

Longchen Nyingthig of the Ancient Ones Tradition (Nyingma)

Its Origins and Transmission by Ven. Khenpo Namdrol Rinpoche

The teaching of Dzogpachenpo was first given in the pure realm of Akanishtha, where the teacher Samantabhadra, in Sambhogakaya form, communicates the teaching directly by means of his wisdom mind to disciples who are not different from him in any way-sugatās and bodhisattvas, male and female.

Now, in this world of ours, the first to spread the teaching of Dzogpachenpo was the Nirmanakaya emanation Garab Dorje. Dates given for Garab Dorje put his birth in the year 536BC; by comparison, one popular date for the passing away of Lord Buddha, from the Theravada tradition of Sri Lanka, is 543BC. From the glorious Lord of Secrets, Vajrapani, or it is often said Vajrasattva, Garab Dorje received, in an instant and all together, the empowerments, as well as the tantras, agamas, and upadeshas, of Dzogpachenpo. Then in the north of the western land of Oddiyana, on the rugged mountain-peak of Suryaprakasha, the vidyadhara Garab Dorje, along with the wisdom dakinis, gathered and compiled all the tantras in existence, both those that were known and those that were unknown. Together they divided the 20,000 tantras which bore the name of Dzogpachenpo into 'shlokas' or verses, and classified them into 6,400,000 verses. Garab Dorje's disciple, Manjushrimitra, then divided these 6,400,000 verses of Dzogpachenpo into

three categories:

the outer category of mind-Semde,
the inner category of space-Longde, and
the secret category of pith instructions-Mengakde.¹

Looking first at the outer category of mind- when the Semde teachings were translated in Tibet, the land of snows, eighteen 'mother' and 'child' texts of the mind class were identified, although the Semde tantras can also be counted as numbering twenty-one. These eighteen 'mother' and 'child' texts of Semde consist of the first five to be translated, which were translated by Vairochana, and given the name the 'Five Earlier Translations', plus the thirteen texts translated by his disciple Yudra Nyingpo, known as the 'Thirteen Later Translations of Semde'. When the 'Three Major Tantras' of Semde are then added, that makes a total of twenty-one.

Vairochana received the cycle of Smede from the master Shri Singha, and then transmitted it to the great Dharma king Trisong Detsen, Yudra Nyingpo, and others as a result of which it spread throughout Tibet. Next, the inner category of space, the Longde, is reckoned to consist of 20,000 'volumes.' These can be classified into three: white space, black space, and variegated space, or they can also be categorized as nine spaces. From Shri Singha, Vairochana received the Longde pith instructions, and composed 'the Vajra Bridgé, a scriptural text, which he transmitted in Tibet to Pang Sangye' Gonpo. Pang Sangyé Gonpo and the six successive disciples in his lineage left this world by dissolving into a body of light.

Finally, as for the secret category of pith instructions, it was divided by Manjushrimitra's disciple, Shri Singha, into:

the outer cycle, which is like the physical body,
the inner cycle, which is like the eyes,
the secret cycle, which is like the heart, and
the innermost secret Nyingtik, which is like the whole body that contains everything, all complete.

These four great cycles present the Trekcho teachings in a similar way, but where they differ is in the clarity, explicitness and detail of how the Togal teachings are given. Shri Singha gave the outer, inner and secret cycles of the category of pith instructions to both Vimalamitra and Jnanasutra. He transmitted the innermost secret cycle to Jnanasutra, who then passed it on to Vimalamitra.

The Vima Nyingtik

The first four masters in the lineage left this world in a characteristic way. At the end of his life, the first human Dzogchen master Garab Dorje disappeared into a sphere of rainbow light, leaving his disciple Manjushrimitra his last testament 'Hitting the Essence in Three Words', Tsik Sum Ne Dek. When Manjushrimitra departed from this world, vanishing in a cloud of light, he gave his last testament to his disciple Shri Singha, entitled 'Six Experiences of Meditation', Gom Nyam Drukpa. When Shri Singha passed away and dissolved into a body of light, he bestowed his testament 'Seven Nails', Zerbu Dun, on Jnanasutra. He too left this world by disappearing into a sphere of light, leaving his disciple Vimalamitra his own testament 'Four Methods of Contemplation', Shyak Tab Shyipa.

