

A Short Biography of Khandro Tāre Lhamo

Compiled by Lama Dechen Yeshe Wangmo for Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tare_Lhamo



Tāre Lhamo (*tva re lha mo*), aka Tāre Dechen Gyalmo (Earth Tiger Year 1938–2003), was a Tibetan Buddhist master, visionary, and treasure revealer who gained renown in eastern Tibet. She was also revered for her life-saving miracles during the hardships of the Cultural Revolution and for extending the life span of many masters. It was said that her activities to benefit others swelled like a lake in spring.

At age 40, through the strength of her determination to fulfill her destiny, she became the wisdom consort of Namtrul Rinpoche Jigme Phuntsok, aka Orgyen Namkha Lingpa (1944–2011), the Fourth Namkai Nyingpo and rebirth of her father, Apang Terchen. For nearly twenty years, the eminent couple worked tirelessly to restore and expand religious practice in their communities. Their home monastery was Nyenlung in Serta County, Sichuan, close to Dodrupchen Monastery and Larung Gar Institute.

In the West, Tāre Lhamo is best known as the first person to recognize Dudjom Sangye Pema Zhepa Rinpoche, the son of Dola Tulku Jigme Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche, as a rebirth of Dudjom Rinpoche, Jigdral Yeshe Dorje. This identification came to her in dakini script and was later confirmed by Chadral Sangye Dorje.

Early Life

Spiraling Vine of Faith: The Life of Liberation of the Supreme Khandro Tāre Lhamo (*mkha' 'gro tā re lha mo'i rnam thar dad pa'i 'khri shing*) is the official biography of Tāre Lhamo's early life, written by Pema Osal Thaye, a heart-son of Namtrul Rinpoche and Tāre Lhamo. The biography first devotes 126 pages to recounting the lives of liberation of Yeshe Tsogyal and Sera Khandro as Tāre Lhamo's previous incarnations before recounting hers.

Another is *Jewel Lamp of Blessings* (*gter ston grub pa'i dbang phyug gzhi chen nam sprul dang mkha' 'dro tva re bde chen lha mo zung gi mdzad rnam nyer bsdud byin rlabs norbu'i sgron me*) written by Abu Karlo et al., and published in 2001.

After Tāre Lhamo's marriage to Namtrul Rinpoche, her biography is incorporated in Pema Osal Thaye's biography of Namtrul Rinpoche, *Jewel Garland: The Life of Liberation of Namtrul Jigme Phuntsok* (*nam sprul 'jigs med phun tshogs kyi rnam thar nor bu'i do shal*), published in *Cloud Offerings to Delight The Vidyadharas and Dakinis* (*skyabs rje nam sprul rin po che 'jigs med phun tshogs ang mkha' 'gro ta re lha mo mchog gi rnam thar rig 'dzin mkha' 'gro dgyes pa'i mchod sprin*), 1997.

Tāre Lhamo was born in the nomadic region of Golok, eastern Tibet, in Padma county. Her father was the miraculous son of Dudjom Lingpa, Apang Tertön (a phang gter chen), Orgyen Trinley Lingpa (*o rgyan 'phrin las gling pa*, aka Pawo Choying Dorje (*dpa' bo chos dbyings rdo rje* (1895-1945). Her mother, Damtsik Drölma (*dam tshig sgröl ma*), was a speech emanation of Yeshe Tsogyal.

When she was one year old, she went on pilgrimage with her parents to faraway central Tibet. In Lhasa, the family met many masters. It was at that time that Dudjom Jigdral Yeshe Dorje (1904-1987), recognized her as an emanation of Yeshe Tsogyal and wrote this aspirational prayer: *Joint emanation of Varahi, the mother of all the buddhas, and Tsogyal, the dakini from Kham who bears the name of Sukha (Sera Khandro), has come again as the mantra-born, Tāre. Her deeds and activities will spread to India, Tibet, and China, and she will bring all those connected to her to the pure realm of Khechara.* In this way, Tāre Lhamo was regarded as an emanation of Sera Khandro, although no formal enthronement ever took place.

Sera Khandro Deway Dorje (*se ra mkha' 'gro bde ba'i rdo rje*), aka Kunzang Dekyong Wangmo (1892-1940), an emanation of Yeshe Tsogyal, was born in Lhasa but came to live most of her life in eastern Tibet. One day, she gave a red protection cord to Tāre Lhamo's future mother saying, Keep this in a safe place. When the knot in the cord has disappeared, I will come back to your house.

