

# The Great Symbolic Vision at Palpuk Ring: A Dream of Guru Chökyi Wangchuk

BY GURU CHÖKYI WANGCHUK



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# THE GREAT SYMBOLIC VISION AT PALPUK RING:

## A DREAM OF GURU CHÖKYI WANGCHUK

By Guru Chöwang

Homage to Guru Pema Tötrenqtsal!

Namo! In the summer of the Wood Female Snake year (1245), on the tenth day of the Dog month, at Palpuk Ring (“Glorious Long Cave”), located at the supreme and exalted sacred site of Kharchu in Lodrak, I was performing a ritual feast with tormas offerings and empowerment at Guru Pema’s abode of accomplishment. It was at that time that I, the monk Chökyi Wangchuk,<sup>1</sup> had a dream at dawn.

I was sitting before Pang Village,<sup>2</sup> taking in my homeland, and a white girl with a cownie headdress came to me. She pointed towards my house and inquired, “Who built this place?”

“My parents built it.”

“That’s not true—where are your parents now?”

Remembering that my parents had passed away, I leaned against the door, tears flowing in my grief. I felt uncertain about the situation and wondered if my parents were still inside, so I cried in sorrow: “Papa, you home? Mama, you’re there, no?” From the depth of my heart, I asked if my parents were there, and as I went longing for my loving parents, I called out, “Please open the door. Open this door, please!”

A faint, ethereal voice replied: “You’ve never had parents, and you don’t have them now. Though you may cry out for them, they will not come into being.”

Struck hard with utter despair and torment, I cried, “If I’ve never had parents, where did I first come from? Where am I in the meantime? Where will I go in the end ... who are you?!” [365]

“You’ve never even been born,” the voice answered. “You haven’t even come from anywhere! You’re baseless and don’t abide anywhere. Being causeless, you’ll never be anything in the end. Now, as for me, I don’t exist. I am empty resonance—Guru, heed this:

“Parents are concepts of erroneous self-grasping.

Like a person whose heart has been ripped out,

Remain in great equanimity, however much you can.

For a father, mother, and son, there’s no such thing as uniting or separating.

Understanding this is primordial wisdom (Yeshe),

And all suffering is ornamentation (Gyen).”

Upon hearing this, I was freed from all the longing and grief I had for my parents, and while abiding vividly in self-aware emptiness and clarity devoid of grasping, I somehow found myself atop

<sup>1</sup> Guru Chökyi Wangchuk (gu ru chos kyi dbang phyug, 1200/1212–1270, BDRC P326), also known as Guru Chöwang, was a thirteenth-century treasure revealer and the second of the five treasure revealing kings (*gter ston rgyal po lnga*).

<sup>2</sup> This is the home village of Guru Chökyi Wangchuk.



the rocky Palpuk Ring together with Yeshe Gyen (“Primordial-Wisdom Ornamentation”). Staring into the sky, she prostrated repeatedly. I also looked and the entire sky appeared to be swathed in a thick expanse of rainbow-like clouds and mist.

Atop Dragri Senge Karmo (“White-Lioness Stone Mountain”) a black man stood, as immense as a mountain, with braids of writhing black serpents and flames flaring from his mouth that scorched the surrounding vegetation and woodlands. Upon his crown, where the sun and moon conjoined, was Mahā Guru Pema Tötreng, cross-legged in the center of a lotus swirling with sunlight. Dark blue and adorned with the six born ornaments, his hair was tied up and he donned a diadem with navy silk. He held a vajra and bell in his hands as his three eyes gazed piercingly. Various voices came from the many heads of his skull garland draped diagonally across his chest.

