PEMA LINGPA DAY
Guru Practice and Prayers

Edited & Translated by Karma Phuntsho
This book is being distributed in order to remember Tertön Pema Lingpa during the celebrations for the 500th commemoration of his demise.
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Short Supplication by Pema Lingpa

While staying in Pemaling in the Ox year, Lama Gedun Zangpo said: “I am deeply interested in the teachings of Drimed Ozer, and have faith in him. If you, my lord, are the incarnation of Drimed Ozer, grant me a supplication beautified by the eight names of Drimed Ozer.” This is taken out from the teaching in response.

Inspired by the aspirations and compassion of Ogyen
You took birth consciously and became a paragon of the world. Through vital profound treasures, you love all beings like a mother. To exalted Pema Lingpa, I pray.

May the waves of your actions surge
To help mature the minds of sentient beings like myself. Bless us to know the truth, perfect the various paths and stages And realize the primordial state of being.
Biographical Supplication by Pema Lingpa

While in Tabi in Kurtoe, artist Tshering requested: “O Precious Lord! Please grant me a supplication which I can use regularly in the morning and evening.” This was taught in response to the request.

Emaho! To Samantabhadra, Vajrasattva, Prahevajra and Shri Simha, To Ogyen Padmasambhava and Yeshe Tshogyal And to Pema Lingpa, who holds the sixfold lineage, I pray: please bless my mind.

Inspired by the aspirations and compassion of Padmasambhava Lhacham Pema Sel, the daughter of the dharma king Has taken the final rebirth as Pema Lingpa. I pray to him: please bless my mind.

In the centre of this pitiable Mon land without freedom
He came forth from his mother’s womb,
With a flourishing body adorned with auspicious marks.
I pray to Prince Pema Lingpa: please bless my mind.

At one score and seven, on the full moon night
From the face of Naring cliff, as foretold by dakinis,
He obtained the profound treasure of Ogyen.
I pray to Pema Lingpa: please bless my mind.

From every immeasureably deep treasure site
He revealed all kinds of profound treasures
In order to tame the beings, and guide the world.
I pray to Prince Pema Lingpa: please bless my mind.

As activities of his body, speech and mind,
He left footprints on rock, sang songs of mystical experience,
And rested in the immutable sphere of reality.
I pray to Prince Pema Lingpa: please bless my mind.
Wherever he was, in all locations, he led on the right path
Those connected to him through empowerment and teachings,
And became the lord of the world in degenerate times.
I pray to Prince Pema Lingpa: please bless my mind.

Oh Prince Pema Lingpa! Emanation of the Buddhas.
Please hold beings like myself who have no refuge
With your compassion in all three times,
And lead us to the sphere of primordial purity.

I pray the lama lives in good health.
I pray the lama lives a long life.
I pray the lama’s activities grow and flourish.
Please bless us to be inseparable from the lama.

May I and all sentient beings,
Through the compassion of the excellent lama,
Without need for much effort on the path
Attain the unsurpassable Buddha state swiftly.
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शृणुवङ्गुर्दायमालिका

पृष्ठितर्ण: 11
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2020 རྩ་ཞེས་རྒྱུན་བུ་བའི་ཐོ་སྲིད་དངོས་ནི་བོད་ཡི་མོ་ི་རྩ་ཞེས་བརུགས་པར་བཤད་པ་ལ་དང་ལོ་བོས་པ་ལ་བསོད་ནམས་སུ་བཅོས་ལོ་བོས་པ་ལ་དང་ལོ་བོས་པ་ལ་བསོད་ནམས་སུ་བཅོས་ལོ་བོས་པ་ལ་དང་ལོ་བོས་པ་ལ་བསོད་ནམས་སུ་བཅོས་ལོ་བོས་པ་ལ་

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Most Bhutanese have heard of Pema Lingpa but only a few know who he is and his importance for Bhutan. His place of birth is today marked by a ramshackle stupa, which goes to indicate our inadequate regard for Pema Lingpa and poor understanding of his legacies. Thus, as the nation observes the first Pema Lingpa Day coinciding with the 499th commemoration of his demise, it is appropriate that we learn a bit about his life and legacies.

Pema Lingpa is without any doubt the most eminent Bhutanese religious figure. His life and works continue to shape Bhutan’s religious, cultural and socio-political landscape. He is our cultural hero and spiritual ancestor, and he is also the only Bhutanese master, who has left a widespread impact on Buddhist practices and people beyond Bhutan.

