught me the way of monkhood.²³
 This incomparable protector, supreme emanation,²⁴
 Gave me the ripening empowerment for
 Ratna Lingpa's *Guru Heart Practice*.²⁵
 In Nabün Dzong,²⁶ I met with Chögyel Dorjé,²⁷
 Who gave me the secret pith instructions and taught me the Great Perfection.
 Following the command of the protector of beings, Situ Pema Nyinjé,²⁸
 Venerable Tendzin Namgyel bestowed upon me the *Guru's Heart Practice*.²⁹
 Following the master's command, I then went to Pelpung Monastery³⁰
 And encountered the second Maitreya.³¹
 Offering my undivided faith to the gracious
 Ngédön Tendzin Rapgyé,³² I received the bodhicitta vows.
 From then on, I received many empowerments and instructions,
 And in particular, cut through all my misconceptions of the view.
 Jamgön Lama Kongtrül Rinpoché bestowed upon me
 Empowerments, tantric explanations, and the ultimate pith instructions.
 The omniscient master Jamyang Khyentsé gave me
 Boundless empowerments and instructions, quintessence of the profound truth.
 These three were the masters who showed me the threefold kindness.³³
 From the supreme emanation, Zurmang Tendzin,³⁴
 I received the ripening empowerment for
 The Assembly of Sugatas of the *Eight Pronouncements*.³⁵
 Moreover, I relied on many other gracious masters,
 Such as Gajé Sang-Ngak Tendzin³⁶
 And Tendzin Jangchup Nyima,³⁷
 And received many sacred teachings.
 When I received explanations on sūtras and tantras from
 Jamyang Ngédön Kewang Zhendön,³⁸ my consciousness was liberated.
 I revealed profound Treasures in the sight of all,

Received their empowerments in visions,
 And applied them in my own experience.
 The omniscient Lord Karmapa,
 The eminent Sakya,³⁹ protector of beings,
 The Lord Drukchen,⁴⁰ and many noble beings
 Of the Drigung and Taklung lineages,⁴¹
 Practiced this sacred Dharma, and thus
 These profound Treasure teachings spread far and wide.
 A great number of scholars and practitioners became my disciples;
 They nurtured the Buddhadharmā of both teaching and practice.
 The three masters of Riwoché⁴²—the teacher and disciple Jédruṅg⁴³ and
 Phakchok,⁴⁴
 Along with Zhapdrung—gave me property and
 The following sites were established:
 The Palace of Secret Mantra in Akanishta Karma,⁴⁵
 Namkha Dzö, the Unchanging Sanctuary of Neten Chok,⁴⁶
 Pema Shelpuk in the sacred site of Dzomnang,⁴⁷
 And the mountain hermitage on Turquoise Lake in Gyamgyel Glacial Slopes.⁴⁸
 Thus initiating teachings of both exegesis and practice,
 With the kind support of the omniscient guru Khyentsé Wangpo,
 I then performed many Great Accomplishments—Drupchens—the foundation
 of the teachings.
 These good deeds are now recorded in one place—
 I have no qualities other than this.
 My greatest virtue has been doing three-year retreat,
 And now too, I focus entirely on pure altruistic intention.
 Many years have passed since the mantra holder, Pema Dödül⁴⁹
 Requested these words from Gyamgigül.⁵⁰
 This year, he overcame the hardship of our remoteness
 And, so as not to disappoint his efforts, I wrote this down
 On the tenth day of the seventh month of the Bull year,⁵¹
 In Yangdzong Ling⁵² and Namkha Dzö.
 I dedicate this virtue so that all beings may reach awakening—
 May the blazing splendor of auspiciousness adorn the world!



