

THE WONDROUS LIGHT OF
LUNAR NECTAR

BY DILGO KHYENTSE TASHI PALJOR



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THE WONDROUS LIGHT OF LUNAR NECTAR

The one who seized the citadel of the awakened intent of primordially pure space, and who met everyone with spontaneous compassion to the greatest degree – In remembrance of this yogin of the essential and Supreme Vehicle, I will compose this biography devoid of embellishment or understatement.

This sacred lord guru was born near the glorious Sakya monastery of Galenteng, which was founded by Ga Anye Dampa near Chogyel Derge Lhundrub Teng Monastery. Although he was initiated into a religious life [in a monastery], he conducted himself in a rough manner. He would wrap stones with animal hide held by a yak-haired rope and keep this [weapon] around his waist, as he would constantly engage in fighting.

Once when he was on his way home after evening group practice, he saw a mountain surrounded by a grassy meadow with mist rolling in. Atop this mountain sat two small, white retreat houses. At this sight, he thought

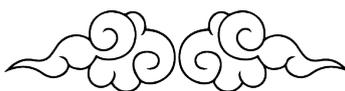
over and over about how he must live such a life in retreat.

In fact, he went to a monastery where he attended a literacy teacher and stayed in retreat on the Element Taming [Vajrapani].

During breaks, he read the biography of venerable Milarepa, and continuously recollected: “Now, I must rely upon a qualified guru in order to perfectly accomplish the doctrine.”

He continued to attend his teacher but received the following reprimand: “Other people can complete the recitations for the Element Taming [Vajrapani] in one month, but you are distracted with these texts and you have not even accomplished the recitations in two months!” Despite this scolding he continued to read Milarepa’s biography and other texts.

He completed enough recitations for the thousand-armed (Avalokiteshvara) and



performed a fire offering ritual. Then, over and over again, he asked himself: “Which guru should I properly rely on?” He heard about Patrul Rinpoche’s life story, and as some others were about to seek him out, he decided to go too.

Without telling anyone else, Kunga Pelden confided in his mother that he would be leaving for Dzachuka to meet Patrul Rinpoche. With tears in her eyes, his mother looked and did not say anything. Kunga grabbed some travel provisions, and while he was leaving his mother broke down in tears. He reached the valley of Dza Mamo Khar¹ in Dzachukha when Patrul Rinpoche was teaching on the *Bodhicharyavatara*. He arrived and received the [last] chapter concerning dedication. Then he received the [entire] *Bodhicharyavatara* from Mura Choktrul Padma Dechen Zangpo although he did not gain a stable understanding.

When he received teachings on [Nagarjuna’s] *A Letter to a Friend* from Gemang Wonpo Orgyen Tendzin Norbu, he gained a stable understanding, and so he thought: “I have become a suitable vessel to rely upon this guru.” He was certain about this, and he said he never hoped to receive empowerments, instructions, or advice from any guru other than Gemang Wonpo Orgyen Tendzin Norbu.

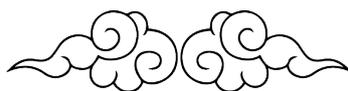
Won Rinpoche said: “Look over a text and you might gain some knowledge. In general, study is important at the outset.” Won Rinpoche took care of him for a few years and Kunga Pelden studied texts. “But I had great hopes of practicing meditation,” he said, and he frequently requested [teachings].

“At that time,” Kunga said, “I practiced the Sakya ‘Time of the Path’ without interruption,² and I did my best to dedicate ritual cake offerings while using my ritual bell and hand-drum.”

Beside this, he enthusiastically and diligently received, studied, and practiced Longchenpa’s Trilogy of Natural Ease (Ngalso Korsum) and The Seven Treasuries, [Ngari Panchen Pema Wanggyal’s] *Ascertaining the Three [Sets of] Vows, Bodhicharyavatara, The Root Stanzas of the Middle Way: Wisdom, the Teachings of Maitreya, the empowerment of the two main volumes of The Heart Essence of the Great Expanse (Longchen Nyintik), creation stage practices, the practice of the channels, winds, and the physical yogas, The Unexcelled Primordial Wisdom (Yeshe Lama), The Three Phrases that Hit the Key Points, and much more.*

In particular, since Won Rinpoche reached the end of practice within one lifetime, he bestowed the empowerment, profound instructions, and oral-transmission of *The Wish-Fulfilling Jewel of the Guru’s Inner Essence (Lama Yangtik Yizhin Norbu)*. On the day that there was an exchange of gifts in reciprocity for the teachings, Won Rinpoche received a fine hanging-scroll of the Omniscient Longchenpa from my old father Dilgo Tashi Tsering. Rinpoche said: “This is a good interdependence,” and he gave it to the lord guru, Kunga Pelden.

