



**To Nourish Faith**  
A Brief Account of the  
Wisdom Deeds of Our Root Guru,  
the Omnipresent Sovereign Tulku Urgyen Rinpoché

*by Kyapjé Chökyi Nyima Rinpoché*

*Unexcelled teacher, Blessed Buddha;  
sublime and undeceiving Sacred Dharma;  
field of accumulation, the Noble Sangha—  
unexcelled Three Jewels, grant auspiciousness, I pray!*

*Garland of gold mountains, our root and lineage gurus,  
when we pray to you one-pointedly with undivided faith,  
in your compassion bless us, that we actualize dharmata  
and become stalwart guides for infinite beings!*

Having opened with this flower garland of praise, I shall now turn to the main topic of discussion, the origins of our Dharma lineage.

To begin, the greatest friend of all sentient beings, the fourth guide of this aeon, the Blessed One, the Perfect Buddha, took birth in the forest at Lumbini in Nepal. His birth was accompanied by wondrous signs and omens. Later, in India, he manifested perfect buddhahood at the Vajra Seat in Bodhgaya, and set in motion the infinite Dharma wheels which are now compiled and classified as the Three Baskets (*tripitaka*) and the Four Sections of Tantra.

Then, at Vikramashila and glorious Nalanda, and other great monasteries, these pristine words of our Teacher were preserved by the sangha, through undivided study, contemplation, and meditation, which brought them to high levels of scholarship and accomplishment. Countless such sovereign practitioners emerged in this way—among them, the highly learned and realized great scholar Tilopa Sherap Zangpo; his student Naro Jñanasiddhi, most eminent among five hundred scholars; his successor, the learned and accomplished Tibetan translator Marpa Chökyi Lodrö; the supreme practitioner Mila Shepa Dorjé (Milarepa); and the Dharma Lord Gampopa, who was foretold by the victors.

After this, there emerged what are known as the Four Major and Eight Minor Dharma lineages. Of these, the Barom Kagyü emerged through Barom Darma

Wangchuk; the Kamstang Kagyü emerged through Karmapa Düsüm Khyenpa; the Phakdru Kagyü came through Phakdru Dorjé Gyalpo; and Shangtsalpa Tsöndru Drakpa gave us the Tsalpa Kagyü. These are the Four Major lineages. From these, there then emerged the Eight Minor or Eight Supreme lineages: the Drikung, Taklung, Tropu, Lingjé (Drukpa), Marpa, Yelpa, Yabsang, and Shuksepa Kagyü.

The Barom Kagyü lineage, stemming from the Dharma Lord Barom Darma Wangchuk, contains complete and unmistakable instructions for attaining a high level of accomplishment within a single lifetime. Such instructions are the very quintessence of the Three Baskets and the Four Sections of Tantra. They contain the path of means (the Six Yogas of Naropa) and the path of liberation (Mahamudra, the Great Seal), as well as empowerments and instructions for the Four Sections of Tantra, aural lineages, pith instructions, experiential guidance, and other special practices. All of this was preserved by Tishri Repa Karpo, the Dharma Lord's foremost disciple, and then successively transmitted and passed down by Lumé Dorjé of Tsangsar and other members of the Tsangsar clan, both tantrika and monastic, all the way to Orgyen Chöpel. In this way, the family and incarnation lineages of the Barom Kagyü teachings have been maintained without a break, since the beginning.

Next, Lama Orgyen Chöpel of Tsangsar took Könchok Paldrön, the noble daughter of the great tertön Chokgyur Dechen Lingpa, as his spiritual consort. Together they had four sons, the second of whom was Tulku Chimé Dorjé, whose own son was the glorious omnipresent sovereign, Tulku Urygen Rinpoché, our own root guru.