Translation Origin

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mChog gyur gling pa. “sPrul pa’i gter ston chen mo’i rnam thar gyi sa bon zhal gsung ma dang gter byung ’ga’ zhig ’bel gtam sna tshogs bcas phyogs bsdoms rgyal bstan nyin byed ’od snang.” In *mChog gling bka’ bum skor*. Vol. 36 of *mChog gling gter gsar*, 175–230. Paro: Lama Pema Tashi, 1982–1986.

mChog gyur gling pa. “sPrul pa’i gter ston chen mo’i rnam thar gyi sa bon zhal gsung ma dang gter byung ’ga’ zhig ’bel gtam sna tshogs bcas phyogs bsdoms rgyal bstan nyin byed ’od snang.” In *mChog gling bka’ bum skor*. Vol. 36 of *mChog gling bde chen zhig po gling pa yi zab gter yid bzhin nor bu’i mdzod chen po*, 191–197. Kathmandu, Nepal: Ka-nying Shedrub Ling monastery, 2004.

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1 The phrase “supreme freedoms and riches” (*dal ’byor*) refers to the eighteen freedoms and riches of a precious human life, which are listed in the *Chos rnam kun btus* as follows: “According to Mipham’s *Gateway to Knowledge*, the eight freedoms entail freedom from the following eight states: the four unfree non-human states, i.e., 1–3) beings from the three lower realms and 4) perceptionless gods; and the four unfree human states, namely 5) barbarians from the borderlands; 6) people with mistaken views; 7) [coming from] a land where a Buddha has not appeared; and 8) possessing defective faculties, such as being imbecilic, mute or incapable of communicating. Of the ten riches, five relate to oneself: 1) being human; 2) having all one’s faculties; 3) being born in a place where the Dharma has been propagated; 4) having an unperverted livelihood; 5) and having faith. These relate to oneself. There are five that relate to others: 1) That a buddha has appeared in this world; 2) that he taught the Dharma; 3) that the teaching endured; 4) that there are those who practice it; 5) that there are those who teach it. These are related to others.” Nor brang o rgyan, *Chos rnam kun btus*, Vol. 3: 3008.

2 Namkha Dzö (*Nam mkha’ mdzod*, Sky Treasury) is a sacred mountain in Nangchen. Alexander Gardner, “Chokgyur Lingpa.”

3 Sangyel (*gSang rgyal*, Secret King) according to Alexander Gardner, is a hill in Namkha Dzö. Alexander Gardner, “The Twenty-five Great Sites of Kham: Religious Geography, Revelation, and Nonsectarianism in Nineteenth-Century Eastern Tibet,” 24.

4 Yegyel (*Ye rgyal*, First King) is another hill in Namkha Dzö.

5 Yarkhilné (*Yar ’khyil gnas*, Upward Spiraling Place), another hill in Sky Treasury.

6 Künzang Choktrül (*Kun bzang mchog sprul*) was the reincarnation of the Treasure revealer Mingyur Dorjé (*Mi ’gyur rdo rje*, 1645–1667).

7 An authorization (*rjes gnang*) is similar to a tantric empowerment (*dbang*). According to Kyapjé Khen Rinpoché, such an authorization is given in the context of the three outer tantras (kriyā, upa, and yoga) while an empowerment is given in the context of the inner tantras (mahā, anu and ati yoga). Moreover, an authorization can only authorize its recipient to perform the practice himself, but not to transmit it to others. Kyapjé Khen Rinpoché, personal communication, 06/01/16.

8 Shedrup Ling (*bshad sgrub gling*). It is unclear which monastery this is.

9 Tsewang Trinlé (*Tshe dbang phrin las*), is also called *rGyal sras bla ma tshe dbang phrin las* in Könchok Gyurme’s biography of the tertön. dKon mchog gyur med, *gTer chen mchog gyur bde chen gling pa’i rnam thar bkra shis dbyangs kyi yan lag gsal byed ldeb*, 57.

10 Könchok Döndrup (*dKon mchog don grub*). According to Orgyen Tobgyal Rinpoché, Chokgyur Lingpa learned to read with his uncle. This might be the person referred to here. Orgyen Tobgyal Rinpoché, *The Life of Chokgyur Lingpa*, 2.

