

The History of the Hearing Lineage of the Profound and Secret Practice of Simhamukha¹

by Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo

Namo gurvyai dakini-simhamukhyai sarva satrun vighnan maraya phat.

Great mandala that vanquishes all sorcery,² sutra known as *Accomplishing All Mahayana Activities*,³ host of wisdom dakinis with the faces of lions – homage to you!

Glorious resplendence of a fine ocean unperturbed by dualistic thoughts, Glorious light which spreads primordial, naturally-arisen wisdom, Source of all the siddhis, life-force of all glorious dakinis, Dawn of the teachings' glory within the Land of Snow — *emaho*!

The sadhanas and activity liturgies of Simhamukha appear in *The Precept of the Net of Tantras*⁴ and bring together an ocean of oral instructions.

The History

The great lotsawa Baripa⁵ of Dring Tsam⁶ went to India in order to listen to, study, practice and translate the sutras and tantras written in Indic languages.

Afterwards he travelled to Nepal, where he received teachings from Chiterwa the Newar,⁷ and trained and conversed with him. During his stay in Nepal, Baripa engaged in dialogue and debate with the heretic teacher Bhavyaraja.⁸ Day after day, Bhavyaraja would defeat the lotsawa and win the debate. Despondent, finally one evening the lotsawa invoked his gurus, yidams and especially Achala⁹ and prayed to them for help.

The next morning the lotsawa triumphed in the debate, with the heretic Bhavya experiencing a devastating loss. Bhavya became furious, and warned Master Baripa, saying, "You've slipped into a bad habit! Now I will cast spells upon you. You will either be left defeated and humiliated in no more than seven days, or you will be forced by the power of my black magic to accept my teachings!" The lotsawa was overwhelmed with fear and rushed back to the great scholar Chiterwa. In a trembling voice, Baripa recounted the debate with the heretic Bhavyaraja, saying, "As soon as I won, Bhavya became enraged and told me that

he is going to cast evil spells which will destroy me within seven days! And if this is not the case, then the spells will force me to accept his teaching. What should I do?"The great Newar scholar Chiterwa replied, "O lotsawa! Do not be afraid! It seems you would rather kill yourself than accept this heretic's doctrine. Now, I will have to send you to India to train in averting the dark arts of life-taking evil spells with the great guru of Vajrasana. ¹⁰ Here, take from this box the powder of swift-footedness and rub it on your feet."So Baripa rubbed the powder on his feet, and he reached the Nepali lowlands that very same morning. After merely a half-day's travel, Baripa arrived at the Vajra Throne. ¹¹

Baripa then met with the great guru Vajrasana and presented his letter of introduction from the learned Chiterwa. He also offered one sho^{12} of gold as a gift to Vajrasana and related the story of his debate with the heretic teacher in great detail.

Guru Mahavajrasana replied, "O lotsawa! Do not be afraid of the heretic teacher! I have a variety of pith instructions for protection and reversal; one in particular is exceptionally profound and acute. In order to retrieve it, first you must prepare an excellent torma¹³ of flesh and blood on the evening of the tenth day of the month.¹⁴ While offering it, one-pointedly invoke and pray to the assembly of the Three Jewels and your gurus, yidams and dakinis. Then at dawn you will receive a prophecy from the dakinis."So the lotsawa prepared a ganacakra¹⁵ using four sang¹⁶ of gold and undertook the invocation. The gurus, yidams and dakinis paid heed and as a result granted him the following prophecy, proclaiming, "O lotsawa! Do not be afraid of the heretic! We will grant you protection!"The principle dakini of this assembly was the esteemed wisdom dakini Simhamukha, who counselled him, saying, "The supreme among all pith instructions, combining the red, black and mottled¹⁷ like an ocean of amrta which annihilates all, lies hidden about one *krośa*¹⁸ to the south of the Vajra Throne. Search there for an iron boulder that looks like a dead yak. Beneath it you will find black earth in the shape of a triangle. If you dig there you will find a small sealed chest covered by charcoal. Inside of this there is a rhinoceros leather chest. Inside of this there is a chest made of the bodhi-tree wood. This chest contains a silver chest. Within the silver chest is a precious chest of gold. Within the gold chest is a turquoise chest. Inside the turquoise chest is a lapis-lazuli chest. Within this is a ruby chest, within which, wrapped in maroon-coloured silk and human skin, you will find 'the fourteen-syllable fierce averting mantra,'19 written with the heartblood of all dakinis; it does not begin with om, and it does not end with svaha. It is ornamented by neither i's nor u's, neither o's nor e's. It is written without spaces between the syllables in one single continuous line. Once you have uncovered it, recite it every day twenty-one times, and you will be protected from all evil spells; you will avert all that is harmful, pacify all adversities and obstacles, and all siddhis and all that is favourable will come to you. If you recite it twenty-one times in the morning and strong disturbing negative thoughts arise, do not recite it any more!"With those words, Simhamukha vanished without a trace, like a