Pema Lingpa’s preeminence was largely due to his role as a treasure discoverer. Not only is Pema Lingpa considered as a major treasure discoverer (ག.toCharArray(0, 22) བོ་), he is among the five great ‘king treasure discoverers’ (གཙོ་བོའི་མཚན་དམན་པོ་). He was also an artist, a mystic, a traveller, a lama with a large following and the head of a large family, with a wide range of talents and the various roles in religion and society. Thus, his enigmatic personality, rich life and legacies vastly exceeds what can be said in a short and simple essay.

**Pema Lingpa’s Life and Deeds**

The Bhutanese tradition believes that Pema Lingpa is one with Guru Rinpoche in his ultimate state. Yet, in the eyes of the sentient beings, Pema Lingpa claims that he took birth as Princess Pema Sel, who was the daughter of King Tri Songdetsen, Pema Ledreltsel and Longchen Rabjam in his previous lifestimes, when he took five pure and five impure births.

Pema Lingpa was born on the 15th day of Tiger Month, Iron Horse year, 1450, at Baribrang in the idyllic valley of Trhai in Bumthang,
with many auspicious omens. His father was Dhondup Zangpo of Somtrhang Choje family in Ura and mother was Pema Dolma. Not long after his birth, he was taken to Mani Gonpa and brought up by his maternal grandfather Jangchub as his mother gave birth to his younger brother. He was a bright boy who could learn basic literacy without instruction and also mastered carpentry, blacksmithy and other crafts known in his community.

The first significant event in Pema Lingpa’s life occurred in 1476 when he was 27 by Bhutanese reckoning. A mendicant, considered to be an emanation of Padmasambhava, gave him a scroll containing instructions to extract the treasures from a cliff called Naringdra at the end of the valley. Following the instructions, Pema Lingpa approached Naringdra on the full moon night with five companions, and upon arriving at the spot, he fell into a trance and plunged into the riverine pool to enter a cave on the opposite side. He came out carrying with him a casket containing the yellow scrolls. This was his first act of treasure discovery.

The casket was brought to Baribrang and the dakini texts on the yellow scrolls transcribed into standard Tibetan script with the help of a scribe from Ura. He gave an exposition of his first treasure texts to a gathering, and while doing so he also received instructions from Yeshe Tshogyal in a vision on how to do the chanting and perform the sacred dance of ḍākiṇīs. Two months after the first discovery, Pema Lingpa revealed his second treasure. In a spectacular act witnessed by a huge crowd, he plunged into the deep pool at Naringdra with a butter lamp in his hand, swearing the oath: “If I am an emanation of a devil, may I die in this river. If I am the heart-son of Guru [Padmasambhava], may I return with the required treasure and this lamp still burning.” He is said to have emerged from the pool with a statue of the Buddha and a skull containing sacred substances, the lamp still burning. Pema Lingpa is today mainly remembered for this feat of extracting treasure in public at Mebartsho.

Pema Lingpa carried out many other acts of treasure discovery, which were initially concentrated in Bumthang, but gradually extended to other parts of Bhutan and southerm Tibet. His final
treasure extraction took place in Samye temple in Central Tibet in 1513 when he revealed treasures from the central Buddha statue and the statue of the door guardian.

In addition to his acts of treasure discovery, he also held religious ceremonies to bestow the teachings and blessings of his treasures. In the middle of these ceremonies, he also performed other miracles such as leaving hand and foot prints on rocks. The ground would shake or the sky would be filled with rainbows during his religious acts. These acts of treasure discovery and miracles brought Pema Lingpa much fame and the high stature as a religious figure in his time. Pema Lingpa passed away in his seat of Tamshing on the 3rd day of the first month, Iron Snake year, 1521, surrounded by his family members.

**Body, Speech and Mind Legacies**

Pema Lingpa is said to have revealed many treasure texts in accordance to the prophecies of Guru Rinpoche. These treasure texts, which were extracted from the physical world such as cliffs and statues, constitute the core of Pema Lingpa’s teachings. In addition, he wrote down the vivid experiences he had in visions and dreams. These visions are spontaneous and dynamic projections and expressions of his inner psyche. He also composed many writings including prayers, supplications, hymns and instructions as mind-treasures erupting from his enlightened mind. These texts make up the teachings of Pema Lingpa, or the legacy of his sacred speech.

Dudjom Rinpoche compiled the texts into 21 volumes in 1976 but some 10 volumes are yet to be added. Containing religious works on guru worship, meditation practice, history, instructions, supplication, counsels, pilgrimage guides and biographies, the Pema Lingpa corpus has spread across the Himalayas from Kham in the east to Ladakh in the west, and have, in our times, reached even many countries beyond the Buddhist Himalayas.

Beside the religious teachings, he also revealed many sacred objects and substances. One finds today in many temples and family establishments in Bhutan a great number of statues and other
religious objects, which are said to be treasures discovered by Pema Lingpa, and artefacts such as swords, armours and cooking pans, which are considered to be made by him. These objects represent the physical blessings of Pema Lingpa, or the legacy of his sacred body.

Pema Lingpa was an enthusiastic public figure, a charismatic leader, a caring spiritual guide for his followers and, above all, an earnest promulgator of his teachings. He was held in high esteem by his milieu, and he used his public stature and economic means – accumulated through religious services – for worthy causes. He played the role of a healer for the sick, mentor for those in training, and a mediator and conciliator to settle civil disputes. Living a highly mobile life for his time, he was a compassionate leader who cared for his world as he traversed his land. Such acts of compassion and his noble aspirations and prayers from the heart represent the spiritual blessings of Pema Lingpa, or the legacy of his enlightened mind.

**Legacies of Spiritual and Family Lines**

As Pema Lingpa’s social and religious stature as a high lama grew, thousands of devotees flocked to him in order to receive his teachings and blessing. People came from Central Tibet, Kham, Dagpo, Kongpo, Ngari, Lhodrak, Latod, Mon and every region of Bhutan. His biography mentions some 300 eminent religious personalities holding the titles of *lama, lopen, trulku* and *terton*. They include Tshultrim Paljor, Karpo Kunga Drakpa, Drukpa Kunley, Dechen Karmo, Chogden Gonpo and Jangchub Lingpa, among others. Thousand of people gathered to receive his public sermons during his last trips to Tibet. On two occasions, he was seated on elevated thrones under which people would file through to receive his blessing.

After his demise, his spiritual and religious tradition spread even further through the persistent efforts of his disciples and spiritual heirs. Among them, the three incarnation lines associated with him became the principal promoters of the religious system he started. The Peling Sungtrul line, which started with his immediate rebirth
Tenzin Drakpa, is currently in its eleventh reincarnation, while the Peling Thugse line originating from his son Thugse Dawa Gyaltschen has seen ten incarnations. Pema Lingpa’s grandson, Pema Thinley, gave rise to the Gangteng Tulku line, which is currently in its ninth incarnation. These three hierarchs make up, today, the supreme heads of the Pema Lingpa tradition, carry on the transmission of his teachings, and have played important roles in Bhutan’s history.

We have sparse information on Pema Lingpa’s personal and family life but we know from his biography that he had five sons including Koncho Zangpo, Dawa Gyaltschen, Drakpa Gyalpo, Kunga Wangpo and Sangdag. Dawa Gyaltschen gave rise to the *zhalngo* family of Prakhar, Kunga Wangpo to the religious nobilities of Khochung, Bidung, Kheri and Dungkar, and Sangdag to the religious lords of Tamshing, Tsakaling and Yagang.

These families emerged as a leading class of religious aristocrats, and through intermarriage with other important families dominated Bhutanese religious and political life. Above all, the Dungkar *choje* family gave rise to the Wangchuck dynasty, which has righteously ruled Bhutan for over a century, while Her Majesty, the current Queen, is a scion of the Prakhar family. Thus, Pema Lingpa’s descendants continue to play exalted roles for the welfare of Bhutan.

**Leadership and Economic Legacies**

After Pema Lingpa established himself as a high lama with a large following, he also inadvertently became the *de facto* leader and champion for his native land, which roughly equates with Bhutan today. He guided and counselled the people of his land, including leaders such as Chokhor Deb brothers and the Dhung ruler of Ura, and took up the roles expected of a public figure. Beyond his native land, he had religious connections and interactions with important personalities of his time including the 7th Karmapa Chodrak Gyatsho, the 4th Zhamarpa Chokyi Drakpa, the Tibetan overlords of Lhodrak, Yargyab, Kyisho, Nagartse and Taglung, the Japa chieftain Tashi Dargye, King Dhondup Phag of Gyantse and King
Jophak Darma of Shar Dongkha in Tawang. These leaders received and treated Pema Lingpa with great honour and respect.