11 Tengyé (*bsTan rgyas*); it is unclear who this is.

12 Rikdzin Pal (*Rig dzin dpal*).

13 Palmé (*dPal me*) monastery refers to the Drigung Kagyü monastery Palmé Tekchen Evam Gatsel Ling (*dPal me theg chen e vaMi dga’ tshal gling*) in Nangchen. Gardner, “Chokgyur Lingpa.”

14 Monastic recruit here translates *grwa rgyun*. This translation is based on Dreyfus’ own translation of the word as “new recruit.” Georges Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, Kindle location 1123.

- 15 Chönyi Norbu (*Chos nyid nor bu*) was a Drikung lama cited as one of his main teachers in his long biography. dKon mchog gyur med, *gTer chen mchog gyur*, f. 26.a.
- 16 “Empowerments and instructions” here translated the phrase *smin grol*, which literally means “ripening and liberation,” namely, the ripening empowerments and liberating instructions. Jamgön Kongtrül defines these as the “two vital parts of Vajrayāna practice: the empowerments which ripen one’s being with the capacity to realize the four kayas and the liberating oral instructions enabling one to actually apply the insight introduced through the empowerments.” Kong-sprul Blo-gros-mtha’-yas, Padma Sambhava, and Mchog gyur gling pa, *The Light of Wisdom*, Vol.1, 280.
- 17 Pad ma ’byung gnas, *bDe gshegs sgrub pa bka’ brgyad skor* (Leh: Tseten Namgyal, 1971).
- 18 Tsechu monastery (*Tshes bcu khang*) was Chokgyur Lingpa’s first monastery in Nangchen. Kyapjé Khen Rinpoché, personal communication, 18/12/15.
- 19 Preceptor here translates khenpo (*mkhan po*), and instructor, lopön (*slob dpon*).
- 20 Tendzin Chöki Wangpo (*bsTan ’dzin chos kyi dhang po*)
- 21 Püntsock Ling (*Phun tshogs gling*). It is unclear which monastery this is.
- 22 Taklung Rinpoché (*sTag lung ma Dpa’ bo gtsug lag ’phreng ba VIII Chos kyi rgyal po*, c.1782–c.1840). Gardner, “The Twenty-five Great Sites,” 26.
- 23 “The way of monkhood” is a translation for *dge slong ngang tshul*. *dGe slong* technically refers to one who has received full ordination.
- 24 This is probably still Taklung Rinpoché.
- 25 Ratna Lingpa’s *Innermost Condensed Guru Heart Practice* (*Thugs sgrub yang snying ’dus pa*) Ratna gling pa, *Thugs sgrub yang snying ’dus pa* (Bylakuppe: Pema Norbu Rinpoché, 1984).
- 26 Nabün Dzong (*Na bun rdzong*, Misty Fortress) is the sacred site in Nangchen where Chokgyur Lingpa revealed his first Treasure casket. Gardner, “The Twenty-five Great Sites,” 171.
- 27 Chögyel Dorjé (*Chos rgyal rdo rje*, 1787–1859) was a Drukpa Kagyü tertön. Ibid., 26.
- 28 Pema Nyinjé (*Padma nyin byed*) was the ninth Tai Situ Rinpoché (1774–1853). Dudjom Rinpoche Jikdrel Yeshe Dorje, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, 198.
- 29 Tendzin Namgyel (*bsTan ’dzin nam rgyal*).
- 30 Pelpung (*dPal spungs*), Situ Rinpoché’s main monastic seat. According to Gardner, “*Dpal spungs thub bstan chos ’khor gling*, a Karma Kagyü monastery, was founded in 1727 by Si tu VIII Chos kyi ’byung gnas (c.1700–1774), whose previous seat had been Karma dgon, in Lha stod, south of Nang chen.” Gardner, “The Twenty-five Great Sites,” 1.
- 31 The second Maitreya (*Mi pham mgon po gnyis pa*) here might refer to Jamgön Kongtrül.
- 32 Ngedön Tendzin Rapgyé (*Nges don bstan ’dzin rab rgyas*, 1808–1864) was a Dapzang tulku (*Zla bzang sprul sku*). Gardner, “Chokgyur Lingpa.”
- 33 Masters who show threefold kindness (*bka’ drin sum ldan*) are teachers who confer empowerments, explain the tantras, and give pith instructions.
- 34 Zurmang Tendzin (*Zur mang bstan ’dzin*) refers to the Zurmang Tengah Tulku. Kyapjé Khen Rinpoché, personal communication, 18/12/15.
- 35 The *Assembly of Sugatas of the Eight Pronouncements* (*bKa’ brgyad bde gshegs ’dus*