Won Rinpoche instructed: “Now there is no need for you to apply yourself to studying texts. You need only go to the mountains on retreat and practice your meditation. Whatever you find to eat, eat it. Whatever clothes you come across, put them on. Food that others may offer, rituals for the dead, and bestowing



empowerments—there is no need for such things. Go meet Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo and exclusively receive the essential instructions for [Longchenpa's] *Finding Rest in Illusion* then stay in a retreat near [Khenpo] Zhenga's place."

"Nothing can compare to receiving the essential instructions on *Finding Rest in Illusion* from my root guru, Won Rinpoche," thought Kunga Pelden. "However, since it is my guru's command, I must meet Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo and receive the teaching as my guru instructed." Thinking this, he left for his homeland.

Along with a few monks from Galen Monastery, he went to Dzongsar to meet Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche, who gave the Hevajra *Gyu lam* empowerment as well as the blessings and instructions for Khecara in an extensive manner.

Between his explanations of the instructions Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo gave supplementary and additional talks. "These days, in the current times, there are many prideful people who say they have renounced [cyclic existence] and are free from activities. If foreigners came to Tibet and said that they must abandon the Three Jewels, they would immediately agree with them. I am in a state of bustling distraction, but still, if they were to place my head on the threshold, bring an axe and say: 'If you don't abandon the Three Jewels, we will cut your throat with this axe.' I wouldn't abandon the Three Jewels even with my words. I would gladly answer them. These days there are Buddhist practitioners who have no substance at all, only great renown."

When other friends were about to depart [the teachings], they made many promises to continuously practice the 'Time of the Path' Hevajra and complete the fundamental recitation total for Khecara.

Kunga Pelden said: "In the past, I practiced the 'Time of the Path' and made ritual cake offerings [to the deities], but it has been several years since I stopped. I promised that I would practice *The Guru's Inner Essence* in a mountain retreat."

Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo said: "A kha kha, I have conferred empowerment and instructions for Hevajra and Khecara on you, and I take any wrongdoings of this upon myself. It was the wrong occasion," as he pulled on his cheek.

"Or, I could consistently recite the *Ashta Chod Rog*³ and the three Om(s) thirty-three times a day," Kunga Pelden said.

Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo replied: "Do whatever you like."

"I will continuously recite the approach [recitations] for *Ashta* and Khecara," he said.

Having offered the text and the essential instructions for *Finding Rest in Illusion*, Kunga Pelden requested the instructions and oral transmission. "You can receive them from your root guru as I do not know the instructions for *Finding Rest in Illusion*," replied Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo. "He never gave me the teachings," Kunga Pelden said. Then Kunga Pelden stayed in a lonely mountain retreat without any bustling distraction.

He received the empowerment and instructions for *The Guru's Inner Essence* and practiced



without interruption the guru yoga of [Longchenpa's] *The Stages of Guru Practice: The Ocean of Attainments* and the guru yoga of the smaller aural transmission of *The Natural Manifestation of Primordial Wisdom*.

He exclusively practiced the inner guru yoga that is devoid of elaborations. On the tenth days of the waxing and waning phases of the month he offered extensive tantric feasts. He accepted whatever clothing and other valuable provisions were given as offerings. Whatever offerings people gave for the dead or for the living, whether great or small, he used them to make woodblocks for texts such as *The Sutra of the Wise and the Foolish* and *A Hundred Deeds*, and he placed them in the Dzogchen Monastery's printing house.

He lovingly protected the wild animals and the various birds by using methods such as the conservation law of sealing the mountains and valleys. He accepted a great amount of salt, which he gave to the wild animals. Through such actions, he nurtured wild animals in the manner of livestock.

Kunga Pelden had disciples who were a calling distance or about a league away in all directions. He made his students enter thatched meditation huts to practice only unelaborate meditation in silence. He advised his students not to collect food offerings or to keep any texts other than *The Guru's Inner Essence*, the Seven Treasuries, and the cycle of The Heart Essence of the Great Expanse.