Tāre Lhamo was also the rebirth of Tra Gelong Tsultrim Dargye (*khra dge slong tshul khrims dar rgyas*) (1866–1937), a scholar and emanation of Naropa. When Tāre Lhamo's future mother went to receive a Vajrayogini empowerment from him, he told her that

one day he would be born into her family. Then on his deathbed, he told his disciple, *In the year of the Male Earth Tiger (1938), go to Apang Terchen. I will have been born there.* Because of these words, Tāre Lhamo was quickly recognized as the rebirth of Tra Gelong Tsultrim Dargye. And, as soon as she could speak, she requested that his ritual implements be returned to her.

Tāre Lhamo's father, Apang Tertön, prophesied the significance of his daughter's life, saying, *A sublime being will be born into my family. She will be the combined emanation of Tra Gelong Tsultrim Dargye and the dakini Sukhavajra (Sera Khandro). As a double rebirth, she will accomplish great benefit for beings on a scale even greater than my own sons.*

At age fourteen, Tāre Lhamo and her mother were traveling by foot to Dodrupchen Monastery, when a pack of wild dogs attacked them in an open field. All they could do was throw stones at the dogs. This included one dark stone that Tāre Lhamo picked up from the top of a boulder. Later that night, when she went to bed, she found that dark stone in her jacket. On closer examination, it was found to be a treasure casket marked with the syllable of Yeshe Tsogyal—a red BAM. Her mother understood once again that her daughter was an emanation of Yeshe Tsogyal and told her, "This stone is very important. You must wear it next to your body". Tāre Lhamo placed it inside a locket and wore it at all times. From that moment, her life began to change. Later, she learned that it contained a treasure destined to be revealed by Dodrupchen Rigdzin Jalu Dorje and she offered it to him.

When she was 19, Tāre Lhamo was advised to marry Tulku Mingyur Dorje (1934–1959), a rebirth of Vairocana and Dzongter Kunzang Nyima's son. Their only son, Wangchuk Dorje, also known as Tulku Ngaro, died from an undetermined illness in 1976. Tāre Lhamo's mother died shortly after that, leaving her bereft.

At age 40, Tāre Lhamo became the wisdom consort of Rinpoche Jigme Phuntsok, aka Orgyen Namkha Lingpa (1944–2011), the Fourth Namkai Nyingpo and the rebirth of Tāre Lhamo's father, Apang Terchen. The couple worked tirelessly to revive Tibetan Buddhism in eastern Tibet, restoring institutions, conducting religious practices, building new artifacts, and revealing thirteen volumes of treasures (listed below). Nyenlung (*snyan lung*) in Serta County, Sichuan, their home monastery, is now under the direction of Namtrul Rinpoche's only son, Shitrul Tulku Lhaksam Namdak.

Teachers

This account of her teachers and the most important transmissions she received is taken from *Spiraling Vine of Faith*.

From a very young age, Tāre Lhamo experienced visions of Padmakara and the Three Roots and received many prophecies.

As a young child, she studied at her father's (Apang Tertön) monastery, Tsimda. At age seven, he transmitted to her Longchenpa's Nyingtik Yabshi and also his own treasure corpus. Along with her brothers (all reincarnate masters), she became one of her father's successors, although she never claimed the position.

When she was nine, her father died and sold her jewels to build a reliquary stupa for his relics. After that, she continued her education by receiving transmissions and guidance from the most important masters of her time in eastern Tibet. Her biography details a long list of transmissions and teachings, but here are just a few:

- Dodrupchen Rigzin Jalu Dorje (*rig 'dzin 'ja lus rdo rje*) (1927-1961) gave her Longchenpa's Nyingthik Yabshi.
- Dzungter Kunzang Nyima (*rdzong gter kun bzang nyi ma*) (1904-1958), the grandson and speech incarnation of Dudjom Lingpa, gave her his 60-volume treasure-cycle and also the treasure-cycle of Dudjom Lingpa. He appointed her the Dharma Custodian (*chos bdag*) of his own Yeshe Tsogyal cycle. Following his instructions, she planted a long-life arrow at the treasure-door rock at Nyenpo Yurtse.
- In 1990, Dola Tulku Jigme Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche, one of Dudjom Rinpoche's sons who remained in Tibet, gave Tāre Lhamo and Namtrul Rinpoche the complete cycle of the Dudjom New Treasures. Later she recognized his son as a rebirth of Jigdral Yeshe Dorje.

Tāre Lhamo practiced at many sacred sites, such as Chagri Obar and Tashi Gomang, where her inner experiences and realizations blazed forth. She discovered many Secret Mantra and Dzogchen Dharma treasures (*gter chos*), including sadhanas, songs of birds, and songs of realization.

According to Tulku Orgyen Zangpo Rinpoche, one of her treasures was an instructional text on tying different types of knots with string as a skillful method for accomplishing specific wishes or activities to benefit others. *Khandro had a hundred different types of knots she used for different purposes, such as longevity. Or, if you were sick or had obstacles or wanted a son or daughter.*

During the Cultural Revolution

At age 22, Tāre Lhamo was exposed to the turbulence of the Cultural Revolution (1966 to 1976). In eastern Tibet, religious institutions were destroyed, and the practice of Buddhism was banned.

It was also a time of famine. When her community was starving, Tāre Lhamo was able to feed them through her miraculous powers. For example, if she had a small amount of food, she multiplied it to feed many. Or, even without increasing the food, whoever ate her food, would feel satiated. Like this, and in many other ways, Tāre Lhamo lovingly cared for her community, performing divinations and rituals in secret late at night, and recounting tales that provided people with a beacon of hope during this devastating chapter of Tibet's history.

During the Cultural Revolution, Tāre Lhamo was subjected to manual labor. Her first husband, Tulku Mingyur Dorje, and her three brothers, all died in prison. According to oral lineage stories, she was spared imprisonment, perhaps because she was a woman, though she did endure beatings and torture. On one harrowing occasion, officials placed her bare chest on a hot wood-burning stove. According to an old woman who told Holly Gayley this story, Tāre Lhamo reflected on the far greater sufferings of beings in the hell realms, and as a result, she had no burn marks.

Here is another example of her miraculous powers: once, a piece of rock as big as a tent made of yak hair broke out of the mountain and tumbled down, destroying everything in its path. Watching this happen, people started to flee. However, Tāre Lhamo pointed her finger in the threatening gesture and the rock came to an immediate halt. There are many miracles that helped her community recounted in *Jewel Lamp of Blessings*.

Life with Namtrul Rinpoche

In 1978, her dreams were telling her that she must meet Namtrul Rinpoche Jigme Phuntsok, who lived in Sichuan Province. She initiated a correspondence and courtship

with him, and using a secret messenger, they exchanged 58 letters over a two-year period, during which time they met only once. These letters—perhaps unique in Tibetan literature—contain expressions of affection and many prophetic statements of their joint destiny to uplift the Buddhist doctrine. They are now translated and published as *Inseparable Across Lifetimes: The Lives and Love Letters of the Tibetan Visionaries Namtrul Rinpoche and Khandro Tāre Lhamo*, Holly Gayley, Snow lion, 2019. In 1980, Tāre Lhamo left her home in Qinghai Province, against the wishes of her relatives and in contravention of government restrictions, to become the wisdom consort of Namtrul Rinpoche. Together they rebuilt Nyenlung Monastery, where they served as the principal teachers until their deaths.

In 1980, they became disciples of Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok Jungne (1933-2004), the founder of Larung Gar, who gave them Kalachakra, the corpus of Apang Terton, and the Chetsun Nyingtik. In 1986, he enthroned them as great treasure revealers. On this occasion, many masters wrote long-life prayers for the couple. In 1987, they traveled together Wutai Shan, near Beijing, with an entourage of 10,000.

During the 80s and 90s, the eminent couple guided and taught thousands of people throughout Eastern Tibet, freely disseminating the treasures of Dudjom and Apang Terton, as well as their own treasures. (See below for a list of their treasure writings.) According to Tulku Orgyen Zangpo Rinpoche, when revealing their treasures, it was customary for Tāre Lhamo to write in a symbolic script and for Namtrul Rinpoche to transcribe the symbols.

In 1981, Namtrul Rinpoche fell seriously ill, to the point that pujas were performed to turn back the dakinis. Rinpoche's body was stone cold, and he was unable to utter a sound. Tāre Lhamo yelled his name three times while waving the longevity arrow, and Rinpoche gradually regained consciousness. When he was finally able to speak, he said, *Numerous dakinis, appeared on a celestial path of silk ribbons. Singing various melodies, they came to meet me. When you threw the longevity arrow, it cut through the rainbow path and the silken ribbons. This irritated the dakinis and they left. So for now, there is no more problem.*

In 1988, at age 50, Tāre Lhamo had a dream in which she saw her home monastery of Nyenlung as a pure buddha field. In this dream, a young princess appeared, and flying together, they traveled to dakini pure realms and received teachings from Yeshe Tsogyal.