rainbow into thin air.

So the lotsawa left before the break of dawn, carrying with him a large red torma as an offering. Soon he reached a yak-shaped boulder. As instructed, he dug where he found triangular-shaped black earth, and first came forth the charcoal.

Then, as the prophecy foretold, he took out the chests, and so he revealed the lifeforce mantra of all the dakinis, the pith-instruction which is like an ocean of amṛta. In exchange for the treasure, the lotsawa placed a precious golden text in the chest and then hid it again just as he had found it.

The lotsawa then recited the mantra according to the pith instruction, day and night without interruption.

One day, at dusk, signs arose that the heretic had targeted the lotsawa with black magic, yet all the worldly dakinis and dharmapalas²⁰ sent by the heretic were unable to harm the lotsawa, so they became ashamed and left. Thus the lotsawa was able to avert the threat.

After the sun had set, the lotsawa managed to avert the cloud of worldly deities and spirits that had gathered. At dawn, the lotsawa was able to avert the cloud of activity dakinis.

Then the esteemed and foremost wisdom dakini Simhamukha appeared once again in the sky before the lotsawa and spoke, "O Baripa, the heretic teacher Bhavyaraja has vomited blood and lives no more!"Overjoyed, Bari Lotsawa returned to Guru Vajrasana and shared this news. Guru Vajrasana replied, "In these degenerate times, fearful sentient beings employ their negative emotions to win arguments. I am one such master," he lamented, covering his head in disappointment.²¹ Moved, Bari Lotsawa prostrated many times before his Guru and confessed, "O Guru! Not only have I averted this evil out of fear, I have also engaged in spells that caused the death of my opponent. So now I must bear the fault of having taken the life of another!" The great Vajrasana replied, "It would have sufficed merely to wear the mantra I have spoken of on your body, but you have recited the mantra day and night without interruption! Thus you have accumulated the fault of killing. Now you must exert yourself in purifying this bad deed. Do not return to me until definite signs arise that it has been purified."For one whole year, then, the lotsawa exerted himself in purifying this evil, during which time he did not have a single opportunity to meet his guru, the great Vajrasana. The close disciples of Vajrasana, without any signs of pride, treated Baripa with great kindness, bringing him food and liquor²² when possible, along with anything else he needed, all without the guru's knowing. When signs finally arose that Baripa had purified his evil deeds, and his guru's command, his wish, had been accomplished and fulfilled, he was once again able to meet his guru.

From then onwards, Baripa requested many teachings and became both learned and faithful. When he returned to Tibet, he benefited beings on a vast scale. Later still, he journeyed to the glorious Sakya monastery²³ and transmitted the pith instructions and related empowerments, sadhanas and activity liturgies to Sachen Kunga Nyingpo.²⁴

The instructions on Simhamukha were then transmitted to the precious teacher Jetsün Drakpa Gyaltsen,²⁵ the great Sakya Pandita,²⁶ the great Jetsün Phakpa,²⁷ Nyene Rongpo Dorje,²⁸ Rongpo Sangye Yeshe,²⁹ and the precious teacher of Rongpo, the learned Yakde Panchen.³⁰

Thus the uncommon practice of the wisdom dakini Simhamukha was established. This led many to gain visionary experiences of the deity, while the practice itself brought a constant rain of blessings.