The lineage which passed from the primordial buddha Samantabhadra through Vajrapani or Vajrasattva to the vidyadhara Garab Dorje is known as the Mind Direct Transmission of the Buddhas Gyalwa Gong Gyu. From Garab Dorje down through Manjushrimitra, Shri Singha and Jnanasutra to Vimalamitra, the lineage is known as the Sign Transmission of the Vidyadharas-Rigdzin Da Gyu. Then from Vimalamitra onwards, the lineage is called the Oral Transmission from Special Individuals-Gangzak Nyen Gyu. These are the three transmissions according to the tradition of Vimalamitra. Within the Innermost Secret Cycle of Nyingtik are the Seventeen Tantras. The tradition of Vimalamitra adds to them the 'Tantra of the Wrathful Mother, Protectress of Mantras', to make eighteen in all, while the tradition of Padmasambhava also arrives at a total of eighteen by adding the 'Tantra of the Blazing Expanse of Luminosity'. Generally, however, both the 'Tantra of the Wrathful Mother, Protectress of Mantras', from Vimalamitra's tradition and the 'Tantra of the Blazing Expanse of Luminosity' from Padmasambhava's tradition and the 'Tantra of the Blazing Expanse of Luminosity' from Padmasambhava's tradition are added to the Seventeen Tantras of the Innermost Secret Nyingtik Cycle, making a total of nineteen altogether.

In Tibet, the ones who made this Nyingtik teaching of Clear Light spread were the great masters who possessed their special direct transmission, chiefly the great pandita Vimalamitra, and Guru Padmasambhava. In the room known as Utse' Barkhang in Samye, Vimalamitra gave the cycle of the Innermost Secret Nyingtik of Dzogpachenpo in strictest secrecy to five disciples: the King Trisong Detsen, Nyangben Tingdzin Zangpo, Prince Muni Tsepo, Kawa Platsek and Chokro Luyi Gyaltzen. The tradition of Nyingtik which came down from this transmission is known as the Vima Nyingtik. The Vima Nyingtik itself can be categorized into tantras, agamas, and upadeshas, which are all taught within it. The tantras here refer to the Seventeen Tantras of the pith instruction. The agamas found in the Vima Nyingtik are the golden lettered instructions, the turquoise lettered instructions, the copper lettered instructions, and the conch lettered instructions. These are what are called the 'four volumes of profound instructions'. Then the upadeshas refer to the 119 treatises of essential pith instructions. Vimalamitra spent thirteen years in Tibet, and then promising to return to Tibet every hundred years as an emanation to further the Clear Light teaching of Dzogpachenpo, he left for the Wutaishan mountain in China. There he remain until all of the 1000 buddhas of this Fortunate Kalpa have appeared. When they have all done so, he will once again go to Vajrasana in India, where he will manifest the state of complete and perfect enlightenment.

Fifty-five years after Vimalamitra's departure for Wutaishan, Nyangben Tingdzin Zangpo, having given the transmission of the Vima Nyingtik cycle to Be Lodro Wangchuk, attained the rainbow body. Be Lodro Wangchuk gave the pith instructions cycle of Nyingtik to Dangma Lhundrup Gyaltzen, who in turn passed it on to Chetsun Senge Wangchuk. He transmitted it to Gyalwa Shyangton Tashi Dorje, and then left this world in a rainbow body. Gyalwa Shyangton passed it on to the great siddha Khepa Nyimabum, who gave the teachings to his principal disciple Guru Jobe. Then Guru Jobe transmitted them to Trulshik Senge Gyabpa. He in turn gave them to the great siddha Drupchen Melong Dorje, who passed them on to the vidyadhara Kumaradza. Kumaradza gave the teachings to the Omniscient Longchen Rabjam, and so this is how the lineage flowed down to the Omniscient Longchenpa, who was born in the year 1308.