At the invitation of such patrons and disciples, Pema Lingpa frequented local places such as Bumthang, Mangde, Kurtoe, Ngenlung and Kheng. He travelled to Tawang twice and made some two dozen journeys northward to Tibet. Prior to Pema Lingpa, Bhutanese communities were mainly patrons of Tibetan figures and significant amounts of goods were transported from Bhutan to Tibet as offerings. Pema Lingpa effectively reversed this process by having many Tibetan leaders as his patrons and transporting goods from Tibet to Bhutan.

During these travels, he would meet his patrons and disciples to bestow blessings, impart teachings and perform religious rituals. His autobiography provides lists of the various gifts offered to Pema Lingpa after these religious sessions, thus giving us insight into the economy, gift culture and religious piety of the people in his time. For instance, it is interesting to see how Pema Lingpa received on one occasion 18 pieces of valuable iron ware known as troh (ཐོ). The total he collected in the course of his travels is easily in the excess of a hundred. While returning from Tibet in 1483, there were forty horse loads of gifts shipped from Tibet. This must have vastly increased in the subsequent decades when he enjoyed high stature among Tibetan elites. Pema Lingpa’s religious tours to Tibet and other places must have contributed a great deal to the local economy in his native land. Such economic activity continued during the times of his disciples, descendants and incarnations.

**Cultural and Artistic Legacies**

Pema Lingpa has also made significant contributions to cultural and artistic heritage of Bhutan. We have seen how numerous cultural artefacts are attributed to Pema Lingpa. These artefacts are treated with deep religious awe and cherished as priceless heirlooms in many Bhutanese households. In addition to embodied material culture, Pema Lingpa is also credited with artistic creations including dances, hymns, paintings and sculptures. Many sacred dances performed throughout Bhutan during festivals and
ceremonial occasions – including the Drum Dance of Drametse, which has been included on UNESCO’s list of Masterpiece of World Intangible Heritage – are composed or inspired by Pema Lingpa.

**Institutional Legacies**

The most salient legacy of Pema Lingpa, however, is the numerous establishments founded by him and his spiritual and physical descendents. Pema Lingpa spent most of the gifts and alms he received on the construction and renovation of religious centres, sites and objects in central and eastern Bhutan. Among them, the first temple he built was Pemaling in his native village, but the most important and grandest is perhaps Tamshing monastery, his main seat in Bumthang, finished in 1505. He also renovated numerous sites including Mani Gonpa, Chal Lhakhang, Chokhor Lhakhang and Langmathil Lhakhang. After him, his sons and disciples went on to found many other monasteries and temples. These establishments have since served as the centres of Pema Lingpa’s tradition and have become premier Buddhist institutions in Bhutan and southern Tibet.

In the seventeenth century, during the unification of Bhutan under Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, Pema Lingpa’s tradition saw a new chapter although many other schools rapidly declined. Zhabdrung personally received the teachings of Pema Lingpa and his government transferred the reliquary holding Pema Lingpa’s remains from Bumthang to Punakha. He treated the Pema Lingpa tradition with great respect, opening a symbiotic relationship between the glorious Drukpa Kagyu and the profound Pema Lingpa traditions bringing much benefaction to the new state of Bhutan.

Pema Lingpa is the most outstanding native of Bhutan, and a religious master, spiritual luminary and cultural doyen who continues to shape Bhutan through his many legacies of treasure texts, works of art, establishments, institutions and family lines. Thus, it is very pertinent that the nation which he has shaped pays tribute to him by observing a Pema Lingpa Day.
Terton Pema Lingpa is Bhutan’s most eminent ancestor, a pioneer of Bhutan's spiritual, cultural and artistic traditions, and a source of Bhutan’s wellbeing as a whole. His legacies including treasure teachings, writings, religious and family lines, and artistic creations form the cornerstone of Bhutan’s spiritual and temporal systems to this day. Therefore, as Bhutan observes Pema Lingpa Day, and remembers his kindness and contributions, this booklet provides some prayers and supplication to Pema Lingpa.