The heart-essence mantra also reached the accomplished lady Jetsünma Timudra;³¹ the eminent scholar, the precious Samten Pal Zangpo;³² the Mantraholder of the degenerate time, the great Vajradhara, the realized Namkha Sangye Gönpo;³³ Rechen Kunga Darpo,³⁴ the heart-son Kunga Zangpo;³⁵ and finally the learned and accomplished master, the kind teacher, speech of infinite teachings, Champa Chökyi Nyima.³⁶

The History of the Special Lineage of the Uncommon Pith-Instructions

The realized Namkha Sangye Gönpo took birth in an area that belonged to the great and glorious Dharma centre of Ne Nying.³⁷ As he grew up, he joined Ne Nying where he listened, studied, and applied himself well. Then one day he fell ill with acute leprosy and experienced great hardship and fatigue.

One of his close vajra-brothers told him, "When such intense hardships befall you, practice Simhamukha, for it is said to help. Heeding his friend's advice for recovery, Sangye Gönpo then requested and received the transmission from Khenpo Denpa. When he returned to Ne Nying, Sangye Gönpo thought to himself, "If I apply myself in the recitation of this fourteen-syllable mantra, I will surely get better." However, his disease only worsened, and so Sangye Gönpo considered the situation. He thought, "I stay in this Dharma centre, but despite this I am not getting any better. What is the point, then, of remaining here any longer? I'll leave, and even though my body is not well, at least my mind is carefree and at ease. That way if my body fails, no one has to worry over me." He gave all his possessions to his vajra-brothers and sisters and set off in the direction of Shang Zambu. There, in the mountains of Zambu, he dedicated himself without concern for life or death to the recitation of Simhamukha. Yet still his leprosy did not improve, and eventually his retreat supplies ran out.

When Sangye Gönpo experienced this terrible hardship, one night, in a dream, an unusually well-turned out girl appeared. She spoke to him and said, "If you

remain here your leprosy will not heal. Leave, and go quickly to the valley of Takna. 40 There great siddhis await you!" With these words, the girl vanished in the air like a rainbow. Sangye Gönpo awoke and reflected upon what he had witnessed in his dream, wondering, "Will my disease really be healed? Either way, I will go in search of Takna." So Sangye Gönpo left, walking down from his place of meditation. He asked everyone he met along the way where Takna was, but there was not a single person who knew its location.

One evening when he became tired, he lay down to sleep in an alleyway. Once the burning, stabbing pain had subsided slightly, providing some comfort, he fell asleep. In his dreams, the girl appeared once again, with the words, "Tomorrow your search for Takna will end." And then, she vanished.

Sangye Gönpo awoke and thought to himself, "What kind of siddhis will I receive if I find Takna tomorrow? If I meet a healer who can help me, that would be my siddhi. But I doubt I would meet someone like that. Three Jewels, look upon me with compassion!"As he began to cry, a young girl holding a bowl full of soup and pastries approached, stopping in front of Sangye Gönpo. "Eat this. It [will ease] the misery of your sickness. Where are you from?" she asked, offering Sangye Gönpo some food."I came from Ne Nying," Sangye Gönpo replied and told the girl his story in great detail. "So now I am searching for Takna.""Traveller, have you not yet found Takna?" the young girl asked.

Sangye Gönpo replied: "No, I haven't found Takna. I have been staying here out of exhaustion." Don't you know?" the girl asked with a laugh. "Traveller, you keep searching for Takna, but you're already here!" With another laugh the young girl continued on her way.

So Sangye Gönpo, the kind teacher, again took up the practice of Simhamukha. Though his leprosy did not heal, he felt at ease.

One night, though, when he became saddened, the girl from before appeared again in his dreams. She said, "On this, the upper side of the valley, there is a northern facing cave. Go there and you will receive the siddhis," and then vanished like a rainbow into the air.

The kind teacher proceeded to ask the locals about the cave. "We didn't know there was a cave there. You should search for it," they replied.

As this kind teacher encountered no one who knew anything about the cave, he went to search for it himself, but still couldn't find it.

The girl who gave him food the night before appeared again, and said, "Traveller, since your body is not well you cannot rest." I'll say! You told me that there is a northern facing cave around here, and I went looking for it," he replied. "It is up there!" she scolded, showing her anger, which made Sangye Gönpo's body freeze

and disturbed his mind.

Sangye Gönpo then went to stay in the cave, and practiced there. The pain of his disease became so strong that he was on the verge of falling unconscious.

