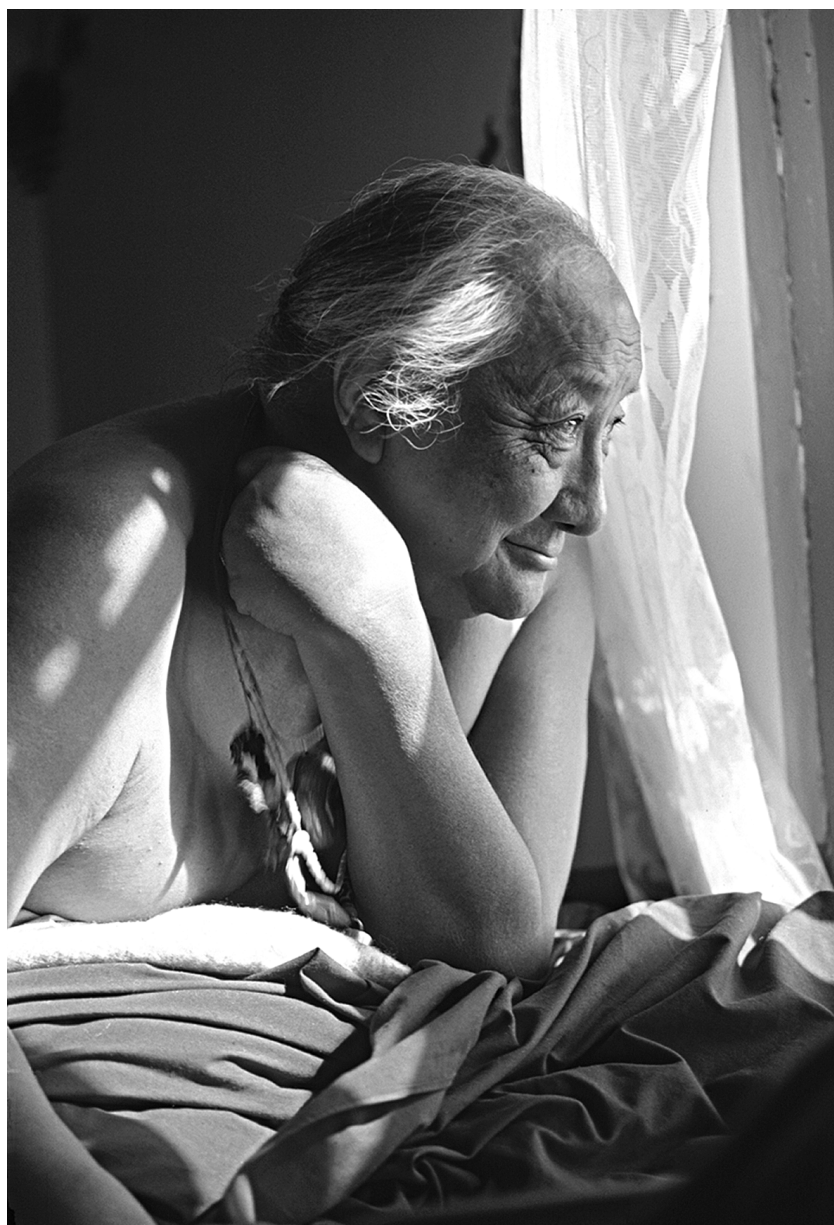




A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF DILGO KHYENTSE RINPOCHE

Tulku Thondup

KYABJE DILGO KHYENTSE RINPOCHE TASHI PALJOR (1910–1991) was one of the few great lineage holders, writers, teachers, and transmitters of teachings and powers of Nyingma tantras in general and Longchen Nyingthig in particular who reached numerous disciples in Tibet, India, Nepal, Bhutan, and the West.

He is also known as Gyurme Thekchok Tenpe Gyaltzen, Jigme Khyentse Özer, and Rabsel Dawa.

He was born on the thirtieth of the fourth month of the Iron Dog year of the fifteenth Rabjung (1910) in the family of Dilgo, a minister (nyerchen) of the king of Dege in the Nyö clan in Dan Valley. His father was Tashi Tsering. It was the very day that the great master Mipham Namgyal and his disciples were performing the feast ceremony at the completion of his one-and-a-half-month teaching on his *Commentary on Kalachakra* at Dilgo. Mipham immediately gave pills of Sarasvati, the female Buddha of wisdom, with the sacred letters *DHIH* and *HRIH* to the baby to eat even before tasting his mother's milk. About a month after the birth, Mipham gave empowerments for purification and longevity and named him Tashi Paljor. Since then until Mipham died at the beginning of 1912, Khyentse was given blessed substances continuously.

When he was only four months old, Ngor Pönlop Loter Wangpo recognized him as the tulku of Khyentse Wangpo. At the time of the death of Mipham, Shechen Gyaltsap Pema Namgyal (1871–1926) saw him and asked the family to give him to Shechen.

At the age of six, he was accidentally burned badly in a fire and was seriously ill for about six months, which caused him to take ordination as a novice.

When he was fifteen, Gyaltsap recognized him as a tulku of Khyentse Wangpo, enthroned him at Shechen Monastery, and named him Gyurme Thekchok Tenpe Gyaltsen. He also gave him numerous transmissions, including those of the Dam-ngak Dzö and Nyingthig Yabzhi. From Khenpo Pema Losal of Dzogchen he received the transmission of Longchen Nyingthig. From Adzom Drukpa, he received teachings on Longchen Nyingthig Ngöndro.