Tulku Urygen Rinpoché held all the Barom Kagyü empowerments and instructions mentioned above. He also received in full the empowerments, reading transmissions, guidance, and oral instructions of the profound treasures of the great emanation and treasure revealer, Tertön Chokgyur Lingpa. Over the course of his life, Tulku Urygen Rinpoché would spend more than twenty-one years practicing the heart-essence of the Mahamudra and Great Perfection in strict retreat, and he would also propagate these teachings by endlessly giving the ripening empowerments and liberating instructions to others.

Tulku Urygen Rinpoché, supreme Lord of Refuge and our precious root guru, was born in the Iron Monkey year of the 14th 60-year cycle known as Wrathful (the year 1920, according to the Roman calendar). He took birth in Nangchen, a province of Greater Tibet, amid wondrous signs and omens. The 15th Karmapa Khakyap Dorjé recognized him as the third incarnation of the guru of Lakyap Monastery in Nangchen, with both Nupchen Sangyé Yeshé and Tertön Guru Chöwang as his emanation basis. He had intentionally taken rebirth once again, for the benefit of the teachings and beings. The Karmapa enthroned him and gave him the name Karma Urygen Tsewang Chokdrub Palbar, "Blazing Splendor

of Supreme Siddhis, Life Force of Uddiyana's Awakened Activity.”

It was clear from early on that Rinpoché was the emanation of a great being, for even as a young child he felt intense renunciation and disenchantment. His heart was naturally saturated with love and compassion, with faith and pure perception.

Once he had grown a little, he excelled in his studies of reading, writing, and other fields of knowledge. He received many empowerments, reading transmissions, and oral instructions, as well as much advice, from his father, his uncles, and other exalted teachers. From a young age, he had the heartfelt wish to live in the mountains in solitary retreat.

Rinpoché's father, Tsangsar Chimé Dorjé, was the lama of Namgön Tupten Namdak Ling Monastery in Tsangsar. Rich in empowerments, transmissions, and instructions, he spent most of his time in the mountains, practicing in strict solitary retreat. His experience, realization, clairvoyance, and signs of spiritual mastery were evident for all to see. Rinpoché's mother, Yu Gatuk, possessed a gentle nature and had great faith in the Three Jewels. She was vigilant in her observance of karmic cause and effect, was kind and altruistic toward everyone, and was a serious practitioner. She was always diligently making offerings and giving generously.

Quite often I would ask Rinpoché about my grandfather Chimé Dorjé. In reply, he would say, “Well, I don't know that much. He was a lama with direct experience and realization, that's for sure, and he had clairvoyance, but saying such things only amounts to heaping praise on my own father. Still, if you like, I can tell you a story or two.”

In one such story, Chimé Dorjé was staying in strict retreat at the mountain hermitage of Dechen Ling, together with my father and other disciples. One of his students, a nun, received a message that her father had died very suddenly, and his body was now being taken to the charnel ground. Sobbing heavily, she cried out, “Please, tell Rinpoché what's happened! Ask him to do *phowa* (the transference of consciousness) from here! Ask him to guide his consciousness through the intermediate state!”

When the request was conveyed to Chimé Dorjé, he said, “Oh dear, oh dear! The poor things! Yes, of course! Arrange a shrine, and I'll do the guidance of consciousness for him.” He was using the *Dredger of Samsara (Khorwa Dongtruk)* liturgy, and then, when he came to the point in the guidance ritual when the consciousness of the deceased is summoned, he threw his head back incredulously. He tried a second time, and then told the attendants to pack the altar up. “Why? What's happened?” Tulku Urgyen Rinpoché asked.

“I've never heard of doing this guidance ritual before the person has actually died!” replied his father.

“But Rinpoché, they said the body is already on its way to the charnel ground.”

But Chimé Dorjé was insistent: “If I don’t even know where his consciousness has gone, I can’t see the use of performing guidance rituals like this.”

The nun was waiting for news of how the ritual had gone, and when Tulku Ugyen Rinpoché stepped outside she asked him, “Has Rinpoché finished yet?” He told her frankly what had happened, and she broke into a huge smile and went away laughing. He, on the other hand, was left extremely disconcerted. Later, though, the news arrived that while they were carrying her father’s corpse to the charnel ground, he’d taken a deep breath and come back to life, so he hadn’t actually died after all.

