

The Jewel Rosary of The Successive Incarnations of Gangteng Tulku

The Lineage Holders of Gangteng Sangngak Chöling Monastery

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Table of Contents

The Jewel Rosary of The Sucessive Incarnations of Gangteng Tulku.....	1
The Lineage Holders of Gangteng Sanggak Chöling Monastery	1
Table of Contents.....	2
Prologue	3
Eulogy	3
The Origin of the Buddha Dharma	3
Tertön Pema Lingpa’s Dharma Activities	6
The Three Emanations of Pema Lingpa.....	8
The Heart-Son, Thuksé Dawa Gyaltsen’s Dharma Activities.....	8
The Successive Incarnations of Gyalse Pema Thinley	9
The First Gangteng Tulku: Gyalse Pema Thinley	12
The Second Gangteng Tulku: H.E. Tenzin Legpai Döndrup.....	14
The Third Gangteng Tulku: H.E. Kunzang Thinley Namgyal.....	17
The Fourth Gangteng Tulku: H.E. Tenzin Sizhi Namgyal	18
The Fifth Gangteng Tulku: H.E. Ugyen Gelek Namgyal	18
The Sixth Gangteng Tulku: H.E. Tenpai Nyima.....	18
The Seventh Gangteng Tulku: H.E. Tenpai Nyinjé.....	20
The Eighth Gangteng Tulku: H.E. Ugyen Thinley Dorji	21
The Ninth Gangteng Tulku: H.E. Kunzang Rigdzin Pema Namgyal.....	22
Epilogue	28
Bibliography.....	29

Prologue

In the hidden and sacred medicinal land of the *Drukpas*, blessed by none other than the second Buddha *Padmasambhava* himself, it is invaluable to have historical accounts and biographical sketches of the great lineage holders of the Dharma, particularly, the biographies of the lineage holders of Pema Lingpa at Gangteng Sangngak Chöling Gönpa.

The Literary Committee of Gangteng Shedra undertook to compile a historical outline of the Monastery and biographical sketches of the successive incarnations of the Gangteng Tulku to mark the completion of the restoration of Gangteng Gönpa and its re-consecration. This auspiciously coincides with the three great events of 2008: the celebration of the Centennial of the Bhutanese Monarchy, the successful introduction of parliamentary democracy, and the Coronation of the His Majesty the 5th Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck.

If learned scholars find any details or events incorrect or missing from these accounts, the Committee requests these readers as well as other patrons and devotees to submit their considered comments and suggestions for improvement.

Eulogy

Om Swasti!

The primordially pure Buddha of Unchanging Light,
The natural expression of unimpeded compassion, Sambhogakaya Avalokiteśvara,
The spontaneously risen Nirmanakaya: the miraculously Lotus-born,
Are the same as my kind root Guru, whom I place on the crown of my head.

The core, profound and heart-essence teachings of the Buddhas,
Through skilful means you spread the teachings to all beings,
The accomplished father and son incarnations of the Peling lineage,
Who are inseparable from the lotus-heart of mine, I make offerings to you.

In the medicinal land, blessed with hundred thousand auspicious signs,
At Gangteng Gönpa, considered as the second Zangdog Pelri,
The miraculously born successive incarnations of Gangteng Tulku,
With great pride and happiness, I relate the Jewel Rosary of the Successive Incarnations.

With the above words of praise and offerings to the sublime and precious beings along with the pledge to compose the biographical account, here is presented the “*Jewel Rosary of Successive Incarnations of the Gangteng Tulku, Lineage Holders of Gangteng Sangngak Chöling*”.

The Origin of the Buddha Dharma

Although fully enlightened unborn Dharmakaya, from the viewpoint of ordinary appearances and in order to benefit beings through wisdom and skilful means, Lord Buddha gave rise to the mind

of supreme *Bodhi*, then accumulated vast merits taking rebirths over three great incalculable aeons, eventually displaying the attainment of Enlightenment on the Vajra Seat at Bodhgaya in India. Thereafter, the Buddha turned the wheel of 84,000 Dharma teachings for the sake of sentient beings according to their capacity thus liberating innumerable gods, demigods, *nagas*, *yakshas*, humans and non-humans from the clutches of cyclic existence. Moreover, *Buddha Kashaypa* and the Seven Buddhas of the past, the Sixteen Great Arhats, the Six Ornaments and Two Excellent Ones of the world, and numerous other realized siddhas and panditas helped the Buddha's precious teachings to rise and shine like the sun in the sublime land of India. Then, from that sublime land, the Dharma spread to and grew in the snowy land of Tibet.

According to the *White Lotus Sutra*, when Buddha, the Great Sage was staying at the bamboo grove, rays of light emitted from the *Zoepu* on his forehead which went towards the north, at which the Buddha smiled. Then, *Nirvirana-vishkambin*, one of the eight great Bodhisattvas, requested the Buddha to explain the reasons and conditions for this sign, to which the Buddha replied:

Noble Son, the northern land untamed by the Buddhas of the three times: that remote, snow-covered barbarian land filled with demons and rakshasas, will in the future see the sublime Dharma rising and shining like the sun; and even the sentient beings there will be extremely fortunate and established on the path of Enlightenment. The Bodhisattva of compassion, Avalokitesvara will be the patron of that remote land.

Thus, the Buddha related that his teachings would spread far into the north in the future. In many other scriptures, both *sutra* and *tantra*, there are similar predictions concerning the spread of Dharma in the land of Tibet.

As predicted, starting from King Nyatri Tsenpo; the first Yarlung Dynasty king of Tibet to the twenty-eighth successor Lha Thothori Nyantsen who was the emanation of the Bodhisattva *Samantabhadra*, the monarchs helped in preserving and propagating the sacred Dharma in Tibet. During the reign of his fifth successor, King Songtsen Gampo, the emanation of Bodhisattva *Avalokitesvara*; the Tibetan script and grammar were introduced into Tibet.

The fifth king following him was the emanation of Bodhisattva *Manjushri*, the Dharma King Thrisong Deutsen, who with the exalted and pure intention of making the Buddha Dharma spread like the rays of the sun, invited the great abbot *Shantarakshita* of Zahor, and the great tantric master *Padmasambhava* of Uddiyana, to Tibet. With their help, the King built the renowned Samye Migyur Lhundrup monastery. Then the unsurpassed great panditas, scholars and translators of India and Tibet brought the Buddha Dharma from the noble land of India to the land of snows, Tibet, translating the original Buddhist scriptures. The teaching, learning, meditation, and practice traditions established during that period subsequently became known as the "Ngagyur Nyingma" tradition, or "The Earlier Translation Old School".

The schools which began in the later period which started with the translations of the great translator Lochen Rinchen Zangpo (958-1055) are known as the "Chigyur Sarma" or the "The Later Translation New Schools".

Within the Ngagyur Nyingma are traditions classified as the long lineage of Kama and short lineage of Terma. The Kama tradition is those oral teachings uninterruptedly transmitted from mouth to ear from Buddha *Samantabhadra* right down to our present root teachers.

In order to prevent the doctrine from declining in future, Guru Rinpoche concealed Terma or spiritual treasures, riches and samaya substances in the snow mountains, rocks and lakes of Tibet and Bhutan to be revealed by emanations of his disciples for the benefit of those with fortunate karma living in the decadent, evil times of later centuries.

The Terma include the *Hundred Treasures to Support the King's Life*, the *Five Great Mind Treasures*, and the *Twenty-Five Great Profound Treasures*, as well as uncountable unclassified treasures. These profound treasures were concealed to be taken out at the appropriate time according to prophecy by the destined holder of the teachings or the Tertöns. These Terma teachings and empowerments can truly bring beings to spiritual maturation and liberation and are the near lineage like the warm breath of the Dakini from which the vapour has not yet disappeared.

Similarly, as foretold, due to the collective merit of the people, the time was auspicious for the Buddha Dharma to flourish in the medicinal land of Bhutan. Many centuries ago, Bodhisattvas such as Chögyal Drimed Künden lived and demonstrated Bodhisattva activities here, thereby leading numerous beings towards the path of liberation. Moreover, in the 7th century, the great Tibetan King, Songtsen Gampo, through his miraculous powers built 108 monasteries and stupas, including Jampa Lhakhang in Bumthang and Kyichu Lhakhang in Paro.

Then, in 746 ce, the Chakhar Gyalpo, Sindhu Raja invited Lopon Padmasambhava (Guru Rinpoche), who had been residing for a time at the supreme place of Yanglehö in Nepal, to come to Bhutan. On the way, he subjugated many harmful and malevolent spirits and bound them under oath. Then in Bumthang, Guru Rinpoche subjugated Shelging Karpo and left body print on the cliff and also brought forth the sacred water which can still be seen today at Kurje. Thereby, the Chakhar Gyalpo was also completely cured of his afflictions. Moreover, King Sindhu Raja, Tashi Kheuden, the ministers and subjects were given blessings and empowerments, thereby sowing the seeds of liberation. In addition, Guru Rinpoche concealed numerous treasures in the mountains, cliffs, lakes and valleys in Bhutan.