pa) was a Treasure discovered by Nyangrel Nyima Özer (*Nyang ral nyi ma 'od zer*, 1124–1192). Gyatso, “The Logic of Legitimation,” 106. mNga bdag nyang ral nyi ma a'od zer, *bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa* (New Delhi: B. Jamyang Norbu, 1971).

36 Gajé Sang-ngak Tendzin (*sGa rje gsang sngags bstan 'dzin*).

37 Tendzin Jangchub Nyima (*bsTan 'dzin byang chub nyi ma*).

38 Jamyang Ngedön Kewang Zhendön (*Jam dbyangs nges don mkhas dbang gzhan don*).

39 The eminent Sakya most probably refers to Drölma Podrang Tekchen Trashi Rinchen (*sGrol ma pho brang theg chen bkra shis rin chen*, 1824–1865), thirty-fifth Sakya Tridzin, throne-holder of the Sakya school.

40 The Lord Drukchen is a reference to the head of the Drukpa Kagyü, who in that time would have been the Ninth Drukchen, Mingyur Wangyel (*'Brug chen IX Mi gyur dbang rgyal*, 1823–1883).

41 The above-mentioned were all guardians of Chokgyur Lingpa's Treasure teachings. Kyapjé Khen Rinpoché, personal communication, 18/12/15.

42 Riwoché (*Ri bo che*) is an important Taklung Kagyü (*sTag lung bka' brgyud*) monastery in Kham.

43 Jedrung (*rje drung*) here refers to the sixth rje drung incarnation, Rinchen Öbar (*Rin chen 'od 'bar*, 1830?–1855?). The Jedrung were one of the main incarnation lines of Riwoché monastery.

44 Phakchok (*Phags mchog*) here refers to the fourth Phakchok incarnation, Rinchen Lhündrup Drakpa Kunsel Nyima (*Rin chen lhun grub grags pa kun sel nyi ma*), the nineteenth throne-holder of Riwoché, born in 1830.

45 Akanishta Karma (*'Og min karma*) was one of Chokgyur Lingpa's Treasure sites in Nangchen. Gardner, “The Twenty-five Great Sites,” 171.

46 Neten Chok Gyurmé Ling (*gNas bstan mchog 'gyur med gling*) was the monastery established by Chokgyur Lingpa, and the seat of the Neten Chokgyur Lingpa (*gNas bstan mchog 'gyur gling pa*) line of incarnations. According to Gardner, “it is located in modern Ri bo che country, T.A.R., just south of the border with Qinghai province.” *Ibid.*, 24.

47 Misty Fortress (Pema Shelpuk (*Padma shel phug*, Lotus Crystal Cave) in Dzomnang (*Dzom nang*), Dergé, is a cave opened jointly by Chokgyur Lingpa and Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo, that was to become the main hermitage of the latter. *Ibid.*, 49.

48 The Turquoise Lake in Gyamgyel Glacial Slopes (*rGyam rgyal gangs mgul g.yu mtsho*). Gardner describes this site as follows: “Four thousand seven hundred fifty meters (15,580 feet) above sea level, to the west of Rdzong sar monastery in Sde dge, lies Seng rgod g.yu mtsho, the Wild Lion Turquoise Lake, a small blue mirror of water at the base of jagged cliffs.” *Ibid.*, 59.

49 Pema Dödül (*Padma bdud 'dul*).

50 Gyamgigül (*rGyam gyi mgul*) is identical to Gyamgyel, above.

51 August 31st, 1865.

52 Yangdzong Ling (*Yang rdzong gling*, Fortress Sanctuary).