On another occasion, I heard from Dabzang Rinpoché that Chimé Dorjé had left handprints in rock. When I asked my father, Tulku Ugyen Rinpoché about it, he said “Yes, it’s true!” One morning, Chimé Dorjé had gone outside to freshen up, and was standing on the rocky ground outside his retreat hut. As he looked around, it dawned deep within him how all these appearances that we perceive are utterly unreal. He then had the thought, “I wonder what will happen if I touch my hand to that rock,” and as he reached out to touch it his fingers seemed to slip right through, sinking into the rock. As time passed, though, and people saw the handprint and started making prostrations and offerings to it, he wasn’t at all pleased, and said, “Well, that’s no good, no good at all.”

“The main thing to know about Chimé Dorjé,” my father would say, “is that he was someone who really persevered in practice. He was a treasure trove of empowerments, transmissions, instructions, and guidance, and he passed all these riches on to others without any discrimination or bias. But what’s the use in me talking about all these things?”

Other lamas such as Adeu Rinpoché and Dabzang Rinpoché recalled that Chimé Dorjé was very eloquent and that when he gave the reading transmission for the Kangyur and Tengyur, or when he gave other empowerments, transmissions, and instructions, his voice was pleasant, clear, and melodious, and so full of blessings that his voice alone could transform listeners’ minds.

When Chimé Dorje left his body and passed into parinirvana, the earth shook with tremors, and precious relics emerged from his ashes. Tulku Ugyen Rinpoché considered Chimé Dorjé one of his kindest gurus, having received from him the full transmission of the Kangyur and Tengyur, along with countless other empowerments, transmissions, and instructions of the Nyingma Kama, Terma, and other traditions.

In assembly with the great Sixteenth Karmapa Rangjung Rikpé Dorjé, my father Tulku Ugyen Rinpoché received the entire *Treasury of Precious Termas* (*Rinchen Terdzö*) from Karsé Kongtrül Palden Khyentsé Özer, as well as extensive profound instructions on Mahamudra and the Six Dharmas. Under the guidance of the master Kyungtrül Kargyam, he studied the general sciences, *The Way of the*

*Bodhisattva, The Three Vows*, and various major treatises, such as *The Root Verses of the Middle Way, Introduction to the Middle Way*, and *Four Hundred Stanzas on the Middle Way*. Rinpoché also received from Kyungtrül Kargyam many teachings on *The Profound Inner Principles, The Hevajra Tantra, The Sublime Continuum (Uttaratantra Shastra), The Guhyagarbha Tantra, The Compendium of Nyingma Tantras, The Seventeen Great Perfection Tantras*, and other profound texts.

He received many empowerments, transmissions, and instructions from Shechen Kongtrül, from Dzongsar Khyentsé Chökyi Lodrö, and from his own uncle Sang-ngak Rinpoché. He spent several months with Poda Khen Rinpoché, receiving teachings on the Whispered Lineage of the Great Perfection. And he received countless other empowerments, transmissions, and instructions from a host of other learned and accomplished masters.

From his paternal grandmother Könchok Paldrön, daughter of the great tertön Chokgyur Lingpa and mother of Chimé Dorjé, he received detailed instructions on the practices of generation and completion, as they had been given by the tertön himself. Rinpoché also learnt from her the ritual arts of dance, mandala construction, and melodies, of torma making and ornamentation, and how to play the various percussion and wind instruments, all according to the tertön's ritual tradition.

It was his uncle, Tsangsar Lama Samten Gyatso, who introduced Tulku Urgyen Rinpoché to the natural state, the true nature of mind, thereby becoming his root guru, a master in whom Rinpoché had such faith and pure perception that he saw him as a living buddha. He would helplessly shed tears at the mere mention of his name. When asked about this precious teacher, Rinpoché would say, "My uncle and guru, Samten Gyatso wasn't just learned, disciplined, and kind, but his realization was as vast as space. I think it's rare to find someone like him, when it comes to pointing out mind-nature.

"Many students would come from all over, far and wide, to request empowerments and teachings from Samten Gyatso, and he would always just say, 'This lama or that lama is much more learned and realized than me; better to go and request teachings from them.' And he would send them away. He didn't like having lots of disciples hanging around.

"When you asked him why he didn't like having lots of students around, he'd say 'Having students is a huge responsibility. To truly benefit them, you need to get them to recognize the nature of mind, and that's extremely difficult. Better for them to go and meet some truly qualified lamas—lamas who are learned and accomplished.'

"Nevertheless, there were always some students who were completely one-pointed in their faith and pure perception toward Uncle Rinpoché, and they refused to listen when he told them to go away. To them, Rinpoché pointed out mind-

nature, using all manner of means, and none of them failed to recognize it.” Tulku Ugyen Rinpoché regarded this as Samten Gyatso’s most extraordinary legacy.

My father followed many amazing masters. Among them, he viewed the Sixteenth Karmapa Rangjung Rikpé Dorjé not as a human being but as a living buddha. As such, Tulku Ugyen Rinpoché received many empowerments and instructions from him, and when he himself had to offer the Karmapa empowerments and instructions he did so with great faith and pure perception. He maintained similar great faith and pure perception towards other great lamas too, lamas such as Kyapjé Dudjom Rinpoché, Kyapjé Dilgo Khyentsé Rinpoché, Neten Chokling Rinpoché, and Poda Khen Rinpoché. They all acted as both guru and disciple to one another, offering and receiving between them many empowerments, transmissions, and instructions. Throughout it all, they maintained the purest samaya and deep harmony.

When many lamas and tulkus gathered together for these occasions, Tulku Ugyen Rinpoché would humbly sit at the back of the assembly, regarding the others with great faith and devotion, even though there were practically none among them who hadn’t received empowerments and transmissions directly from him!

For more than twenty-one years, one-pointedly, Rinpoché practiced the profound yogas of the two stages, in Kham, Tsurphu, Sikkim, and Nepal, at Nagi Gompa nunnery, and other places. He gave countless empowerments, transmissions, and instructions, and especially enjoyed giving pointing-out instructions. But in all these circumstances he kept a low profile.

Tulku Ugyen Rinpoché showed great affection for everyone he met, not just lamas and monastics but lay men and women too, and he treated everyone with respect. He didn’t like to give “hand-blessings”—the custom of blessing people by placing one’s hand on their heads—but preferred to touch foreheads with everyone. In all circumstances, he would stay humble, keeping pure perception towards all.

Again and again, he bestowed empowerments, transmissions, and instructions on large gatherings of lamas and tulkus, practitioners and public, always without sectarian bias. He did this for most of the major Kagyü lamas and tulkus, such as the four Kagyü Regents, and likewise for the major Nyingma lineage holders. He taught all sorts of people from different backgrounds—lamas, tulkus, khenpos, monastics, and laypeople from different schools and sects. He also traveled overseas, throughout the East and West, to give teachings, empowerments, and instructions there.

While still residing in Tibet, Rinpoché restored and rebuilt the Lakyab Jangchup Nordzin Chöling temple in Tsangsar, together with its inner supports and

offering articles, and the buildings that housed the sangha there.

When building the new temple at Nagi Gompa Nunnery (Nang Kyi Tongsel Ling) in Nepal, Rinpoché himself helped with the construction. In particular, he expertly crafted the three main statues in the temple with his own hands, as well as a thousand statues of Guru Rinpoché and the altars to house them.

When we bought land beside the Jarung Kashor (Boudha) Stupa and began building Ka-Nying Shedrub Ling Monastery, Rinpoché helped with the construction work there too, and was always on site. He would often go in person to purchase the building supplies, and whenever we suggested calling a taxi, he'd ask how much it would cost, and then, when we said it would cost 5 rupees, he'd say, "Better to spend that money on supplies, let's take the bus." Then Gyaltzen Dorjé or Sangyé Yeshé would accompany him on the bus.