Then, after the arrival in Bhutan of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel, to whom we owe our deepest gratitude, the dual system of government which brought about great reforms in spiritual and temporal practice was established. Thereby a unique and independent religious culture and social system developed in Bhutan, which is worthy of admiration and which the Bhutanese can be truly proud of.

Moreover, from amongst the five King Tertöns, Tertön Ugyen Pema Lingpa, Master of the Southern Treasures took birth in the Tang region of Bumthang in Bhutan and discovered numerous treasures – becoming renowned in Bhutan, Tibet and India. Today Pema Lingpa's lineage is carried on through three lines of body, speech and mind emanations. In particular, the Gangteng Sangngak Chöling Gönpa, popularly known as Gangteng Gönpa and located in the center of the Medicinal Land, is the seat of the Gangteng Tulku who is the body emanation of

Pema Lingpa. The rest of this work focuses on the successive incarnations of the Gangteng Tulku, who have taken successive rebirths and travelled far and wide in the country, benefiting numerous sentient beings through their unceasing spiritual activities.

Tertön Pema Lingpa's Dharma Activities

Amongst the five Tertön Kings prophesied by the second Buddha Guru Rinpoche, one was Tertön Ugyen Pema Lingpa, the incarnation of Lhacham Pemasal.

According to the prophecy given in the *Word of Padma (Padma Thangyig)*, it was foretold:

At Phari in Gos, when homes fall under the fortress
At Tagur in Lato, when the streets become a poison bazaar
Warned by these signs not to fail to bring to light
The treasures hidden in the Burning Lake (Me Bar Tsho)
Ugyen Pema Lingpa will appear

Accordingly, in the Iron Male Horse Year, 1450, amidst auspicious signs, Pema Lingpa was born in Bumthang of Lhomon (Bhutan) as the son of Döndrup Zangpo, a descendent of the Nyö clan and mother Drogmo Peldzom, who was bestowed with all the signs of a dakini.

As the true incarnation of Kunkhyen Longchenpa Drimé Özer, when he was a child Tertön Pema Lingpa learnt effortlessly the art of reading and writing as well as ironwork and carpentry. Once while residing at Mani Gönpa, on the 10 th day of the Monkey Month and Year, he had a vision of Guru Rinpoche who appeared in person, blessed him and handed him the addresses of 108 treasures to be revealed.

When he was 27 years old, at the foot of the cliff shaped like a long nose (Naring Drag), he discovered the first part of the profound treasure *Quintessence of the Mysteries of Luminous Space (Longsal Sangwa Nying Chu)*. Also at Tang Mebartso (Burning Lake) in Bumthang, witnessed by a large crowd, Pema Lingpa leaped into the deep water with a burning butter lamp in his hand. After some time he emerged with a Terma casket, the size of a pot, under one arm and the still-burning butter lamp in the other hand. His amazing, profuse and enlightened activities inspired unshakable faith in the people and his undisputed fame as a true and great Treasure Revealer spread everywhere like the light of the sun and moon.

At Samye Chimphu, he revealed the treasure of the *Great Completion Union of Samantabhadra's Intentions (Dzogchen Kunzang Gongdu)*. From various other sacred places he revealed: the cycle of the *Small Child Tantra* belonging to the non-dual Great Completion; the *Lama Jewel Ocean (Lama Norbu Jamtsho)*; the *Great Compassionate One, Lamp Dispelling Darkness (Thukje Chenpo Munsel Drönme)*; the *Eight Transmitted Teachings, Mirror of the Mind (Kagyé Thug-ki Melong)*; *Kilaya, Most Secret Blade of Vitality (Phurba Yangsang Soki Pudri)*; the *Elixir Medicine Sadhana (Dutsi Mendrup)*; Vajrapani as the *Haughty Tamer*, and as the *Fierce Youth (Chador Dregdul and Tumchung)*, the Greater, Extensive and Abbreviated Sadhanas of Wrathful Guru (*Drakpo Che Dring Chung Sum*); the *Adamantine Necklace of Instructions on Longevity (Tshetri Dorji Threngwa)*, the *Longevity Practice, Applying Jewels*

on the Path (Tsedrup Norbu Lam Kher); the *Three Black Cycles (Nakpo Korsum)*; and numerous other teachings. Likewise, he discovered countless precious substances such as the *Nyangdrol Ke Duen*, *Kutshab Pema Guru* etc.

Of the 108 treasures authorised and originally destined to be revealed by Pema Lingpa, thirty two treasures were actually revealed and their teachings propagated for the sake of sentient beings.

Regarding the retinue of his followers and lineage holders, it is mentioned in the Treasure (Terlung) prophesies as follows:

Ten thousand disciples connected through Karma
Eleven disciples connected through profound methods
One thousand and two disciples connected through aspiration
Seven mandala holder sons
And three heart-sons will come

Accordingly, countless followers and disciples were connected through good fortune and all their minds introduced to the treasure teachings, ripening their beings with the profound practices.

In addition, he performed many miraculous deeds and prophesied that in future, in the Pureland of Pema Kōdpa, he would become the Buddha Dorji Nyingpo and that sentient beings who had the good fortune to associate with him would also be born in that Pureland. Having said thus, in the Iron Male Snake Year (1521), on the 3rd day of the first lunar month, with his body in the vajra position, uttering the syllables “A, Ā” () many times, placing his right hand in the hands of Thugsé Dawa Gyaltsen, he entered into Dharmadhatu, at Lhundrup Chöling in Tamshing, Bumthang.

At the time he passed away, people in Dechenchöling and Kunzang Drak heard auspicious sounds and saw lights turning to five-coloured rainbows, space filled with the scent of incense accompanied by auspicious rains of flowers. His bodily remains when looked at in parts seemed intact and unchanged whereas when viewed as a whole looked to be only a little over a foot in size. It was later preserved in a reliquary stupa and kept at Lhundrup Chöling in Tamshing, Bumthang. However, one account says that later, the 7th Sungtrul Rinpoche advised that if the reliquary stupa was kept at Yungdrung Chöling, the country would enjoy spiritual and temporal benefits. Thus, it is said to have been moved to Yungdrung Chöling. The other account says that the stupa was enshrined as an object of offering and devotion in the Pungthang Dewachenpoi Phodrang (Punakha Dzong), alongside the reliquary stupa of the invincible Dharma King, Zhabdrung Rinpoche.

Of the speech incarnations of Pema Lingpa or Peling Sungtrul, the first was Gyalwa Tendzin Drakpa, the second Tshultrim Dorji, the third Ngawang Kunzang Dorji, the fourth Tendzin Drupchog Dorji, the fifth Kunzang Tenpai Gyaltsen, the sixth Ngawang Chöki Lodrö, the seventh Kunzang Tenpai Nyima, the eighth Tendzin Chöki Gyaltsen, the ninth Ngawang Chöki Gyaltsen and the tenth is the present Jigdrel Kunzang Pema Dorji. Their enlightened activities for the benefit of all sentient beings are as limitless as the sky.

The Three Emanations of Pema Lingpa

The first speech incarnation of Pema Lingpa was Gyalwa Tendzin Drakpa, the first mind emanation Dawa Gyaltsen, and the first body incarnation Pema Thinley. Although, these three emanations are popularly known as the body, speech and mind emanations; later, it was common to refer to the emanations as the *Peling Yab Sé Sum* or “Pema Lingpa father and sons” which included Pema Lingpa himself, the mind emanation Dawa Gyaltsen and the body emanation Pema Thinley.

The *Peling Yab Sé Sum* were blessed as heart-emanations of Guru Rinpoche and confirmed as the benefactors of multitude of sentient beings. The three emanations often reincarnated as teacher and pupil amongst themselves, thereby enabling the transmission and reception of the ripening and liberation teachings from one to another. This has ensured the transmission of the lineage teachings in their entirety through an unbroken pure lineage without losing any precious blessings of the teachings in the process.

Over the course of lifetimes these incarnations have benefited sentient beings greatly through their Buddha activities of blessing, empowerments and transmission of the authentic lineage teachings.