With Khenpo Zhenphen Chökyi Nangwa (Zhen-ga) of Dzogchen, Khenpo Thupten Chöphel (Thupga) of Changma hermitage, Dza Mura Dechen Zangpo, and other masters, he studied the texts of Nagarjuna, Asanga, *Abhidharma*, *Yönten Dzö*, the commentaries of *Guhyagarbha-maya-jala-tantra*, and many others. Khenpo Thupga recognized him as the tulku of Önpö Tenzin Norbu (Tenli).

Then from Khyentse Chökyi Lodrö he received the transmissions of Sakya, Kagyu, Geluk, and Nyingma teachings, including Rinchen Terdzö, Nyingthig Yahzhi, Longchen Nyingthig, and Lama Gongdu. From Khenpo Tendzin Dargye of Shechen he received the transmission of the nine volumes of Jigme Lingpa. From Shechen Kongtrul (1901–1959?) he received transmissions of the thirteen volumes of the Minling cycle. He received teachings of all the Buddhist traditions of Tibet from over seventy teachers. Among them, Shechen Gyaltsap and Khyentse Chökyi Lodrö were his principal teachers.

Starting from the age of eighteen, for twelve years he stayed in solitary places and practiced various teachings, including the Three-Root Sadhanas of Minling Terchen and Longchen Nyingthig.

Throughout his life he dedicated himself to giving teachings and transmissions to all, whoever came to receive them. He wrote that by the age of sixty-four, he had given empowerments of Nyingthig Yabzhi and Longchen Nyingthig over ten times. From the age of forty till eighty-two he gave discourses on *Chokchu Münsel*, the commentary on *Guhyagarbha* by Longchen Rabjam, at least once a year, and gave extensive commentaries on Jigme Lingpa's *Yönten Dzö*. Among countless other teachings, he gave five times the transmission of the *Rinchen Terdzö*, four times those of the *Nyingma Kama*, thrice that of the *Dam-ngak Dzö*, and twice that of the *Kanjur*.

Rinpoche and his consort, Khandro Lhamo, had two daughters. His daughter Chime's son is the seventh Shechen Rabjam.

At the invitation of the royal family of Bhutan, he spent many years in Bhutan teaching and transmitting the teachings.

Since the early 1960s, he single-handedly maintained and propagated the unique nonsectarian tradition of Khyentses, and tirelessly with the continuity of a stream he spread the teachings by traveling, teaching, practicing, and building monuments without any pause, for the sake of Dharma and people.

In 1980 he built Shechen Tennyi Dargye Ling Monastery (a name he took from his monastery in Tibet) at Bodhnath in Nepal, an elaborate complex with over two hundred monk-students. In 1988 he established a shedra at the new monastery, where monks are studying scholarly texts.

Starting in 1975, he visited many countries in the West many times and taught various levels of teachings and transmissions. Also he established Thekchok Ösal Chöling, a Dharma center in France. He visited Tibet three times from exile to teach and to help in rebuilding the monasteries and the faith in his homeland.

He conferred on the fourteenth Dalai Lama many empowerments and teachings on the commentaries of *Guhyagarbha* and *Yönten Dzö* and oral teachings of Dzogpa Chenpo combined with the teachings on *Yeshe Lama*.

He discovered many teachings and sadhanas as terma and wrote many scholarly texts and commentaries on various subjects, totaling twenty-three volumes. Among his writings on Longchen Nyingthig are a commentary on *Palchen Düpa* and *Wangki Chokdrik*.

At the age of eighty-one, at three A.M. on the twentieth of the eighth month of the Iron Sheep year (September 28, 1991), his enlightened mind merged into the ultimate openness at a hospital in Thimbu, the capital of Bhutan. Since then, his monastery in Nepal has been presided over by his Dharma heir and grandson, Rabjam Rinpoche, Gyurme Chökyi Senge.

He was one of the greatest learned and accomplished masters of Tibet of our age. He was tall and giant. When he was among other masters, he stood like a mountain in the midst of hills or shone as the moon among stars, not because of his physical prominence, but because of the breadth of his scholarship and the depth of his saintliness. When he gave teachings, it was like the flow of a river, with hardly any pause. If strang-

ers heard his lectures, their first impression might be that he was reading a beautiful text from memory, as the words of his talks were poetry, his grammar was perfect, and the meaning was profound.

Another most astonishing feature was his memory. He remembered not only scholarly and liturgical texts and details about his teachers and friends, but also those people whom he had seen only once years earlier.

His kindness was boundless, and there was room for everybody. Whenever I had an audience, he gave me the feeling that there was a place for me reserved in his vast mind. If you watched carefully, you got the feeling that he was always in the meditative or realized wisdom of openness and reaching out to people with the power of compassion, love, and directness, without any alteration.

He practically held the transmissions of all the Buddhist teachings of Tibet, but was constantly searching for additional transmissions, no matter how minor they might be. He had a huge library collection, but never stopped looking for even a page of a rare writing. He was also immensely loyal.

In his last trip from Bhutan to Kalimpong, instead of flying he insisted on making the arduous journey by car in order to see an old disciple of his on the way. While that effort might have exhausted the last drops of his physical strength, it would have been his joy and fulfillment, an act of compassion.

Urgyen Tenzin Jigme Lhundrup (b. 1993), the grandson of Tulku Ugyen Rinpoche (1919–1996) and the son of Kela Chokling Rinpoche and Dechen Paldron of Terdhe, has been enthroned as the reincarnation of Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche.