

His Eminence Chöje Ayang Rinpoche – Background, Lineage and Previous Lives



His Eminence Chöje Ayang Rinpoche was born into a nomadic family in Eastern Tibet (Kham). At his birth special signs appeared. His mother dreamed of a Buddha-like being who emanated a golden vajra that merged into the crown of her head. During another dream a bright light appeared, like a shooting star from the west. It dissolved into her body, filling the whole earth and sky with red light.

The young boy was recognised by a delegation of high lamas, including His Holiness The 16th Gyalwang Karmapa, Ayang Drubchen Tenpai Nyinpa, Nelong Drubchen, Traleg Kyagbon, and the tutor of His Holiness Drikung Kyobgon Chabra Rinpoche, as the mind (wisdom) emanation of Terton Rigzin Chögyal Dorje and the seventh incarnation of the founder of the Ayang Monastery in Eastern Tibet (Kham), which was built around 1580 C.E. as a branch of the main Drikung monastery.

He took his monk's vows and received his early training at Drikung Thil Changchub Ling, the main Drikung Kagyu monastery in central Tibet. From 1951 to 1955 he studied at Drikung Nyima Changra Philosophical College in central Tibet. From Khenpo Tsense Sangpo he received all the *Nyingthig* initiations and teachings as well as his first *Phowa* teaching according to the Nyingma tradition. From the great Drikung lama Nyizong Tripa he received all the initiations of *Rinchen Ter Dzod* and *Kagyu Nag Dzod*. From his own monastery, Ayang Thupten Rinpoche, who was also the tutor of the head of the Drikung lineage, bestowed on him teachings of the *Six Yogas of Naropa* and *Mahamudra*. He received teachings on Drikung *Phowa* from both His Holiness Drikung Kyobgon Chetsang Rinpoche and His Holiness Drikung

Kyobgon Chungsang Rinpoche, the heads of the Drikung lineage, during the Phowa Chenmo, which takes place only once every twelve years. He was given the *Upadesha* (pointing out instructions) by the great Nyingma yogi Rahor Chödra Rinpoche.

After receiving the title of Lama in 1955, Rinpoche went on pilgrimage to many of the holy places of Guru Rinpoche. In Phulung in Southern Tibet, where Guru Rinpoche practised Phowa, he did a long retreat. After completing the retreat, he performed an offering puja that was attended by many from the Naga tribe. They brought offerings and circumambulated his place of retreat while reciting many mantras of Guru Rinpoche. Rinpoche felt this was a great sign that might mean he would be teaching Phowa in foreign countries in the future.

In Phulung, he received the equivalent of a Western Doctor of Philosophy degree in 1959. He received many further teachings, empowerments and oral transmission blessings, including the Kalachakra initiation from His Holiness the Dalai Lama at Norbu Lingka in Lhasa. From His Holiness the 16th Gyalwang Karmapa at Rumtek he received the initiations and oral transmissions of *Chagchen Kundzod Chig She Kundrol* and a special *Mahamudra* introduction. From His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche in Bhutan he received the *Dam Nag Dzog* which contains the essence of all initiations of all schools.

After becoming one of the first Drikung lamas to leave Tibet in 1959, Rinpoche's profound connection with the Phowa practice was recognised when he was requested by many great Masters, including His Holiness the 16th Gyalwang Karmapa, His Holiness the Dalai Lama and His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche, to travel to the West and teach this powerful practice through which even inexperienced practitioners can receive strong and unmistakable signs of accomplishment.

Having done this tirelessly from 1982 until the present day, and having extended his teachings to Eastern countries, including Taiwan, Japan and Hong Kong, there is now perhaps no Tibetan lama more identified with the transmission of Phowa to the world than His Eminence Chöje Ayang Rinpoche.

As a Drikung Kagyu lama who holds both Nyingma and Drikung lineages, Rinpoche continues the unbroken succession of realized Masters from the Supreme Buddha Dorje Chang/Vajradhara to the present day. In 2003, he was awarded the title of Dharma Regent (*Chöje*) by the Drikung Lineage Masters in Dehra Dun, India

Having been recognized as the reincarnation of Tertön Rigdzin Chögyal Dorje, Ayang Rinpoche wished to find out more about his activities in past lives. Fortunately, Tertön Chögyal Dorje had written his own autobiography, in which he stated that he remembered a number of his past lives very clearly.

2500 years ago he had been a disciple of Shakyamuni Buddha, a Bodhisattva called Ze Pai Tok (Tib.) or Ruchiraketu (Sansk.). At Vulture Peak Mountain, Ruchiraketu enquired of the Lord Buddha the reason for the Enlightened One's comparatively short life. Ruchiraketu then recounted his dream of a magnificent golden drum that shone like the sun and was surrounded by Buddhas. When the drum was struck, it issued verses of confession. This account is recorded in the *Sublime Golden Light*

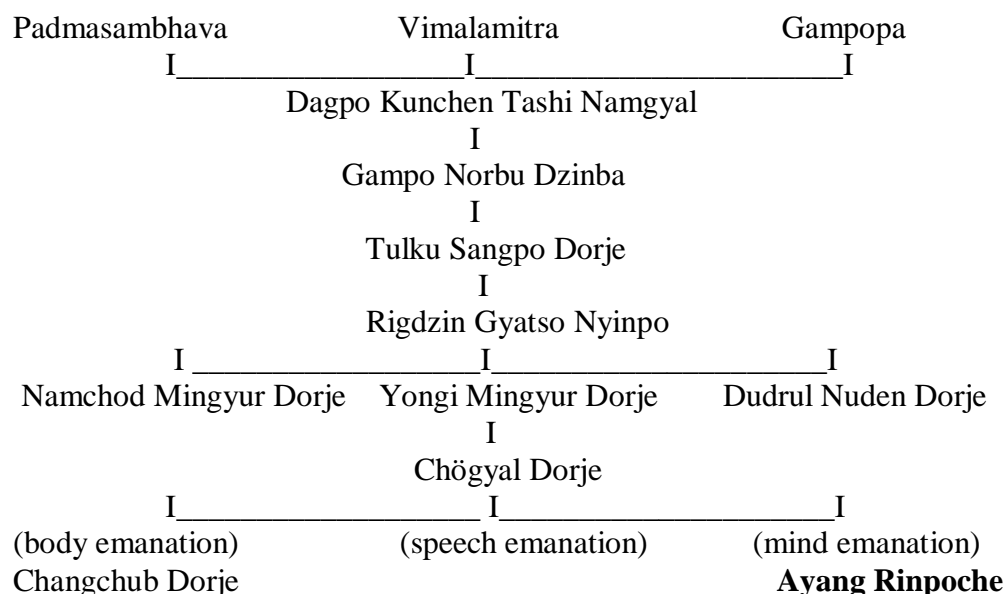
Sutra, which can be downloaded in English translation from <http://www.fpmt.org/teachers/teachings/sutras/golden-light-sutra/download.html>. Described as the King of Sutras, its blessing power to bring about spiritual realisation, healing, karmic purification and peace is very great. It has also been translated into many other languages.

Terton Chögyal Dorje had also been one of Guru Rinpoche's twenty-five main disciples named Langdro Lotsawa (also known as Langdro Konchok Jungne), an influential minister at the court of King Trisong Detsen. After becoming a monk, he translated Dharma teachings from Sanskrit to Tibetan. As a result of his practice he could send lightning bolts like shooting arrows wherever he liked, liberating both humans and non-humans alike. On his death he manifested as an expanse of light and left no corpse behind.

In another life, Terton Chögyal Dorje recalled, he had been Repa Shiwa Ö, one of Milarepa's eight great heart sons. A short description of his history can be found at http://www.dzogchenmonastery.org/repa_shiwa_o.html and his famous meeting with Milarepa is recounted in the *Hundred Thousand Songs*.