Just before midnight, a bright light appeared, and he heard terribly loud stomping noises. The five families of Simhamukhas together with retinues of hundreds of thousands had appeared in actuality within his cave! In an instant they began to partake of Sangye Gönpo's aggregates of flesh and blood as an elaborate feast. Sangye Gönpo fainted in that very moment.

When he finally came to his senses, he found that all the pus and blood and wounds on his body were completely removed without even a trace remaining, while pus and blood covered his seat and the entire cave. Fully recovered from his ailment, Sangye Gönpo finally found physical and mental ease.

The five classes of Simhamukhas then granted Sangye Gönpo all the outer, inner and secret empowerments, the sadhanas and activity liturgies in their entirety, and then actually dissolved into the cave itself.

It was thus that the precious, the realized, the great lord of yogins, Repa Namkha Sangye Gönpo was healed from his disease, and was thereafter accompanied by Simhamukha wherever he went.

Sangye Gönpo continued to feel blissful, and when the auspicious time had come for his heart disciple, the noble and supreme, great Repa Kunga Darpo to take hold of his lineage, Sangye Gönpo travelled to Shang Sanglung.⁴¹

Once there, Sangye Gönpo asked if a yogin resided at the monastery. One person replied, "Except for that crazy yogin who acts inappropriately towards the nuns, there hasn't been a dharma practitioner residing at length." The kind teacher thought to himself, "I wonder whether this is the yogin who will become my lineage holder." After invoking and praying to the dakini for only a short while, a black person appeared. "What do you need?" he said.

The precious teacher replied, "I have a goal I aim to accomplish here." The black person replied, "What brings you here? Except for the great Repa, the lord of the yogins, Kunga Darpo, nobody resides here. If you have a message for him, I will deliver it." The kind lama replied, "Please tell him that a pith instruction awaits him." The black person went in, and immediately Repa Kunga Darpo stepped outside. The moment the lamas met they felt that they had been connected as teacher and student in their past [lives]. Kunga Darpo prostrated before Sangye Gönpo and put his feet on his head.

Then, with devotion he made a request, "Please be so kind and bestow your pith-

instructions upon me. Last night I had a very auspicious dream..."Sangye Gönpo replied, "Please share your dream without leaving out any details." Last night in my dream, a very beautiful girl with her hair tied in a top knot appeared. She was holding a kila that bore the face of Simhamukha and a kapala filled with amrta. She handed me both and laughed. Then I woke up feeling delighted and happy." The two lamas went inside where they offered a ganacakra. Kunga Darpo then asked, "Please kindly bestow your pith-instructions in their entirety to me, without leaving anything aside." Sangye Gönpo replied, "I will give everything to you. Tonight is an auspicious time, for it is the twenty-fifth day (the dakini day). If I give you the transmissions tonight it will be extremely auspicious. Following an excellent ganacakra and a gold mandala offering, I will first perform the sadhana and then perform the self-initiation." So that evening Sangye Gönpo gave the outer empowerment, at midnight the inner empowerment, and, finally, in the early morning the secret empowerment.

When the transmissions had finished Sangye Gönpo folded his hands before his head and said, "Now I've granted you the empowerments, sadhanas, pith-instructions, clarification and activity liturgies of the dakini. This is a treasure that needs to be kept secret. Now, you should follow my instructions with perseverance and engage in authentic practice to delight the dakini." The two lamas had formed a heart connection and exchanged many oral instructions. Sangye Gönpo warned, "These instructions should not be bestowed upon more than one lineage holder at a time. The seal of secrecy has to be firm and the practice commitment maintained." Then the precious teacher meditated upon the teachings in the south, and the great Repa Kunga Darpo dedicated himself to the sadhana practice completely.

The lineage of the outer empowerments were then transmitted to the lord of yogins, the heart-disciple Kunga Zangpo, who in turn transmitted it to my teacher Chökyi Nyima.

The Uncommon Lineage

The uncommon lineage of the inner and secret empowerments and activity liturgies of the white, black and varied, is:

Dharmakaya Samantabhadra in union,

The wisdom dakini Simḥamukha,

The unequalled Guru of Uddiyana in union,

The realized Namkha Sangye Gönpo,

The destroyer of illusion, the great Repa Kunga Darpo,

The Mantra-holder Tsöndru Senge, 42

From whom my root teacher Chökyi Nyima received the teachings on

Simhamukha. This concludes the history of the lineage of Simhamukha that inspires faith.