My mother made tea and food for all the workers. She also helped with the construction, and even sold her coral, dzi, and other precious jewelry to help fund the building. Yet she never skipped her morning and evening practice sessions, and over the course of her life she completed thirteen sets of the *ngöndro* (the five times one hundred thousand preliminary practices). She also spent many years on retreat. She played a major role in overseeing the construction of the monastery, assisted by my younger brother, Chokling Rinpoché.

Eventually, the temple and its inner shrine supports came together, and when the work was, for the most part, finished, the monastery was inaugurated by the King of Nepal. We invited the supreme Sixteenth Karmapa, the four Kagyü Regents, and many other lamas and tulkus from all traditions to join us for the ceremony to consecrate the temple. Then, at the monastery, over the course of two months, the glorious Karmapa bestowed *The Treasury of Kagyü Tantras* (*Kagyü Ngakdzö*), along with a wealth of other empowerments, transmissions, and instructions. He also performed the sacred crown ceremony that liberates upon sight.

From then on, almost every year, one of the sovereigns of the Early Translation teachings would visit the monastery and bestow empowerments, transmissions, and instructions: Lamas such as Kyapjé Dudjom Rinpoché, Kyapjé Dilgo Khyentsé Rinpoché, and Kyapjé Shadeu Trulshik Rinpoché all came and bestowed various cycles of teachings, including from the Kama and Terma.

Great beings from all traditions—among them, the 41st Sakya Trizin Rinpoché, Kyapjé Minling Trichen Rinpoché, Kyapjé Drubwang Pema Norbu (Penor) Rinpoché, Drikung Kyabgön Rinpoché, Chogyé Trichen Rinpoché, and Kyapjé Chatral Rinpoché—came and graced the monastery with their presence, and bestowed empowerments, transmissions, and instructions.

In the same way, our lord of refuge Tulku Ugyen Rinpoché himself gave empowerments and transmissions to the four Kagyü Regents, and to the many

thousands of lamas, khenpos, tulkus, monastics, and laypeople from all traditions who came to see him. To his close students, he gave oral instructions again and again. In particular, to great lamas such as the Sixteenth Karmapa, Kyapjé Dudjom Rinpoché, Nangchen Adeu Rinpoché, Dabsang Rinpoché, Tarthang Rinpoché, and Tenga Rinpoché, he offered the empowerments, transmissions, and instructions for such teachings as *The Three Sections of The Great Perfection (Dzokchen Desum)* from Chokling's profound treasures. The mutual guru and disciple connection among all these lamas was strong and pure.

At the new monastery in Boudha, Ka-Nying Shedrub Ling, Rinpoché founded a monastic sangha, the sangha being the bedrock of the teachings. To this effect, the Sixteenth Karmapa graciously conferred all the novice and full vows on the newly ordained monks. Since then, without break, the monks of Ka-Nying Shedrub Ling have maintained the three foundational practices of a monastic sangha: regular purifying and mending ceremonies (*sojong*), the annual rains retreat (*yarné*), and the concluding ceremony for the rains retreat (*gakyé*). Since then, the sangha has been performing daily morning and evening group pujas, elaborate pujas on the tenth and twenty-fifth (and other special) days, and various annual drupchens, all without break.

As the great master Vasubhandu said, "First you should study properly, and then contemplate, and then you should apply yourself to meditation." In short, the monastery's sangha is following this edict. As a result, our sangha continues to grow each year. The monastery now houses an elementary school, a secondary school, a monastic center, a center for Higher Buddhist Studies (*shedra*), and a retreat center (at Asura Cave). In all these places, the monks' learning, expertise, and meditative practice continue to deepen and expand.