In terms of what are called the 'old' and 'new Nyingtik', the Vima Nyingtik came to be known as the old Nyingtik, and in terms of kama and terma, it was classified as kama. This is how it is popularly defined. The Vima Nyingtik is also called the 'mother text' (ma yik). Later on, Longchenpa composed his own commentary on the Vima Nyingtik, which was mainly based on the Dzogchen Tantra 'Garland of Pearls'. It was called the Lama Yangtik, 'Wish Fulfilling Jewel', and is subdivided into fiftyone different treatises. Since it is a commentary on the Vima Nyingtik, it is referred to as the 'child text' (bu yik). This is how Vimalamitra's lineage came to be passed down.

The Khandro Nyingtik

It was from Shri Singha that the great master Padmasambhava received the teachings of Nyingtik. In Tibet, Padmasambhava taught his own complete Nyingtik cycle of the Clear Light teaching of Dzogpachenpo in secret to Yeshe Tsogyal, along with 100,000 wisdom dakinis, at the Shyoto Til Dro cave. Then one day, king Trisong Detsen's daughter, the Princess Pema Sel, died unexpectedly at the age of only eight. The king was distraught with grief, and so to console him. Guru Rinpoche drew a syllable NRI over the little princess's heart, caught her consciousness with the hook of his samadhi, and brought her back to life. As soon as she opened her eyes and could speak again, he gave her the whole cycle of the Khandro Nyingtik by means of the power he had to transfer blessings directly. He empowered Princess Pema Sel to reveal this teaching in a future life, and then the complete Khandro Nyingtik cycle was hidden as a terma. Princess Pema Sel was reborn much later as Pema Ledrel Tsal, who withdrew the terma of Khandro Nyingtik from its place of concealment at the Daklha Tramo Drak rock in the province of Dakpo. He then transmitted it to his main disciple Gyalse' Lekden. Pema Ledrel Tsal was reincarnated as the Omniscient Longchenpa, who received the whole cycle of Khandro Nyingtik from Gyalse' Lekden, and by so doing ensured that the authentic lineage was kept alive.

According to the Khandro Nyingtik then, the Mind Direct Transmission of the Buddhas is the same primordial expression of the Dzogchen teachings in the Akanishtha heaven. The Sign Transmission of the Vidyadharas is that which passed from Vajrapani to Garab Dorje, Shri Singha, Guru Rinpoche, Yeshe Tsogyal and Princess Pema Sel. From Pema Ledrel Tsal on, to Gyalse' Lekden and the Omniscient Longchen Rabjam, is the Oral Transmission from Special Individuals. The Khandro Nyingtik cycle itself consists of the Twelve 'mother' and 'child' Tantras of the Takdro Gyu, the 'Three Last Testaments of the Buddha', and other teachings amounting to a total of sixty-five different categories. When the pith-instructions are given according to the Khandro Nyingtik, it is these Twelve Tantras of the Takdro Gyu and Three Last Testaments which are quoted as references.

Guru Rinpoche's Khandro Nyingtik came to be known as the 'new' Nyingtik, and is classified as terma. As it was first taught to Yeshe Tsogyal and Pema Sel, who were both dakinis, and the guardian of the teaching was the protectress Shaza Khamoche, it was given the name 'Khandro' Nyingtik. Guru Rinpoche's Khandro Nyingtik is called the 'mother text', as is the Vima Nyingtik, and so these two are known as the two 'mother's'. The commentary on the Khandro Nyingtik composed by the Omniscient Longchen Rabjam is the Khandro Yangtik-'the Cloud-bank of Ocean-like Profound Meanings', which is called the 'child text'. The two mother texts and two child texts of the Nyingtik were called the 'four parts' - Yabshyi, and so became known together as the Nyingtik Yabshyi. Longchen Rabjam also composed the Zabmo Yangtik, which condenses the important pith-instructions of both Vima Nyingtik and Khandro Nyingtik, but it is not comprehensive.