The Heart-Son, Thuksé Dawa Gyaltsen’s Dharma Activities

Pema Lingpa’s heart son, Dawa Gyaltsen, is considered to be the manifestation of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. He was the manifestation of the ferocious and wrathful form of Avalokiteśvara, known as Hayagriva (Tamdin) who subdues pernicious angry beings who can’t be tamed through peaceful means. During the Lord Shakyamuni Buddha’s time, Dawa Gyaltsen was born as Shariputra the close attendant and chief disciple of the Buddha. Then later, he was born as the King Indrabodhi in the land of Ugyen. Finally, in the Earth Sheep Year (1499), on the 10th day of the 7th lunar month, amidst auspicious signs, Dawa Gyaltsen was born in Bumthang to Tertön Pema Lingpa and mother Sithar who was an emanation of Shelkar Tshodron. From a young age, he displayed signs of great meditative realization and concentration such as moulding the stones like mud with his feet. Just by looking once, he was able to learn the arts and crafts very easily. Even the dakinis and protecting deities paid great reverence and protected him, so much so that Pema Lingpa is said to have remarked to his disciples that if even the non-humans and devas regard him thus, he seems to be an extraordinary being and hence all of you must not think of him as equal to ordinary beings.

From his father he received all the essential teachings such as Lama Norbu Jamtsho, Dzogchen Kunzang Gongdu, Thukje Chenpo Munsel Dronme, and through their sadhana practice and mediation, he was able to actualize the teachings and had visions of the Guru, deity and dakini as signs of accomplishment.

Moreover, he received blessings and empowerments directly from the male-female aspect of Guru in a meditative trance. Having transported himself to Purelands such as Zangdog Pelri (Copper-coloured Mountain) and those of the Five Buddha families, he was able to see the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas.

When he was twenty-three years old, his father passed away and as prophesied by Guru Rinpoche, the relic from his father's heart, an image of a turquoise girl, dissolved into Thuksé Dawa Gyaltzen. Then, from the Chel region in Tang area, from the Menchu River, he discovered the statue of Vajrapani and the precious seven-rebirth mother pills in the form of a joined skull. From Naring Drak, he discovered precious substances that had the power to repel the invading armies.

In places such as Lhasa and Samye in Tibet, he performed numerous army-repulsion, consecration ceremonies, Drupchens, blessings and empowerments, thereby benefiting many fortunate beings in the process.

As the dakinis had prophesised, when Gyalwa Drigung Rinchen Phuntshog met Dawa Gyaltzen at Dargay Chöling, he saw the Thuksé Dawa Gyaltzen in the form of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in red form, with one face and two hands. While the right hand held the jewel rosary, the left held the crystal vase, and in the heart of this Sambhogakaya manifestation, he saw the image of Hayagriva, the Horse Headed One, or Tamdin, in its red form carrying an amulet and rope in its hands. Also, he saw that on the outer level, the form was Rinpoche himself, in the middle was Avalokiteśvara, and in the inner Hayagriva with the images not inanimate like a painting but very much alive and moving. This caused even greater faith and devotion to develop in the heart of Drigung Rinchen Phuntshog who thereafter regarded Dawa Gyaltzen as the true Lord of the teachings and thereafter received numerous ripening and liberation teachings from him and becoming one in essence.

Then, having traveled far and wide within Bhutan, covering mostly the sacred places, Thuksé Dawa Gyaltzen gave teachings, blessings and precious substances to many sentient beings, thereby, leading them on the path to liberation. He also built monasteries such as Lhundrup Deyang at Trakar in Chumey and Gongted Sergi Lhakhang at Tali in Kheng.

The congregation of his disciples included Drigung Rinchen Phuntshog, Sakya Dakchen Rinpoche, Karmapa Mikyo Dorji, Shamar Kenchog La and Pawo Chogyel Dhendup as well as Tertön Dechen Lingpa, Gyalwang Tenzin Drakpa and many others.

Thus, fulfilling his Dharma activities for this lifetime, in KhariThabtsang at the base of Mt. Kulagangri, at the age of 88, in the year 1586, on the 17th day of the 9th month of the Fire Dog Year of the 16th Rabjung, he demonstrated the act of passing into nirvana.

His successive reincarnations are Nyida Gyaltzen, Pema Nyida Longyang, Tenzin Gyurme Namgyal, Gyurme Chögdrup Pelbar, Tenzin Chöki Nyima, Kunzang Gyurme Dorji, Kunzang Zilnon Zheytse, Gyurme Pema Kunzang and the present incarnation Thegchog Tenpai Gyaltzen, who tirelessly propagates the Buddha Dharma for the benefit of sentient beings.

The Successive Incarnations of Gyalse Pema Thinley

Here follows a brief account of former lives of Gyalse Pema Thinley, who is considered to be the activity emanation of Tertön Pema Lingpa. The refuge for the sentient beings of this degenerate

times, the body emanation of Tertom Pema Lingpa, Gyalse Pema Thinley's incarnations can be considered at three levels; the outer, the inner and the secret levels.

Firstly, regarding the outer level manifestation, he was born as the venerable Chunda and was predicted by Lord Buddha just before he passed into nirvana that Chunda would become the Buddha Kuntu Nangwa or All Illuminating Buddha in the future. Then he was born as Namdrol Yeshey or Denma Tshemang in the land of snows, during which time, he received all the excellent empowerments and blessings directly from Guru Rinpoche as one of the twenty- five disciples (Gyal Bang Nyer Nga). Then during the crucial time in Tibet, he was born as the Lha Lama Yeshey Yoed, who was responsible for inviting Lord Atisha into Tibet, which he did even at the cost of his own life.

Then he was born as the famous Kunga Drakpa, the vastly learned and the great seat holder. Then, he was born as Drupthop Tendzin Yonten, the lineage-son of the mighty Nyangral Nyima Yoedzer.

Also, being born as Yeshey Dorji (Jnana Vajra), Dharma Dhaza, and Jnana Dewa, benefited numerous sentient beings on the path to liberation. Then he took birth as the Gyalse Legpa alias Wangchuk Pelbar, who was a great disciple of Tertön Laydrel Tsel, through whom he received secret dakini teachings of the Nyingthik lineage and helped in ripening and liberating the beings through this teaching.

Then he was born as the famous Khyapdel Lhundrup. Then he took birth into the royal lineage in Lhodrak and received complete teachings of the Kadampa tradition. Moreover, from Kunkhyen Longchenpa, he received complete Nyingthik teachings. In addition to subduing the spirits, he also showed signs of realization by walking about one foot above the ground and ultimately lived up to the ripe age of one hundred and eight years. Next, he was born as the Tertön Drimed Lingpa and discovered the profound mind treasures hidden by Guru Rinpoche, and through practice mastered the method of consciousness transference (Phowa). It was during such time that while he was building a Lhakhang on the fringes of Kurje in Bumthang, the model of which was based on the tradition of Sangye Lingpa, he had some doubts over the scale and dimensions of the Lhakhang. He used his Phowa practice to transfer his consciousness to Zangdog Pelri and stayed there for fifteen days. In the meantime, his close attendants could not maintain the secret and later he was declared as dead and they cremated the body. On his return, he couldn't find a body to transfer his consciousness. Finally, he had to transfer his consciousness into the dead body of a 15 year old girl in the Dangchu region. Thus according to the heart advice received from Ugyen Guru Rinpoche and the correct dimensions, the construction of the Lhakhang was completed with an elaborate consecration ceremony. Soon thereafter, realising that his time had come to an end, he manifested the act of passing into parinirvana.

Then, he was born as the famous Khenchen Chöki Gyalpo Tshultrim Peljor, which according to prophesy given in the Clear Mirror of Prophecies (*Lungten Kunsel Melong*) foretold:

The present Khenchen,
After seventeen lifetimes would take birth,

As the glorious title-holder from the copper coloured realm,
Who is predestined to disseminate the Dzogchen teachings.

Thus, accordingly, he was born as one amongst the seven mandala holders of Rigdzin Pema Lingpa. Having received complete teachings from Pema Lingpa himself and fulfilled all the auspicious conditions, Pema Lingpa said;

Equivalent to me is Tshultrim Peljor,
Who even flying is the king among flyers.

Also, as Guru Rinpoche predicted:

In earlier times, Lord Shakyamuni predicted,
The divine Lama called Yeshey Yoed,
Presently in the barbaric and dark country,
Would plant the banner of the Buddha Dharma,
As the noble son Pema Thinley.

Such were the words of praise conferred by Pema Lingpa, and ultimately he went on to become an authority on both Sarma and Nyingma teachings. Moreover, he used to recite the 8000 verses of the *Prajnaparamita (Gyad Tongpa)* scripture regularly and it is said that due to perfection of his discipline, the hopes and aspirations of numerous beings were fulfilled.

On the inner level, he is the combination of body and activity emanation of Tertön Pema Lingpa. Pema Lingpa himself remarked that the heart son Pema Thinley is not only his body emanation, but also his lineage holder.

Once while Pema Lingpa was looking upwards from the Phobjikha valley, he remarked saying that in the future, on the hilltop of the valley, his secret teachings will flourish, to which the chant master Drukpa Kuendhud asked if it would be during this lifetime or during future incarnations. To this, the great Tertön replied that the time is not appropriate for this lifetime, but it would materialize in the future when Pema Lingpa himself would reincarnate.

Even Lord Thuksé Dawa has said that the activity lineage holder of father Pema Lingpa is none other than Gyalse Pema Thinley.

Then, on the secret level, Guru Rinpoche has said;

The dharma name holder, Young Tshultrim,
Is my emanation
To whom must be given the secret sacred teachings in all its entirety.

Gyalse Tendzin Rabgye also, auspiciously, said that Tulku Pema Thinley was like Guru Rinpoche in person.

The 5 th Thuksé said about Tendzin Legdön;

The boundless Great Master of Oddiyana,
While incarnating as the Dharma holder,
Manifests as an excellent teacher of the fortunate Kalpa,
Having fulfilled all wishes, may he live for countless eons.

The 10 th Je Khenpo, Penchen Tendzin Chogyel also said that Tulku Tendzin Legdön was none other than Guru Rinpoche in person, and offered the following words of praise:

In the centre of the world,
In the pure land of Gangteng,
Guru Rinpoche in true form,
Tendzin Legpai Döndrup, to you I supplicate.

In short, Tulkus like Pema Thinley and Tendzin Legdön are the heart emanations of Guru Rinpoche himself.

The First Gangteng Tulku: Gyalse Pema Thinley

In this and the following sections is presented an account of the successive reincarnations of the founder of Gangteng Sangnak Chöling Gönpa, Gyalse Pema Thinley who took successive rebirths for the benefit of sentient beings, just as the other Enlightened Ones have also taken rebirth for the sake of sentient beings.

Gyalse Pema Thinley was born to father Dawa Gyaltzen, who himself was the son of Tertön Pema Lingpa and considered to be the emanation of Hayagriva (Tamdin). His mother was Buthri, the daughter of local ruler of Choekhor in Bumthang. He was born amidst miraculous and auspicious signs in the Male Wood Rat Year of the 9 th Rabjung, in 1564. He could flawlessly relate the past life stories of Khenchen Tshultrim Peljor, thus leaving no doubt as to the true incarnation of the Khenchen's. The young Tulku had amazing signs such as the white mole in between the eye-brows, his excreta smelt of musk (*Lartsi*) and on the lower path of the body was a clear imprint of stripes of a tiger. In the middle of his forehead was the clear mark of the sun and moon.

Even father Thuksé Dawa Gyaltzen declared that the young Tulku will be the activity lineage holder of his father, Tertön Pema Lingpa, and appropriately named him Pema Thinley and conferred on him all the core teachings and instructions.

In addition to receiving teachings from his father, Gyalse Pema Thinley also received the teachings and instruction from Drupchen Dendrup Pelbar, 2 nd Peling Gyalwa Tendzin Drakpa and Gyalse Tenpai Jungney. Moreover, realizing that it would be excellent to follow the monastic discipline, he received full ordination as a monk in a ceremony presided over by the abbot Rinchen Sherab, and in the presence of hundreds of other monks at Tshogchen Geduengang which was the monastic seat founded by Penchen Shakya Shribadra.

Also, having traveled to Darlung region, from Khenpo Kunpang Ngawang Chödrak, he received the complete teachings, blessings, empowerments of the 8,000 verses of *Prajnaparamita*. In the

course of time, he became famous both in Tibet and Bhutan as one who is a pure *vinaya* holder and industrious to his works and religious practice. As a sign of realization, he left his hand and foot prints on the rock cliff. From Yarlam Tshanpai Dra Karpo, he extracted a clear naturally arisen image of Guru Tshoki Dorji on stone which is today in the Gangteng Monastery.

As prophesied and blessed by his grand father, Rigdzin Pema Lingpa and also being the meditation centre of the 2nd Peling Gyalwa Tendzin Drakpa, the place was blessed for the successful propagation of the Dharma, Gyalse Pema Thinley built the great Gangteng Gönpa including the body, speech and mind objects of the Buddha, with the main objectives of promoting the Buddha Dharma and to tame sentient beings during the degenerate times through skillful means. Moreover, he also instituted the *Sangha* or the community of practitioners in the newly built Gönpa.

In addition, he was able to frequently see visions of the family of 100 peaceful and wrathful deities, Vajrasattva in the form of Garab Dorji, Vimalamitra, Shrisingha and Guru Rinpoche. He was also able to communicate with the protecting deities (Dharmapalas) as if talking person-to-person and was able to bring the eight categories of evils to servitude. It is said that the protecting deity Rahula was always present with him, like a shadow, and helped him in fulfilling his wishes.

He visited and re-consecrated the Tang Khangrap Lhakang, Chel Thegchen Choekhor Tsuglakang and Kunzang Drak Zimkhang. He also founded the Trakar Lhakang in Chumey and instituted the new monastic school. He also conducted numerous empowerments, oral transmissions and discourses and constructed body, speech and mind representations of the Buddha, besides conducting around 125 *drubchens*.

Moreover, in Gangteng Gönpa, he initiated the monastic disciplines called Ling Toed and Ling Maed, which continue to this day.

Amongst his eminent disciples are included Kuenkhen Tshultrim Dorji, Thuksé Nyida Longyang, Drukpa lineage holder Tsewang Tendzin, Dongkar Tulku, Nayphu Tulku, Datong Tulku, Chumey Jetsun etc. besides many other lineage Lams and high officials who offered their deepest respects and received blessings and teaching from him.

As his popularity and fame spread, even the great Drukpa Rinpoche Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel developed great regard and admiration of Gyalse Pema Thinley and often remarked that he must request the teachings of Pema Lingpa from Gyalse Tulku. However, this wish could not be fulfilled and later, Lam Zhabdrung regretfully said, “Although I must receive the sacred teachings from Gyalse Pema Thinley, I had to make do with receiving it from Chöje Ngawang”.

When Gyalse Pema Thinley paid a visit to Pungthang Dewa Chenpoi Phodrang, Zhabdrung Rinpoche made elaborate arrangements to receive the Gyalse Tulku in full tradition with incense smoke filling the sky in Zomthangkha. When he arrived, Zhabdrung Rinpoche stepped down from the throne and prostrated equally, thus showing his highest respects and regards to Gyalse Pema Thinley. Lam Zhabdrung’s high regard and respect for Gyalse Pema Thinley was further enhanced by their conversations on the Dharma and his personal conduct. While parting, they

exchanged numerous gifts, advises and Lam Zhabdrung resolved that he would request the entire Peling teachings from Gyalse Tulku.

Thus, having fulfilled the Buddha activity, at the age of 80, in 1642, coinciding with the auspicious 10th day of the 9th month of the 11th Rabjung, amidst wondrous and auspicious signs, Gyalse Pema Thinley demonstrated the act of passing into parinirvana.

The Second Gangteng Tulku: H.E. Tenzin Legpai Döndrup

The second throne holder, Tenzin Legpai Döndrup was born to father Bönbi Chöje Thinley Wangchen and mother Wachen Zhelngo Buthri Lhamo, who had all the signs of a dakini and was a descendent of the Drukpa Kagyu master Phajo Drugom Zhigpo. It was on the auspicious 8th day of the 11th month of the Wood Bird Year, in 1645, that the Tulku was born coinciding with the emerging rays of the dawning sun and other auspicious signs.

As soon as the Tulku was able to speak, he could relate stories and identify the personal horse and details about Gangteng Gönpa. Since the Tulku could mention all his past disciples and attendants by name, he became the centre of veneration and deep devotion developed in their hearts.

Knowing that he was the unmistakable reincarnation of Gyalse Pema Thinley, Je Lama Kunkhyen Tshultrim Dorji enthroned the young Tulku as the second Gangteng Tulku at the Gangteng Gönpa.

In the course of time, the Tulku received instructions on philosophy, sciences, astrology and other subjects from renowned and learned teachers and gained mastery over these fields of study. Moreover, from the 4th Thuksé Tenzin Gyurmed Dorji, he received the complete instructions, explanations and empowerments on the earlier and later Terma teachings, like a vase being filled.

Not before long, the Tulku realized that the enlightened beings in the past too had first listened to the vast philosophical teachings and then later for the sake of the beings, worked and practiced with discipline and austerity. As is popularly said:

Even if complete knowledge is accumulated,
If not complemented with the practice of meditation,
From the jewel of our mind,
The seed of Bodhicitta will not grow.

Therefore, the Tulku decided first to listen as much as possible and then to undergo deep undistracted meditation practice. He undertook outer, inner and secret practice of Lama Norbu Jamtsho, Vajrapani, Vajra Kilaya Lama Drakpo, Jangter Karma Guru and numerous other tutelary deities. Having meditated and practiced on Dzogchen Kunzang Gongdue Thruelkhor Lungbumchen with great determination and diligence, he achieved the signs of realization of the teachings. He could see visions of tutelary deities and spontaneously uttered numerous prophetic words, thus showing signs of his deep realization. Although, he wished to continue with a long

and strict retreat, due to the invading Tibetan forces, the government requested the Tulku to perform antidote rituals in Punakha and Wangdi to obviate the invading forces.