Translation Origin

Translated by <u>Samye Translations</u>, 2018 (trans. Stefan Mang, Peter Woods and Kaleb Yaniger). Edited by Corinne Ewen.

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Bibliography

Tibetan Source

'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po . "zab gsang seng gdong snyan brgyud kyi lo rgyus sgrub thabs las tshogs dang bcas pa'i man ngag gi yi ge gces btus rin chen bum bzang zhes bya ba bzhugs so/ grub chen sangs rgyas mgon po nas brgyud pa'i bo dong lugs." In *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo*/ New Delhi: Shechen Publications, 2007–2008. Vol. 32: 929–943.

1 In the following historical narrative Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo recounts the origin of the teachings of Simhamukha and how they have been subsequently passed down to him. In his account Jamyang Khyentse closely follows the famous story of their origin as found in the teachings connected to the lineage of Bari Lotsawa (ba ri lugs). The following narrative was extracted from a cycle of pith-instructions following Bari Lotsawa's lineage written by Jamyang Khyentse and entitled "The Excellent Vase of Precious Jewels: Selected Pith-Instructions on the History, Sadhana and Activity Liturgies of the Hearing Lineage of the Profound and Secret Practice of Simhamukha, The Bodong Tradition of the Accomplished Sangye Gönpo" (zab gsang seng gdong snyan brgyud kyi lo rgyus sgrub thabs las tshogs dang bcas pa'i man ngag gi yi ge gees btus rin chen bum bzang zhes bya ba bzhugs so/ grub chen sangs rgyas mgon po nas brgyud pa'i bo dong lugs).

2 The great mandala that vanquishes all sorcery (byad ma 'bum rdug gi 'khor lo chen mo)

3 The sutra known as Accomplishing All Mahayana Activities (theg pa chen po las thams cad grub pa zhes bya ba'i mdo)

4 The Precept of the Net of Tantras (Rgyud drwa ba sdom pa'i rgyud)

5 Bari lotsawa (ba ri lo tsA ba, 1040–1111) was born in Kham in 1040. He spent nine years (1073–1082) studying in India with various teachers and returned to Tibet in 1082. During these years Bari Lotsawa studied with several Indian teachers, including many who supported him in his translation. Upon his return to Tibet, Bari Lotsawa headed Sakya monastery (Sa skya dgon pa) for a period of ten years following the death of Khön Könchok Gyalpo (Khon dkon mchog rgyal po, 1034–1102) in 1102. He also acted as the tutor and teacher of Khön Könchok Gyalpo's son Sachen Kunga Nyingpo (Sa chen Kun dga' snying po, 1092–1158).

6 Bring Tsam (*'bring mtshams*) is the name for an area near the Tibetan-Sikkimese border and thus described as the northern gateway (*byang sgo*) of Sikkim.

7 Chiterwa (*spyi ther ba*) was a student of Naropa (956–1040) and also one of Marpa Lotsawa's (1012–1097) main teachers. While there appears to be no independent biography of Chiterwa, he is frequently mentioned within Marpa Lotsawa's biography. Thus for their interaction, see: Tsang Nyön Heruka, *The Life of Marpa the Translator*, transl. by the Nalanda Translation Committee, (Boulder: Prajña Press, 1982), xxvii, 10–11, 39, 107, 111, 202.

8 Bhavyaraja (skal ldan rgyal po)

9 Achala (mi g.yo ba)

10 Bari Lotsawa studied with Amoghavajra (don yod rdo rje), a great tenth century Indian pandita, who received the title Vajrasana (rdo rje gdan pa), 'the guru of Vajrasana', because he was the abbot of Vajrasana, the Vajra Throne, in modern day Bodh Gaya in India. On invitation of Bari and other Tibetan lotsawas Amoghavajra is said to have travelled to and taught in Tibet. Amoghavajra's teacher was likewise an abbot of Vajrasana and is thus also referred to as Vajrasana. Both teachers worked closely together with Tibetan lotsawas. In Tibetan the two teachers bearing the same name are often distinguished by referring to them as Vajrasana the greater (rdo rje gdan pa chen po) and Vajrasana the younger (rdo rje gdan pa chen po). Generally it is stated that Bari Lotsawa studied with Amoghavajra that is Vajrasana the younger. However, in this text Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo continuously calls Baripa's teacher Vajrasana the greater (rdo rje gdan pa chen po). Thus, it may be the case that Bari Lotsawa studied with both teachers, or that Jamyang Khyentse used the adjective

'great' (chen po) to honour Vajrasana. In order to account for this ambiguity, we have rendered Bari Lotsawa's teacher's name as 'the great guru of Vajrasana' (bla ma rdo rje gdan pa chen po).