Namtrul Rinpoche transcribed the *Fearless Armor Protection Against Lightning* (*thog srung 'jigs med go cha*) and offered it to Tāre Lhamo. According to Pema Osel Thaye: *Then, one night, while Tāre Lhamo was sleeping, a violent hail suddenly arose. When thunder and lightning struck her residence, her bed, all the furniture in the room, and her clothing were burnt to ashes, but she remained untouched.*

In 1992, the couple went on pilgrimage to central Tibet. When they were approaching the sacred mountain of Nyenchen Thanglha to the northeast of Lhasa, orange-colored clouds appeared at the summit and accompanied them along the way. They visited Lhasa and then Kangri Tokar, where they wrote a new treasure text, *The Blazing Blue Dakini: Samantabhadra's Heart-Mind Quintessence, Pith Instructions Pointing Out Wisdom Luminosity*. They bestowed empowerments at Shuksep and at Tsogyal Latso, the birthplace of Khandro Yeshe Tsogyal in Drakda. At Tsogyal Latso, they arranged for the temple and the shrine to be rebuilt and refurbished. When they gave the *Blue Blazing Dakini* empowerment, the sky was enveloped in an orb of iridescent light. And nearby, on the slopes of Lady Mount Turquoise, a walking trail appeared. People remarked that it must be a processional path for people coming to receive the empowerments! Before leaving, the couple also performed rituals to expunge and purify the site, at which time, beautiful vajra melodies spontaneously arose. After visiting Samye, Chimphu, and Tradruk, they journeyed to Tashilunpo Monastery in western Tibet and then returned to Nyenlung.

Their main treasures were discovered at Samye Chimphu, Kangri Tokar, Amnye Machen, Dragkar Trel dzong, Sergyi Drong-ri Mugpo, and Nyenpo Yutse, Trophug Khandro Du Ling, Tashi Gomang, Drakyangdzong, Shujung Pemabum Dzong, Kokonor, Drakda Tsogyal Latso, and Doyi Nyingpo.

Final Years

Tāre Lhamo died on March 26, 2002, in a Chengdu hospital. She had been healthy and strong throughout her life. However, according to Tulku Orgyen Zangpo Rinpoche, in 2000, she started feeling that she would soon die. With Namtrul Rinpoche, they consulted with Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok. Everyone agreed that the indications of her forthcoming death were undeniable. They arranged for medical tests, but nothing helped. When they prayed to extend her life, hopeful signs did not arise. It was clear that the dakinis would soon escort her from this world.

After that, one day, Tāre Lhamo donned her best robes and ornamented her hair. She gathered her disciples and offered her heart advice. They begged her to take rebirth quickly and to return to them. Shortly after, Tāre Lhamo laid down on her side in the dying position and passed away. As soon as she had passed, her skin turned white. She glowed and was beautiful. Her body became fragrant. These were some signs of her realization. Her body was taken to Nyenlung Monastery and displayed. According to the practice of Dzogchen, her body began to shrink. Finally, it was the length from your fingerprints to your elbow. It was placed on a plate and offered up at the cremation. During the cremation, there were still more signs that she had attained the realization of a Dzogchen master, such as rainbows in the sky and flowers raining down. After her passing, Namtrul Rinpoche vigorously continued their activities until he passed way in 2011.

Today, the lineage of Tāre Lhamo and Namtrul Rinpoche has passed to Namtrul Rinpoche's only son, Shitrul Tulku Lhaksam Namdak (*sprul sku lhag bsam rnam dag*), the rebirth of Zhuchen Kunzang Nyima (*gzhu chen kun bzang nyi ma*) and Tare Lhamo's son who died at an early age. He is the current head of Nyenlung, where the reliquary stupas of Tāre Lhamo and Namtrul Rinpoche are placed side by side.

Rebirth

Jetsunma Kunga Trinley Palter Sakya was born January 2, 2007, as the daughter of Dagmo Kalden Dunkyi and Ratna Vajra Rinpoche, the current Sakya Trizin, whose father was a rebirth of Apang Tertön. The Dalai Lama has recognized her as the rebirth of Tāre Lhamo.

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