While performing one such wrathful ritual at the Punakha Dzong, everyone saw a blazing fire emit from the ritual cakes and fly towards the direction of the enemies. Not long thereafter, the news reached that the enemy forces have retreated, at which the Deb Raja too rejoiced and offered the Lekhabi field as well as the horse-driven and water-driven mills as a gift and offering.

Then when the Tulku was around 37 years of age, Gyalse Tendzin Rabgye, realizing that the Tulku and his followers didn't have a winter residence, asked the Tulku to choose any area from Sha (Wangdi) region. When the Tulku requested for Chitokha Gönpa (formerly offered by Chazam Chöje to Zhabdrung Pema Thinley) as the winter residence with Lekhabi as the landed property, it was promptly approved and granted with numerous other precious gifts.

At around 38 years of age, the Tulku started building the Chitokha Phuntshog Rabtenling Lhakhang and within a span of 3 years, the Lhakhang was completed in all respects both inside and outside. At that time, he also left his foot print on a corner stone and to this day it remains as an object of faith and devotion.

The inner main treasures include the eight manifestation of Guru Rinpoche, the Sixteen Arhats, Eight Wisdom-holders of India and other wall paintings including the eleven-faced Avalokiteśvara and numerous other treasures. Later there was a major earth quake in the Wood Horse Year and the Lhakhang had to be repaired when the Tulku was 82 years of age.

Then, when the Tulku was on pilgrimage to Paro Taktsang, he conducted a feast offering ceremony, at which time, he saw a vision of Guru Rinpoche, which was larger than average human size, fully adorned with a blue dress with large sleeves, holding a drum (Damaru) in the right hand and radiating a brilliant aura, while being surrounded by a large retinue of dakinis and making gesture of feast offerings. He dreamt that he was offered half a portion of a head of a corpse. When he ate it he could get the hundred different tastes and felt immense bliss. After uttering numerous words of prophecy, the image of Guru Rinpoche said that he is being invited by many in the east and hence he must leave. Saying thus, he disappeared into the sky.

The Tulku also saw many more visions of Lama, Yidam (deity) and dakinis and received numerous predictions, which due to lack of space is difficult to present in this volume.

Once while in Bae Langdrak, the various sounds of religious instruments could be heard and sacred water emerged from the sacred cliffs and in the clear winter sky there were rainbows and auspicious rain of flowers and within the rainbow circles, the image of Amitayus could be seen. The Tulku commented that this is a good sign of removal of obstacles from his life.

Once in Thimphu, the Tulku consecrated a statue of Guru Rinpoche sculpted by a Nepali sculptor. Later when the Tashi Chö Dzong was ravaged by fire, almost everything was burnt down except for this statue. It is said even the gold paint on the face of the statue was not

affected. Thereafter, this statue of Guru Rinpoche came to be known as the “fire resistant Ugyen”, and it is still there in the Dzong for all to worship and make offerings.

Then, when Tulku Rinpoche was about 59 years of age, foreseeing that there would be numerous followers and disciples of the Pema Lingpa teachings, he initiated the task of expanding the existing Lhakhang with aesthetic designs. With Lam Shacha as the Task Master, Gelong Jamtsho as the Craft Master and other monks and lay devotees, the Lhakhang was completed in every respect including the inner treasures. It is said that the protecting deities offered the construction materials for the Lhakhang. The stones were offered by the local deity Drak Seng. In short, the Lhakhang was constructed both by humans and non-humans like the famous Samye Monastery in Tibet, which was inaugurated by Guru Rinpoche, Abbot Shantarakshita and Maha Pandita Vimalamitra. Similarly, Tulku Rinpoche performed the elaborate consecration ceremony for the Lhakhang.

Then, while Tulku Rinpoche was in Mebar Tsho (Burning Lake) in Bumthang, all witnessed the sweet smell of incense and the sound of religious instruments pervading the entire valley. Sacred water emerged from the rock cliffs and he saw the image of Terdag (treasure care taker) in the lake, while receiving numerous prophecies.

Once while the Tulku was in Athang Rukha for the *Drupchen*, during one of the night halts, he dreamt that the demon king invited him and requesting for his blessings offered the vow to not take any life, thereafter.

Gyalse Tendzin Rabgye and Penlop Jingyel and his brothers received transmissions and empowerments on Lama Drakpo Marchen and Tsethri Dorji Threngwa from Tulku Rinpoche. The followers of the Tulku also include Khenchen Pekar Lhundrup, Koma Thrang Chöje Yeshey Ngedrup, Nayphu Tulku Sangngak Gyaltzen and numerous other followers of all levels from Bhutan.

Once in the presence of the chant master and the chamberlain, Rinpoche said that since it’s uncertain how long he would live, and also that since there is no difference between the Peling father and sons and Gyalse Tendzin Rabgye’s incarnate Tulku Jetsun Mipham Wangpo, an invitation should be extended to Jetsun Mipham Wangpo. Having welcomed him in a grand ceremony, the Tulku installed Jetsun Mipham Wangpo as his replacement on the lion’s throne. The Gangteng Tulku gave all the sacred and profound teachings of the Peling tradition to Jetsun Mipham Wangpo and also handed over the entire charge of the monastery to him.

Then, in the year 1727 AD, at 82 years of age, coinciding with the 15th day of the auspicious month of Lord Buddha’s Descent from Tushita Heaven, Tulku Rinpoche demonstrated the act of passing into nirvana. Following the instructions of Thuksé Rinpoche, the body was preserved for some years. Eventually, the 5th Thuksé Rinpoche presided over the last cremation rites. Later the relics were used as the inner sacred content for the construction of the one-storey stupa in the middle of the ground, which can still be seen today.

The Third Gangteng Tulku: H.E. Kunzang Thinley Namgyal

The third Gangteng Tulku, Kunzang Thinley Namgyal was born in Punakha region to mother Sonam Buthri, who was endowed with all the signs of a *dakini*, in the Fire Horse year of the 12th Rabjung (1727) amidst miraculous and auspicious signs.

The birth of a Tulku had been prophesied as follows, clearly indicating the location and the mother's identity:

In a particular region in the west,
In the womb of Samkyid's body.

Moreover, His Holiness the Gyalwa Karmapa had identified the child as the unmistakable reincarnation of the Gangteng Tulku and further instructed that the young Tulku be taken to Gangteng Gönpa.

The 5th Peling, Tendzin Drupchok Dorji also recognized the child as the reincarnation of Tendzin Lekpai Döndrup. The 5th Thuksé was convinced and pleased at the way the young Tulku displayed his accurate remembrance of past events. Then, they went to Punakha Dzong to meet with the Desi and received some teachings and auspicious connections were established.

Then, in the course of time, he went to Lhalung region in Lhodrak, Tibet and completed the study of astrology, and other essential sciences such as mask dances, drawing, painting, ritual chanting etc. These studies helped in further increasing the loving kindness and compassion in the young Tulku who also became highly learned.

Then, coinciding with an auspicious day, the young Tulku was enthroned as the 3rd Gangteng Tulku amidst an elaborate enthronement ceremony.

Thereafter, the Tulku received the complete treasure teachings of the Terdag Lingpa from Thuksé Gyurmed Chokdrup Pelbar Zangpo. Then, the Tulku was fully ordained as a monk with Thuksé Rinpopche as the abbot, Gelong Gyurmed Pelzang as the secret teacher and the entire ceremony presided over by the Sungtrul Rinpoche, and was conferred the dharma name of Pema Kunzang Thinley Nampar Gyalwai De.

Although very young, the Tulku was incomparable in terms of his learning speed and abilities. The 10th Je Khenpo, Tendzin Chögyal who had heard about the Tulku received many excellent signs which convinced him of the Tulku's qualities. He then received transmission on the canonical texts (Kanjur), Nyingma Lineage Teachings (*Nyingma Gyudbum*), Lama Norbu Gyamtsho and Tshetri Dorji Trengwa from the young Tulku, who was then residing at Chitokha Phuntshog Rabten Ling monastery. The other remaining teachings were transmitted while the Tulku was later residing at Gangteng Gönpa.

Having fulfilled the Buddha activity and extensively spreading the precious teachings, at the young age of 32, due to the lack of merit of sentient beings, the Tulku passed into parinirvana in the Year of the Earth Tiger (1758).

The Fourth Gangteng Tulku: H.E. Tenzin Sizhi Namgyal

In the year 1759, the reincarnation of the 3rd Gangteng Tulku, Tenzin Sizhi Namgyal was born in the Wang region of Thimphu amidst miraculous signs. The 5th Peling Tendzin Drupchok Dorji recognized the child as the unmistakable reincarnation of Kunzang Pema Thinley and conferred the auspicious name of Tenzin Sizhi Namgyal. Soon thereafter, the Tulku was enthroned as the 4th Gangteng Tulku in a grand enthronement ceremony. At Trakhar in Bumthang, the young Tulku received sutra and tantra teachings from eminent teachers and finally received the complete and elaborate teachings from the 5th Peling Tendzin Drupchok Dorji.