Rinpoché also built a new monastery, Ngedön Ösel Ling, at Swayambhu, and he established the Pema Ösel Ling retreat center at Asura Cave, the sacred practice place of Guru Rinpoché. There, he and my mother built a temple and shrine supports, as well as rooms and other facilities.

In addition to all his work at home, Tulku Urgyen Rinpoché also traveled extensively in Sikkim, Bhutan, and Nepal, giving empowerments, transmissions, and instructions, and presiding over *mani* and *vajra guru* group mantra accumulations.

However, the real heart of this noble master's life story is the fact that most of his disciples have developed sincere renunciation and disenchantment, true loving kindness and compassion, genuine faith and pure perception. They have a wholehearted resolve to practice the sublime Dharma in general and the nature of mind in particular, and by this means many of them are taming their minds and inner being. I hold this to be the most important part of my father's legacy.



In his later years, Rinpoché lived at Nagi Gompa, where he remained one-pointedly absorbed in the simple practice of dharmata, the intrinsic nature. Finally, at the age of seventy-six, on 13th February of the Wood Pig year, 1996, his wisdom heart dissolved back into basic space. At his passing, the earth shook, the sky was crystal clear, and all the dust settled. When his holy body was carried down from Nagi Gompa to Ka-Nying Shedrub Ling at the Jarung Kahsor (Boudha) stupa, thousands of people, both ordained and lay, lined the roads, with tears in their eyes, *khatas* and flowers of offering in their hands, and unparalleled feelings of anguish, faith, and devotion in their hearts.

The funerary pujas and cremation ceremony were lovingly and graciously attended by a great host of several hundred lamas, tulkus, khenpos, and disciples. Kyapjé Charal Rinpoché was there, and Kyapjé Chogyé Trichen Rinpoché, Dilgo Khyentsé Yangsi and Dudjom Yangsi Rinpochés, Shechen Rabjam Rinpoché, Dzongsar Khyentsé Rinpoché, Dzigar Kongtrül Rinpoché, Sangyé Nyenpa Rinpoché, Bero Khyentsé Rinpoché, Tarthang Rinpoché, Thrangu Rinpoché, Tenga Rinpoché, Tarik Rinpoché, Neten Chokling Rinpoché, Dodzong Rinpoché, Sogyal Rinpoché, Chögyal Rinpoché, Orgyen Tobgyal Rinpoché, Khyentsé Yeshé Rinpoché, Yongdzin Rinpoché, Gyatrül Rinpoché, Sachu Rinpoché, Zangzang Rinpoché, Ripa Jikmé Rinpoché, Tulku Jikmé Rinpoché, Trakar Rinpoché, Kushok Tsechu Rinpoché, Dungsé Shenphen Dawa Rinpoché, Khenpo Tsültrim Gyatso Rinpoché, Khenpo Pema Sherab Rinpoché, and Khenpo Namdröl Rinpoché, amongst others.

We were also joined by Tibetan ambassadors, Nepalese dignitaries, foreign ambassadors, and many thousands of lay and ordained practitioners, all coming to bear witness with tender, heartfelt faith. Following the cremation, Rinpoché's entire skull remained intact, his heart, tongue, and eyes fused together, and his ashes were full of multicolored relics, leaving his devoted disciples with multiple supports for their faith. These blessed relics can be viewed to this day.

*This life story, freely spoken to nourish faith, has been repeatedly requested by the khenpos, tulkus, vajra masters, and senior monks of our own monastery, Ka-Nying Shedrub Ling, as well as by disciples at Nagi Gompa, Asura Cave retreat center, and our other Dharma centers. On multiple occasions they have presented me with mandalas and katas, with the request that I compose our noble father's life story. Thus, at their insistent behest, I, the old man with the name Tulku Chökyi Nyima, the firstborn son of our father guru, wrote this down on the 10th day of the 9th month of the Earth Rat year, the Tibetan year 2135 (the Roman year 2008). May it bring goodness!*



### **Translation Origin**

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### **Tibetan Source**

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