As the mind emanation of Chögyal Dorje, Rinpoche also traces his line of incarnation to Dagpo Kunchen Tashi Namgyal (1512-1587), who was both descended from and a reincarnation of Gampopa, and was the author of "*Mahamudra –The Moonlight*", one of the greatest practice manuals in the Tibetan Buddhist canon, and "*Clarifying the Natural State*", a guide for the meditator unsurpassed for its clarity and practical guidance. The second reincarnation of Dakpo Kunchen Tashi Namgyal and author of his biography was Tulku Sangpo Dorje (1634-1700). From these great masters the line of incarnation extends back to Vimalamitra, Gampopa and Padmasambhava. (See diagram below.)

Rinpoche's names are Konchog Tendzin Chogyal Dorje, Konchog Chogyab, and also the name of his monastery in Eastern Tibet: Ayang Tulku (Rinpoche).



With his usual humility, Ayang Rinpoche said that, while he naturally has devotion towards Guru Rinpoche and Milarepa and trusts the words of his root master His Holiness the 16th Gyalwang Karmapa, how can he be certain that he really is the reincarnation of the great Terton Chögyal Dorje? (In fact, before numerous repeated requests by students elicited some of this story, he jokingly used to tell his devoted disciples that he must have been a dog that bit a great Master in a past life!)

The answer to this question is contained in two sentences in Chögyal Dorje's autobiography. Half of each sentence is written in Tibetan, and the other in a language that Ayang Rinpoche was able to identify as Dakini language. By now living in India, Rinpoche searched for someone to translate this mysterious Dakini writing. He discovered that Ven. Kamtrul Rinpoche, who was living in Dharamsala and already quite elderly, with failing eyesight, possessed this rare knowledge. Ven. Kamtrul Rinpoche kindly read and translated the sentences, and confirmed that they indeed included Dakini writing.

First Sentence:

First half in Tibetan: *Tse Tsing Ma*: Next life

Second half in Dakini language: *Ga Yu Ta Ji*: *Gayu* or *Gaba* is the birthplace. *Ta* is horse.

Ven. Kamtrul Rinpoche told Ayang Rinpoche that the first half sentence is quite clear, stating that Terton Chögyal Dorje is predicting his next rebirth. The second half said *Gayu/Gaba* and Ayang Rinpoche said he was born in a place called Gaba. Then Ven. Kamtrul Rinpoche asked whether there is a thing or place near Gaba with the sound Ta. Ayang Rinpoche replied that, while there is nothing with such a sound, he himself was born in the year of the horse – which in Tibetan is Ta. So Ven Kamtrul Rinpoche confirmed that the first sentence says that Terton Chögyal Dorje's next rebirth would be in a place called Gaba in the year of the horse.

Second Sentence:

First half in Tibetan: *Lam Samo*: Profound path of Phowa

Second half in Dakini language: *Powin Da Din Jing*: with great success

At this point Ven. Kamtrul Rinpoche said that it appears the two sentences are indeed about Ayang Rinpoche and accurately predict his birth and subsequent Dharma activities.

Thus, with these two sentences written during the lifetime of Terton Chögyal Dorje in two different languages, the great Terton (discoverer of hidden treasures) predicted his next reincarnation and his future activities, and confirmed Ayang Rinpoche without a doubt as his authentic reincarnation. Furthermore, when asked what Terton Chögyal Dorje was best known for, Ayang Rinpoche replied “for Phowa and for introducing the True Nature of the Mind.” In his current life, of course, Rinpoche is indeed renowned both for Phowa and for the uniquely powerful and effective way he can introduce his disciples to their true nature.

Although his written biography starts with the birth of Buddhism 2500 years ago, by the time he became the Bodhisattva Ruchiraketu accompanying Buddha Shakyamuni, the great being we know as Ayang Rinpoche had already been engaged in Dharma activities for an incalculable number of lifetimes, as recorded in the Golden Light Sutra.

May every being with any connection with His Eminence Ayang Rinpoche treasure every word that he speaks, and every moment that we are able to be with him, and always follow his advice to “Try our best!”

This material has been compiled from a number of sources by Ani Martha Hamilton, Vincent Cheng, Becky Loy, Mark Tayrien and Jane Crancher. Full responsibility for all errors is taken by Jane Crancher.