It is said that the Tulku was enrolled as a monk in the Punakha-Thimphu Dratshang where he practiced and perfected all the rituals, teachings and dances of the Palden Drukpa tradition. Due to this, even today, rituals are performed according to the Peling-Drukpa tradition at Gangteng Gönpa. Even the spiritual discipline was also brought in line with the practices adopted by the Palden Drukpa Kagyu tradition.

Having taught the precious teachings to numerous disciples, at the young age of 31, in the year 1790, the 4th Gangteng Tulku displayed the act of passing into parinirvana.

The Fifth Gangteng Tulku: H.E. Ugyen Gelek Namgyal

The 5th Gangteng Tulku, Ugyen Gelek Namgyal was born amidst many auspicious signs in Trakhar, Chumey in Bumthang to a noble family of an unbroken spiritual lineage in the Year of the Iron Pig (1791). The 6th Peling Sungtrul Kunzang Tenpai Gyaltsen recognized the young child as the 5th Gangteng Tulku and conferred on him the spiritual name of Ugyen Gelek Namgyal. Soon thereafter, the Tulku was enthroned as the 5th Gangteng Tulku in an elaborate ceremony at the Gangteng Sangngag Chöling Gönpa.

The Tulku received the complete teachings of the sutras, tantra and grammar from the 6th Peling Sungtrul and other recognized masters of the time. After receiving the complete teachings and transmissions of the Peling tradition from the other lineage holders, he put these teachings into practice.

Having taught the dharma extensively to a wide array of disciples, at the age of 49, the Tulku displayed the act of passing into parinirvana in the year of the Iron Rat (1840).

The Sixth Gangteng Tulku: H.E. Tenpai Nyima

The 6th Gangteng Tulku, Tenpai Nyima was born amidst miraculous and auspicious signs in 1838 to father Tenpai Gyaltsen who was of the 31st generation in the Nyö lineage and the son of Lama Langkha Rinpoche of Dungkar Chöje. The younger brother of the Tulku, Tashi Palbar later went as the lineage holder of the Bönbi Chöje of Mangde in Trongsa. It is said of Tulku Tenpai Nyima, reincarnation of Ugyen Gelek Namgyal the rescuer of beings in the times of ever-increasing degeneration who took rebirth for the sake of all beings, that:

The cloud of three defilements that veil from beginningless time
Is completely cleared by the rays of the wisdom sun;
Victorious in illuminating the darkness of samsara-nirvana,
Who else could be the incomparable dharma-sun, if not you?

Soon thereafter, Tulku Tenpai Nyima was enthroned as the 6th Gangteng Tulku in an elaborate ceremony. On that occasion the Palden Drukpa Rinpoche Zhabdrung Jigme Norbu offered the following long life prayer:

Samantabhadra, the Lord from beginningless time,
The representative of the treasury of compassion of all Victors,
The lord and protector of samsara-nirvana, Thoedtreng Tsel, and all:
May you bless the life of the glorious root-guru.

The Lord who is the holder of the Nyingma tradition,
The subjugator of untamed beings, the Lord of the hundred Buddha families,
The victorious fluttering banner resounding in all directions,
May your life be stable like the immutable mighty Lord.

The essence of the tradition of the Lotus-Born's activity,
When enveloped in darkness of degenerate times,
The secret sun of teachings shining forth from you,
May you completely eliminate the darkness of samsara.

Then, later the Tulku traveled to Lhalung in Tibet and received the complete empowerments and transmission of the ripening and liberation teachings from the 7th Sungrul Rinpoche, Ngawang Chöki Lodrö .

He returned to Bhutan at a time when the Trongsa Penlop, Chogyel Minjur Tenpa was in the process of gaining control over upper and lower regions of Kurtoe and placing it under the direct administration of the Trongsa Penlop. To facilitate the process, a Dzong was constructed at Leng Leng and named the Lhuendrup Tsei Dzong.

The Tulku became the root-guru of the Lhuentse Dzongpon and stayed in retreat for 5 years at the blessed sacred place of Rinchen Bumpa. Many signs of realization were observed during this time.

At this time, he instituted the Dungkar Tsechu during which the dances such as Peling-Ging-Sum, Peling Tercham and Karma Lingpa's Tercham Raksha Mangcham were introduced for the first time. The mask for the Raksha Lango was taken from Khochu and kept at Dungkar as the sacred treasure of the Peling. Even today the tradition of the mask dance master being from the descendants of Dungkar Chöje family is observed.

Moreover, the Tulku benefited the people of Kurtoe Dozhi, Shonggar Chadue (present day Mongar) and Kheng Rig Nam Sum regions by taking care and revealing the Peling treasures in these regions, giving blessings, teachings and precious pills and conducting numerous other enlightened activities.

Soon thereafter, having further strengthened the annual tradition of performing Tsechu rituals and mask dances at the Gangteng Gönpa, and also having benefited both the living and the dead in an unstinting manner, the Tulku passed into parinirvana in 1874. As has been offered:

On the divine path, he whose mind is free of mental formulations and
Through the congregated clouds of boundless affection,
Ripens the mind stream of beings instantly,
May you the kind Lord become the precious ornament of the world.

The Seventh Gangteng Tulku: H.E. Tenpai Nyinjé

The 7th Gangteng Tulku, Tenpai Nyinjé was born at Dramitse in Mongar, a place previously blessed by the sister of Pema Lingpa, Ani Chöten Zangmo. The Tulku was born to mother Singye Drolma, descendent from the lineage blessed by Gyal Yum Ingki Wangchuma, and father Kencho Wangdü, a descendant from the Peling lineage. Amongst the three eminent Tulkus born to the same parents, the eldest was Zhabdrung Thuktrul Jigmed Chögyal, the middle son Tango Tulku Künga Drakpa and the younger son was the 7th Gangteng Tulku, Tenpai Nyinjé. The three sons were popularly known as the “Zhabdrung Punsum” or the “Chöje Nam Sum”.

The 7th Gangteng Tulku was born around 1875 and soon after was recognised and enthroned at his official seat in Gangteng Gönpa. From eminent teachers and masters of the time such as Gyalwa Sacha Gyaltsen, the Tulku received the complete teachings of the basic and advanced Buddhist studies.

Feeling a great sense of gratitude and inspired by the first and second Gangteng Tulkus, who developed the monastery tirelessly and at the same time understanding the transient nature of personal material wealth, the Tulku used whatever was offered to him for the growth of the Lhakhang. He gilded the pinnacle of the Utse or the central sanctum of the Gönpa and established the meditation centres at Kunzang Chöling, Gorgoen Lhakhang, ZiZi Lhakhang, and Pangkhar Samten Chöling at Chitokha. He also established a retreat centre at Khenpa Jong and numerous fortunate disciples were benefited through the treasure teachings of the Peling tradition.

During this time, news reached that the Tulku’s father had passed away and following the instructions from his elder brother Lam Zhabdrung, Tango Tulku and he proceeded to Dremitse, followed by Lam Zhabdrung himself later.

The three brothers performed a grand and extensive cremation ceremony for their late father. Moreover, for the benefit of sentient beings in general and their parents in particular, the three

Tulkus created many body, speech and mind representations of the Buddha. Then, having entrusted the place to their sister Tshewang Drolma, the Tulku came towards West Bhutan.

Having travelled to the Dagana region, the Tulku blessed and inspired numerous practitioners committing them to the practice of the Dharma.

At one time, Gangteng Gönpa was badly affected by a severe earthquake and the Gönpa had to be repaired. The Tulku undertook the task in such a manner that it looked even better than before.

Adding numerous outer and inner treasures, even the frescoes were painted anew using good colours. For the consecration, the elder brothers Zhabdrung Rinpoche and Tango Tulku Rinpoche as well as other eminent lineage holders were invited and the consecration and thanksgiving ceremonies performed in a grand manner.

Soon after the consecration, the Tulku was taken seriously ill. Despite numerous rituals and life-extending prayers being performed by his elder brother Lams, the Tulku showed no sign of recovery. Thus, all of them went to Chitokha Gönpa.

Feeling the inconvenience even there, the Tulku was brought to Norbugang Gönpa. Although, numerous rituals were performed and medications administered there, the Tulku could not be cured.

Hence, in 1905, the Tulku passed into parinirvana amidst numerous auspicious signs. The last cremation rites were held at the Gangteng Gönpa.

The Eighth Gangteng Tulku: H.E. Ugyen Thinley Dorji

In 1906, amidst miraculous signs, the 8th Gangteng Tulku, Ugyen Thinley Dorji was born as the son of Thimphu Dzongpon Kunzang Thinley, a descendent of Khedrup Kinga Wangpo who was descendent from the Peling lineage and belonged to the Nyö lineage, and Sangay Drolma, younger sister of the 7th Gangteng Tulku. When the child came of age, he was enthroned as the 8th Gangteng Tulku at his original seat at Gangteng Gönpa.

The Tulku received the complete teachings of the Peling tradition from the 9th Peling Tendzin Chöki Gyaltzen.

He introduced the tradition of wearing the *Gho*, as was the custom of court attendants, amongst his followers. It is also said that he succeeded his father as the Thimphu Dzongpon, during which time he constructed the Guru Lhakhang in Thimphu, which exists to this day for all to pay respects and make offerings.

While coming to Gangteng Gönpa, at a nearby *chorten*, the Tulku changed into the robes of a monk and got down from his horse as a mark of respect. Thereafter, the people started calling the *chorten* as the Tabab Chorten [meaning the stupa where Rinpoche dismounted from the horse].

Then, in the year 1949, the Tulku passed away into parinirvana in Wangdi Phodrang Dzong. The sacred body was brought to Gangteng Gönpa for the last cremation rites.

The Ninth Gangteng Tulku: H.E. Kunzang Rigdzin Pema Namgyal

In 1955, Kunzang Rigdzin Pema Namgyal, the 9th Gangteng Tulku was born to noble parents of the Bönbi Chöje: father Tshering Dorji, who was a descendent of the Tibetan King Trisong Deutsen, and mother Tshering Pelmo, in the region of Trongsa, Central Bhutan. The birth of the Tulku was preceded by numerous auspicious and miraculous signs such as the rainbow filled sky, untimely flowering of trees and plants. Before birth, when the Tulku was still in his mother's womb, his mother saw a very auspicious dream in which boiling water turned to milk and many children were fetching water. She also dreamt that the sands and stones on the banks of nearby stream turned into white pearls and the water flowing from one of the two openings on the shining cliff towards the north of the house turned to milk. When the Tulku was about a month old, while his mother was giving him the morning bath, to everyone's surprise and amazement, a five-coloured rainbow was seen striking from the eastern direction onto the bath tub.

Coincidentally, around the same time, Gyal Yum Ashi Phuntsho Choden [Queen of the Second King of Bhutan and Royal Mother of His Majesty, the Third King of Bhutan], on her way from Bumthang, while residing in Sha Samtengang near the Luedtsho Lake, dreamt of a girl adorned with flowers and silk scarves, carrying a bowl of milk. She said that the milk is to be offered to Gangteng Tulku Rinpoche and requested the Gyal Yum to offer it to Rinpoche. Upon asking who she was, the girl in the dream answered that she is the Tshomen (Spirit of the Lake) of the Luedtsho Lake and offered the following song:

I offer this song to the Three Jewels: the ultimate refuge,
There is none other than you to rely on.

If you do not recognise this place,
It is the Luedtsho lake of Sha Samtengang.

If you do not know who I am,
I am Deki, the Tshomen of this lake.

The lake is the Spirit Lake (Latsho) called Gakhil,
It's the Spirit Lake of Peling's heart incarnation.

One Lama for one human generation,
By the time it reaches the sixth generation,

I have become very unfortunate here:
The Tulku's focus of Buddha activity is elsewhere.

A number of years have gone by,
At Sangngak Chöling, the main seat,
There is no throne holder as yet.
In the last summer's sixth month,
I had gone looking for the Tulku.

Towards the eastern direction from here,
Behind the great Pelela Mountain Pass,
Towards the source of the Mangde Chu,
A place where the unique language Henked is spoken,
The youngest of the three sons,
Is in the full bloom of health.

At Gangteng Sangngag Chöling,
The mind feels empty without a Tulku,
Thanks be for the Great Queen Mother's arrival here,
Couldn't you invite the Tulku to his monastic seat?

As the Tulku's birth was clearly indicated in the song, during the morning tea, in the presence of *Changzoed* Lapsap Kuenley, Wangdi Dzong's guest caretaker, Shar Gyalmo and Kurtoed Ashi Tshewang Lhamo, Gyal Yum Phuntsho Choden sent an order that the monks of Gangteng be told that if they want to seek their Tulku's incarnation they must look towards the source of Mangde Chu. Moreover, the above song was given to Ashi Tshewang Lhamo by the Gyal Yum, from whom it has been sourced for this work.

As a child, the Tulku often talked of the Gönpa and imitated actions of conducting blessings and teaching ceremonies. From the previous of the Lama Namkhai Nyingpo Rinpoche, he received empowerment and transmission of the *Soeldep Leu Duenma* and the novice's vows. When the Tulku was about seven years of age, he was admitted as a monk in Trongsa Dratshang. From Lam Neten Tshewang Gyeltshen and other teachers, the young Tulku learnt the basics of reading and writing effortlessly.

In addition, he also mastered the inner and outer ritual practices, playing of religious instruments etc. During this time, the Great Dzogchen yogi, Polo Khenpo Rinpoche recognized the Tulku as a reincarnate Lama. Similarly, His Holiness Kyabje Dudjom Rinpoche, Jigdreel Yeshe Dorji and

His Holiness the Gyalwang Karmapa, Rangjung Rigpai Dorji recognized the Tulku as the unmistakable reincarnation of Gangteng Tulku.

Then the Tulku was enrolled in Tango Buddhist College, during which he received the secret Vajrayana teachings including the complete Sarma and Dzogchen teachings from Je Tenzin Döndrup, Je Geduen Rinchen and other noble teachers.

The young Tulku was enthroned as the 9th Gangteng Tulku at an elaborate enthronement ceremony.

His Holiness Kyabje Dudjom Rinpoche, who was Guru Rinpoche himself in person, not only transmitted all the teachings, empowerments, transmission and detailed pointing out instructions of Pema Lingpa but also conferred the complete empowerment, transmission and teachings of the Old and New Treasure teachings of the Dudjom lineage in the manner of filling a vase. With great affection and regard, His Holiness also composed a long life prayer for the Tulku. From the great masters including Kyabje Jadrel Rinpoche, Kyabje Penor Rinpoche, Kyabje Je Khenpo Tenzin Döndrup, Kyabje Dilgo Khentse Rinpoche, Kyabje Dodrup Rinpoche, Polo Khenpo Rinpoche, Sakya Khenchen Rinchen, Khenchen Khedrup, Khenchen Dampa Noryang, Khenchen Dazer, Nyoshu Khen Jamyang Dorji Rinpoche, Yanglop Shakya Dorji etc., the Tulku received important teachings such as the *Rinchen Terdzoed*, *Dam Ngag Zoed*, *NyingthikYazhi*, *Ngel So Kor Sum*, *Gyud Gyal Sangwa Nyingpo* and other teachings completing the entire *Ka Ter* teachings.

Then, Tulku studied in Buddhist Ngagyur Nyingma College at Mysore, where he read Buddhist philosophies such as Madhyamaka, Prajnaparamita, metaphysics, logic etc, including debate, composition and teaching skills. Again, at the blessed retreat centre in Kunzang Chöling, the Tulku underwent three years of strict meditation and retreat, during which many signs of accomplishment were seen.

Once the people of Banjar community in Tsamang under Mongar Dzongkhag invited and requested Tulku Rinpoche to bless their village. During this time, the Tulku was able to bring forth sacred water at three places, thus fulfilling the long-felt wish of the Banjar community. Even to this day, the proof of this amazing Buddha activity of Rinpoche can be seen in that village.

Understanding that the Buddha Dharma is vital for peace and happiness in the world and learning, meditation and practice are essential to ensure the continuity and spread of the Dharma, Rinpoche felt the need and wished to institute Buddhist colleges and meditation centres. As auspicious coincidence would have it, His Majesty, the Fourth King, Jigme Singye Wangchuck commanded that a Buddhist college and a meditation centre be established at Gangteng Gönpa in the future interest of the Monastery and the Lineage as well as in the general interest of upholding the Dharma for the sake of all beings. His Majesty graciously commanded that the Royal Government would extend full support. Accordingly in 1985, the college and meditation centre were started. During this time, Gyal Yum Phuntsho Choden supported this initiative by sponsoring the construction of three large statues of Lord Buddha, Guru Rinpoche and Rigdzin Pema Lingpa and the temple housing many precious contents. In addition to this, the private

secretary of the Gyal Yum, Lopen Phub Dorji, through pure motivation, made contributions including many articles of offerings to the Gönpa.

Following this, Rinpoche also instituted Ugyen Thegchok Chöling in Karshong, Anim Gönpa Pema Chöling at Tang, Bumthang, Samdrup Chöling at Chasilakha, Ugyen Thegchok Chöling at Tingtibi, Kunzang Chöling at Gangteng, meditation centres at Aja Nye and Tsakaling in Mongar and so on. In short, there are around 35 new and old subsidiary meditation and learning centres of the Gangteng Gönpa in the country.

In addition, Rinpoche has been continuously and tirelessly teaching and conferring empowerments, transmissions and blessings to the people of all cross-sections of society. Rinpoche has, since 1997, imparted the complete cycle of the Teachings of Pema Lingpa around five times in Gangteng Sangngag Chöling and other places. Moreover, Rinpoche founded the Yeshe Khorlo Centres and has been teaching and conferring empowerments, transmissions and blessings to students in the USA, Canada, Europe, Taiwan, Singapore, India and other countries, continuing to teach and inspire beings based on their capacity and merit.

With the ravages of time, the almost 400 years old Gangteng Gönpa showed signs of disintegration especially in the wooden materials and some portion of the stone masonry. Unable to bear this sight, Rinpoche initiated the formidable task of major renovation of the Gönpa in the year 2000. Without being perturbed or hindered by the myriad problems and difficulties, Rinpoche went to great lengths to procure the best construction materials to be used in the renovation. Thus, the Gönpa has been restored to a grandeur and splendour greater than ever before, the works for which are being completed in the year 2008.

Concurrently, it would be worthwhile to identify the four directions of the Gönpa and the sacred and symbolic significance of the areas surrounding it.

The region is the central region of Bhutan that is filled with medicinal plants and trees. In this central region, the blessed, peaceful and pleasurable land of the Gangteng valley is further surrounded by the sacred places: Gayney Lhakhang in Bumthang to the east, the Moenyul Namkha Dzong in the south, the famous Paro Taktsang in the west and Guru Rinpoche's meditation cave called Namthang Lu Gi Phu in the north.

As a symbol of the highest Vajrayana teachings and its practice, the temple is located at the highest point.

As a symbol of liberating beings on the ninth "yana", it is located at the knotted base of nine huge mountain peaks.

As a symbol of lack of sufferings due to five afflictive emotional poisons, the valley is not afflicted by the problem of wild animals.

As a symbol of the supreme view and practice by the yogic practitioners of Dzogchen, the vast sky appears like the eight-spoked wheel.

As a symbol of equanimity and altruistic intention of Bodhicitta, the land is level and resembles the eight-petalled lotus.

As a symbol of the congregation of the noble sons and daughters from all directions, it is filled with the eight auspicious signs.

As a symbol of spontaneous fulfilment of the four activities, there is a victory banner in the east, long horns in the south, six-syllable mantra in the west and stupa in the north. These are the four unchanging Great Treasures that adorn this place.

As a symbol of success of the noble ones practicing *Shamatha* meditation and the dawning and enhancing of the 4 perceptions, the sun and moon rises early and sets late.

As a symbol of the continuity of the Three Vehicles, the three rivers flow perennially.

As a symbol of the auspiciousness of the higher view of Mahayana, the Gönpa is located on the ridge of an elephant-shaped peak.

As a symbol of the objects of prayer, the place is endowed with all ten virtues.

As a symbol of the spreading of the Buddha Dharma, the surrounding mountains and forests look like the sixteen great Arhats with their retinue of close attendants.

As a symbol of the eastern grey Tiger, there is the white road of Langleygang.

As a symbol of the southern blue Dragon, there is the blue river, Zhungchu Ngoenmo.

As a symbol of the western red Bird, there is the red rock in Trawanang.

As a symbol of the northern black Turtle, there is the pastoral meadow of Tsi Tsi La.

As a symbol of non-destruction by the four elements, there are the four local protectors (*Sadags*).

As a symbol of prosperity in both spiritual and temporal matters, it is surrounded by the evergreen Wish-fulfilling Tree (*Paksam Joenshing*).

As a symbol of the uniqueness of the teachings of the Three Baskets, the region has upper, middle and the lower sub-regions.

As a symbol of rule through the dual system, the retreat centers are filled with dedicated male and female practitioners.

Amidst such blessed and harmonious setting, the abode of the Buddhas, the significance of the main temple in Gangteng Gönpa is as explained below.

As a symbol of the perfection of teaching and practice, the temple is square in shape.

As a symbol of obstructing the outer evil influences, the temple is enclosed with large wall fencing.

As a symbol of opening of the doors of the three Yogas, there are 3 entrances to the temple.

As a symbol of clearing the darkness of beings through the hundred and eight dharma doors, the temple has 108 doors and windows.

As a symbol of the Compassionate One's skillful means in the taming of beings, it is filled with painted and embossed sacred images.

Moreover, at the outer level the temple resembles the mandala of the Mahayoga, at the inner level it resembles the mandala of the Anuyoga, while at the secret level, it resembles the mandala of Atiyoga.

The ground floor of the temple houses the images of the Buddhas of the 3 times similar to the ones in Magadha, Vajrasana and Yangpachen. Next to these, are the images of 4 other Buddhas, the 8 Noble Sons, the Great Teacher, wrathful form of Hayagriva, and Vajrapani. In the Assembly Hall are *Jangchub Tungsha* and offering goddesses while at the sides of the entrance are the Kings of the 4 directions, the Mandala of Cyclic Existence, layout of Mt. Meru according to the sutras and tantras, Zangdog Pelri and the Pureland of Shambala.

On the next floor is the residential quarters of the successive reincarnations, 3 shrine rooms of the Dharmapalas and the Treasury with the *Namsey Phodrang*.

On the floor above, the Lamai Lhakhang with the statue of Vajrasattava surrounded by the Peling lineage holders and the complete Nyingma Gyud Bum texts is on the eastern side. To the south is the Tshengye Lhakhang with the statues of the 8 manifestations of Guru Rinpoche, canonical texts and 8 red-sandalwood *Desheg Chortens*. On the sides are the eastern and western living quarters. To the west is the Amitayus Lhakhang with the statue of Buddha Amitayus surrounded by his retinue. To the north, the Machen Lhakhang with the reliquary stupa containing the precious embalmed body of the 6th Gangteng Tulku Tenpai Nyima also has statues of the 16 Arhats.

To the front of the main temple is the 11-faced Avalokitesvara Lhakhang.

On one side is the Shedra's Assembly Hall and on the other, the Kezang Lhakhang and enclosing on all sides are the monk's living quarters.

The Monastery has the sacred relics of the Enlightened Ones and many substances blessed by great Lamas, Maha Siddhas and Treasure Revealers. The Monastery continues to uphold the tradition in all its integrity and performs all the rites and rituals in its entirety.

In keeping with the noble and sacred tradition, the Consecration Ceremony of the fully renovated Monastery was observed by conducting the *Guru Thukdrup Lama Norbu Jamtsho* and *Phurba Pudri Drupchens* from 29 September 2008 for ten days and nights. This was followed by the

actual consecration ceremony duly presided over by the Incarnations of the Peling lineage on the auspicious 11 th day of the 8 th month of the Earth Rat Year, 10 October 2008, and which was attended by His Majesty the Fourth King of Bhutan, Members of the Royal Family, the Prime Minister, other dignitaries, as well as devotees from far and near. Then, from the next day onwards, the annual *Tsechu* and mask dances were performed followed by an exhibition of traditional arts and crafts for a period of seven days, during which the spiritual practitioners, monks, lay people and civil servants gathered like one family to celebrate the joyous occasion of the consecration of the Gangteng Sangnag Chöling Gönpa.

Epilogue

When it is impossible to give a complete account of the Buddha activity of sublime beings even by ones who are on the higher bodhisattva levels, what can be said of a being such as me who is filled with obscuration and defilements? Yet still, while trying to justify a single drop of the precious teachers' ocean of Buddha's activities, if the wise and the learned find any short comings in this compilation, it is requested of them to bear with me with patience and kindness. At the same time, the positive merit that accrues from this may be dedicated to the Buddha Dharma in general and the propagation of Pema Lingpa's teachings, in particular.

May the great practitioners live long and fulfil the wishes of the sentient beings.

May the world, in general, enjoy compassionate governance and in particular in Bhutan, where there is the dual system of governance, may the compassionate and successive reigns of the Bodhisattva Kings continue longer than the course of the great river Ganges.

In other words: may the people of this blessed earth enjoy a life free from disease, famine, conflict and other obstacles; may all conditions be abundant like the waters of a lake in the summer monsoon, and let all the appropriate and auspicious conditions be fulfilled spontaneously, ultimately leading all sentient beings to the blissful Pureland of Buddha Amitayus.

The virtue accrued through this writing;
The lotus of learning and realization blossoming,
Those who aspire for liberation like a group of honey bees,
May this be the cause for relishing the sweetness of the three trainings!

On the pure, vast, divine path,
The profound, luminous and non-dual rays of a hundred thousand suns,
Liberating beings from the darkness of the five poisons,
May they be established in the Buddha-field of the three Kayas!

Vast, secret, all-encompassing teachings of the Victorious Ones,
One who is skilled in leading the chariot of learning and realization,
The lamp of Peling's lineage and teachings,
May all incarnations of the Gangteng Tulku be ever Victorious!

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