Most of the cycles of the Innermost Secret Nyingtik are famous as being termas, and they can be categorized into elaborate, middle-length and condense cycles of teachings. The most elaborate Nyingtik is the Nyingtik Yabshyi itself. The middle-length Nyingtik is said to be the Northern Treasure Gongpa Zangtal, 'All-penetrating Wisdom Mind', and the condense one is said to be Minling Terchen's terma Ati Zapdon Nyingop 'Essence of the Profound Truth of Ati'.

The Continuing Lineage between Longchen Rabjam and the vidyadhara Jikme Lingpa, there are fourteen masters in the lineage of transmission. However, when Jikme Lingpa practised, focusing on the Omniscient Longchenpa, for three years in the Sangchen Metok Cave at Samye Chimphu, Longchenpa actually appeared to him in a vision three times, and gave them the entire blessing of the transmission of his wisdom mind. So this was a short lineage which came directly and immediately down from Longchenpa to Jikme Lingpa. From Jikme' Lingpa, the teaching passed to Jikme Gyalwe' Nyugu, then to Jikme' Chokyi Wangpo (Patrul Rinpoche), and then to Nyoshul Lungtok Tenpe' Nyima, who gave it to the great Khenchen Ngakgi Wangpo (Khenpo Ngaga). In turn, he transmitted it to his disciple, Shedrup Lungtok Tenpe Nyima, the incarnation of Nyoshul Lungtok. From this great master, His Holiness Penor Rinpoche received, it is said, almost all of the teachings of the Nyingtik cycle. The transmission which Nyoshul Lungtok Tenpe Nyima gave to Khenchen Ngaga was in turn passed on by him to the vidyadhara Palchen Dupa, the second Pema Norbu Rinpoche. Khenpo Ngaga and Palchen Dupa were as teacher and student to one another. So Palchen Dupa would offer Khenchen Ngaga many teachings from the Nyingtik cycle, and likewise he received a considerable number of Nyingtik teachings from the great khenpo. Now, Palchen Dupa gave the transmission to Thubten Chökyi Dawa, the second Choktrul Rinpoche, who passed it on to His Holiness Drubwang Penor Rinpoche. In this way, the two lineages from Khenpo Ngaga merged into one. Finally, Penor Rinpoche received the entire transmission of Nyingtik Yabshyi, along with the detailed explanation of the texts, from His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche.

This brief note on the Nyingtik Yabshyi was composed by Khenpo Namdrol Rinpoche to mark HH Drubwang Penor Rinpoche's granting of the Nyingtik Yabshyi empowerments at the request of Sogyal Rinpoche and Rigpa at Lerab Ling in July 1995. The Dzogchen teachings of Mengakde are also differentiated according to whether they belong to the 'Shé Gyü' or 'Nyen Gyü,' the explanatory Tantras or oral transmission. It is sometimes said that the Shé Gyü mainly contains the instructions for enlightenment in this lifetime and the Nyen Gyü for enlightenment in the intermediate state. Another way in which this is explained is that the Outer, Inner and Secret cycles are Nyen Gyü, and the Innermost Secret Cycle belongs to Shé Gyü. The special fruition of the practice of the Innermost Secret Cycle, the Nyingtik teachings, is to attain the 'rainbow body.' Through the perfection of the practice of Trekcho, the physical body can be dissolved completely at death into particles, while through the Togal practice, it is dissolved into a body of light or rainbow body. There are two kinds of rainbow body: the general rainbow body, where the body dissolves completely into light, and the 'Rainbow Body of the Great Transference', Jalu Phowa Chenpo, where the ordinary body is transformed into a rainbow-like body and the individual lives for centuries for as long as they can benefit beings, appearing to them from time to time. Such was the case with both Vimalamitra and Guru Rinpoche.