11 That is Bodh Gaya.

12 Sho (zho) was a Tibetan weight unit. 1 sho is about 3.7 grams. Sho was also used for the Tibetan currency from about 1640 until 1959 and refer to one gold coin.

13 A torma (*gtor ma*), *bali* in Sanskrit, is a propitiatory oblation made from various foods.

14 That is the tenth day of the lunar calendar.

15 The tantric feast of the ganacakra (*tshogs kyi 'khor lo*) involves the offering of *bali* (*gtor ma*).

16 Sang (*srang*) was a Tibetan weight unit equivalent to the Chinese liang (tael). 1 sang is about 37.3 grams. 1 sang corresponded to 10 sho.

17 The red, black and mottled (*dmar nag khrag gsum*) probably refers to three different kinds of pith-instructions that are brought together in this practice of Simhamukha.

18 Krośa is an ancient Indian measure of distance. One krośa is about 3.5 km.

19 The fourteen-syllable fierce averting mantra (*grog sngags drag zlog yi ge bcu bzhi pa*) is Simhamukha's principal mantra "a ka sa ma ra ca śa da ra sa maraya phat".

20 Note that the terms dakini and dharmapala here do not refer to Buddhist deities, but rather fierce worldly spirits who obeyed the heretic teacher's orders.

21 This implies Vajrasana's disappointment over the fact that Bari Lotsawa used the profound teaching merely to settle a personal dispute.

22 Food and liquor (*zas chang*) here refers to the items necessary to perform his daily Vajrayana offering rituals.

23 Sakya Monastery (*sa skya dgon pa*) is the head monastery of the Sakya school, located in Tsang province in Central Tibet, founded by Khön Könchok Gyalpo in 1073. It is named after the white-coloured or pale (*skya*) earth (*sa*).

24 Sachen Kunga Nyingpo (sa chen kun dga' snying po, 1092–1158)

25 Jetsün Drakpa Gyaltsen (*rje btsun grags pa rgyal mtshan*, 1147–1216)

26 Sakya Pandita (sa skya paN+Di ta, 1182–1251)

27 Jetsün Phakpa (*rje btsun 'phags pa*) aka Chögyal Pakpa (*chos rgyal phags pa*, 1235–1280)

28 Nyene Rongpo Dorje (*nye gnas rong po rdo rje*) could be Rongpo Dorje Gyaltsan (*rong po rdo rje rgyal mtshan*, 1282–1325).

29 Rongpo Sangye Yeshe (rong po sangs rgyas ye shes)

30 Yakde Panchen (g.yag sde pan chen, 1299–1378)

31 Jetsünma Timudra (*rje btsun ma tis mu dra*)

32 Samten Pal Zangpo (bsam gtan dpal bzang po)

33 Namkha Sangye Gönpo (nam mkha' sangs rgyas mgon po)

34 Rechen Kunga Darpo (re chen kun dga' dar po)

35 Kunga Zangpo (kun dga' bzang po)

36 Champa Chökyi Nyima (*byams pa chos kyi nyi ma*)

37 Ne Nying (*gnas rnying*) was an important monastery in upper Nyang (*nyang stod*) in Tsang (*gtsang*) established during the reign of King Ralpachen (~806–838)

38 Khenpo Denpa (*mkhan po gdan pa*)

39 Shang Zambu (*shangs zam bu*) is considered the principal pilgrimage site of the Tsang region. It is especially associated with Guru Padmasambhava and the terma-

- treasure tradition. 40 Takna valley (*rtag sna zhes bya ba'i lung*) 41 Shang Sanglung (*shangs sang lung*) 42 Tsöndru Senge (*brtson 'grus seng ge*)