Kunga Pelden did not have even a hand-drum or a ritual bell for performing ceremonies. He collected a lot of supplies for ritual feast offerings and delicious foods and drinks which

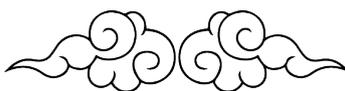
he generously gave to the birds, wild animals, and the poor. When many ordinary people gathered, he taught them the essential points about karmic causes and results, taking refuge, generating the intentional mind of awakening, and the four causes of the Blissful Realm in a concise and easily understandable manner. He thus encouraged them to engage in virtue.

At some point, he developed a sickness of the white channels which caused him weariness. Due to this he exclusively engaged in the practice of removing obstacles in the body, as found in *The Guru's Inner Essence*. He did not take any other treatment or medicine, and he was freed from the sickness.

He said, "By supplicating the guru, vital provisions will come naturally even if you are staying in a pleasant mountain retreat. In places without water, you can say 'Let water arise here!' Then, when you dig for it, water will emerge."

In his familial line there have been many who did not live long, but since he practiced the longevity practice of *The Wish-Fulfilling Jewel of the Guru's Inner Essence*, he was able to live for more than seventy years.

"At the time of engaging in the longevity practice, one needs to hold the wind in the center of the heart. Doing so ensures there is no chance for obstructions of the life-sustaining wind to come about. I came to the firm conviction concerning daily work that other than supplicating my root guru, Wonpo, there is no need for such things as divination, astrological calculations, or predicting good and bad days," said Kunga Pelden.



“In Galenteng, there is a lord called the Steward of Derge Khangsar. His fortress became empty and inside there was a room where absolutely no light could get in, so I went there to engage in a hundred-day dark retreat of *The Guru’s Inner Essence*.

“In the first vision, there appeared a great ravine in which a thickening darkness amassed from above and below, and you could not see the end of it. In its center was a small stone the size of two feet. There I stood, crouched. When gusts of upturning and swirling winds came, all of the long prairie grass swayed back and forth with whistling sounds—*shu*. I kneaded some barley flour into dough and ate it. Then I had the impression that grey flour became scattered from the rim of my small cup. Although I was in a comfortable position, fear prevented me from becoming completely relaxed.

“Again, I was in that ravine, and there came an intense roaring sound—*Ur!*—as hail clouds rolled in. They enveloped my illusory body and carried me into the surrounding space. As soon as that happened, I recalled that my mind was integrated with the guru’s mind, and I felt a shiver of happiness. At once the anxiety returned, although it was not a shock to me.

“Many pure and impure visionary realms appeared, and inside a round orb of light (*rigle*) about the size of a fingernail were all the beings of the six classes organized [according to their] happiness and suffering. Their arrangement was not mixed together, but it was clear and complete. I thought: ‘Is it not like that one saying? On a single particle there are countless [other] particles filled with buddhafi elds in which buddhas enact their activities.’ From all this, a trusting faith arose in me.

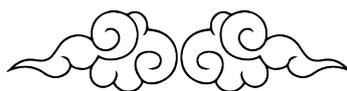
“Later on, since going into dark retreat I thought the visions of *leaping-over (togel)* would be enhanced, but I did not experience any increase.” Kunga Pelden said.

When I (Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche) received the final instructions of *The Guru’s Inner Essence*, Kunga Pelden told me about his visions in dark retreat as additional explanations for practicing the dark retreat yogas.

“I have explained to you how the dark retreat visions appear so that after this when you come to practice the dark retreat yogas, you will find this very beneficial. That is why I have shared them with you,” Kunga Pelden said.

“Dzogchen Khenpo Lhagyel and my own virtuous students have stayed in that place for one hundred days and practiced. However, they did not have harsh experiences. In general, it probably varies according to the differences in peoples’ channels, winds, and essences,” Kunga Pelden said.

He also said: “When [Wonpo was teaching the] profound instructions for *The Wish-Fulfilling Jewel of the Guru’s Inner Essence*, he praised its great blessing. To his students who were exerting themselves in their retreat, Lord [Wonpo] said, ‘In general, if there is no study, then contemplation and meditation will not develop properly. Unless one has looked into *The Root Stanzas of the Middle Way: Wisdom*, in particular, one will not comprehend the atemporal, natural rest of *cutting-through (trekcho)*. Therefore, it is very important to study *The Root Stanzas of the Middle Way: Wisdom*.’”



When the dharma lord Patrul Rinpoche gave teachings for the textual traditions of sutra and tantra, he never had the custom of keeping texts with him; however, he remained inseparable from one volume of *The Guru's Inner Essence* until he died at the age of seventy-nine.

“As for myself, I received the empowerment and instructions from the lord guru, Won Rinpoche. Then, at that time, I did my best in my practice, yet there was not even the slightest depth in my realization, view, or meditation. But discursive concepts such as ‘Have I been deceived by these instructions?’ never occurred to me,” Kunga Pelden said. That is all he said; other than this, he did not tell any of his students how the sign of heat on the stages and the paths arose in his mind.

The Lord's close friend, Khenpo Drelo of Dza Gyel Monastery practiced the approach recitations for the essential sections of the secret practice of the protectors and guardians of *The Guru's Inner Essence*. As a result, he received a lot of veneration and offerings and came to be known as a companion of the protectors. He knew that this was the help of the protectors, and he clarified his position to them: “I did not engage in your practice for the benefit of this life. I am practicing for the sake of the supreme spiritual attainment.” By saying this three times, he ended up with fewer visitors.

“When I initially stayed alone in my retreat, I did not need to meet anyone in person. All I had to do was practice day and night, and I was content. Yet, as soon as I had the name of Guru Kunga Pelden many people assembled. They would never allow me to be completely free, as I constantly had to engage in various

activities that would connect people to the teachings,” Kunga Pelden said.

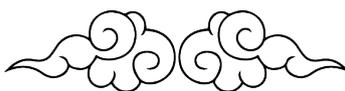
Khenpo Zhenga Rinpoche said: “I spent my entire life teaching the sutras and tantras, but whenever Kunga Pelden asked questions concerning the profound points of view and meditation I could not answer immediately. I had to think about it carefully. I suppose the wisdom from his meditation had unfolded.”

Jamgon Dorje Chang Chokyi Lodro Rinpoche (Jamyang Khyentse Chokyi Lodro) said: “I received both the instructions and transmission for *The Guru's Inner Essence* from Guru Kunga Pelden, and he also explained many excellent profound points on practice.”

During the later years of his life, he stayed in the retreat place called Nepu in the front of the Ziltrom glacier, which became his residence, and Palpung Situ Pema Wangchok (1886–1952) also attended him there.

Later Kunga Pelden was protected by the compassionate refuge of Drubwang Dzogchen Tubten Chokyi Dorje. Kunga Pelden stayed at the upper meditation cave of Tsering Jong [near Dzogchen Monastery]. He uninterruptedly spun the wheel of the doctrine of the essential maturation and liberation [instructions] of the supreme vehicle and *The Wish-Fulfilling Jewel of the Guru's Inner Essence* in particular to the majority of abbots and tulkus of Dzogchen Monastery. There he died and many amazing sights occurred such as tiny pearl-like relics (*ringsel*) arising from his bones.

When I (Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche) reached my eleventh year my legs were burned, and I came close to death. At that time the holy guru



Kunga Pelden performed the ablution ritual, conferred the layman's vows and carried out a longevity practice for a month.

In particular, he granted an elaborate and detailed explanation of the whole of *The Wish-Fulfilling Jewel of the Guru's Inner Essence*, beginning with *The Stages of Guru Practice: The Ocean of Attainments* right up to the final inventory. I also received practical guidance from him on the channels, winds, and physical yoga practices of The Heart Essence of the Great Expanse. He told me that I should focus on practice as my main activity and, as a supplement to this, grant instructions to those who seek the teachings.”

He also gave me his own copies of the Seven Treasuries, which he had studied for his entire life, and his personal copies of the Trilogy of Natural Ease and cared for me with immeasurable compassion.

1 Dza Patrul Rinpoche reconstructed this Mani stone wall, which was first constructed by Samten Puntsok (bsam gtan phun tshogs).

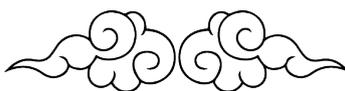
2 'Time of the Path' (lam dus) is the common name for the daily Hevajra sādhana, which must be practiced regularly without interruption.

3 This is a root mantra found in the practice of Hevajra.

Therefore, I, Mangala Shri Bhuti (Tashi Paljor) have written this brief biography, which is devoid of embellishment or understatement, at my retreat place. May all beings set out upon the direct path of the supreme sovereign vehicle, and may this text become a cause for them to follow the path as found in this glorious guru's life of liberation.

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