In front, embracing him was Machik Jomo Nazhön Dzema (“Sole-Mother Lady, Young and Beautiful”), who had the raiment of a goddess, and ḍākinīs adorned with the six bone ornaments surrounded him. [366] They all bowed to the Guru in his intimate embrace and offered him nectar. Under his right knee, he pinned down a lion as well as a peacock under his left, while beneath his two crossed legs, he pinned down a swine, snake, and bird. From the mouth of the swine shone dark blue light, white from the snake, and red from the bird, rising like smoke. At the tip of these was a five-pronged crystal vajra. A white OM, a red A, and a dark blue HŪM radiated from and reabsorbed into the Guru’s three places. On his right side danced the five classes of heroes, while the five classes of heroines danced on the left. Goddesses of the five sensory delights and many hosts of ḍākinīs encircled him. Great flags of victory were planted on the four corners of his seat. Divine attendants danced in all directions while holding various musical instruments. Seeing him amidst this encirclement as dense as clouds, I also prostrated, supplicated, and spoke these words:

“Kyeho! This excellent, supreme sacred site is delightful!  
 Lhodrak Kharcu is so joyous!  
 Palpuk Ring is lovely!  
 I’m overjoyed at the Guru’s arrival!  
 Guru, with your hosts of ḍākinīs and *gings*,  
 Confer empowerment upon me and bless me!  
 Compassionately care for the six classes of beings,  
 Venerable One, open your heart’s secret door,  
 And turn the wheel of the Dharma, please!”

In light of this request, Mahā Guru Gyalpo looked into the sky and spoke:

“Primordially selfless, this reflexive awareness,  
 Out of nowhere, rises as any aspect whatsoever.  
 If you know to rest without grasping,  
 You will realize total natural liberation, devoid of clinging.”

Having uttered these words, he entered contemplation.

Machik Jomo then stood up in front of him.  
 Looking at me she said: [367]



“Although all the Dharma doors are condensed in empowerment,  
This is the authorization of enlightened body, speech, and mind.  
If you wish to attain undefiled bliss,  
Destroy grasping at defiled pleasure.”

Having said this, she embraced the father (Guru Rinpoche).

Then ten great ḍākinīs  
Each arose and in unison  
Propounded the following profound, excellent Dharma:

“First, relying upon a knowledgeable physician,  
To diagnose the disease—vomit, urinate, and defecate.  
The medicinal compound expels the chronic illness from within.  
Without rejecting the illnesses, all maladies are cured.”

Then the five classes of heroes on the right  
Performed a dance and spoke:

“If you wish to approach and accomplish the hero,  
Approach primordial spontaneity and simplicity.  
Realizing that is close approach.  
Abiding in such a state is accomplishment.  
Manifesting that is great accomplishment.  
This is the pith instruction that encompasses all approach and accomplishment.”

Having said this, they laughed, “haha!” and danced about.

Then the five classes of ḍākinīs on the left  
Danced and sang and said:

“If you wish to approach and accomplish the ḍākinī,  
Primordial self-grasping is the ḍākinī.  
Mentally constructing it as such is approach.  
Realizing that itself is close approach.  
Abiding in such a state is accomplishment.  
Mastering that is great accomplishment.”

Having spoken, they continued their dance.

Thus, to the Guru’s manifestation,



I, out of delight, joy, and awe,  
Offered a *kusulu*<sup>3</sup> gaṇacakra.  
Then, the Guru spoke again:

“All that appears and exists is a symbolic teaching.  
Specifically, this manifestation of mine  
Is a symbol of the supreme path of liberation.  
So, decode the symbolic meaning, son of a noble family.”

Thus he spoke, and as I deciphered the symbol,  
The Guru [368] was pleased and continued:

“Saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, existence and non-existence,  
Periphery and center—all are myself.  
Elaboration and simplicity are my path.  
All forms, sounds, and negative thoughts  
Are my supreme body, speech, and mind.  
All hopes and fears, including what to accept or reject,  
Are displays of me, Orgyen.  
Faults and virtues, good and bad—these are my companions.  
Everything is primordial wisdom, my ornamentation.  
All sentient beings to be tamed are utterly perfect.  
Everything is the dharmakāya, my dimension.  
Anything is acceptable. Nothing exists.  
Since everything is perfected in the equanimous state,  
How could there be accomplishment or something to accomplish?  
Everything is my magical display.  
Even though your visions are unfathomable,  
They are wholly complete in me, Orgyen.  
Take a body as an example.  
It has limbs, other parts, and conditions.  
Through the power of self-awareness, they are perfect within it.  
Everything is the saṃbhogakāya of Orgyen.  
Whoever sees my nature,  
That person who is aligned with ultimate reality,  
Naturally liberates even the Three Supreme Jewels,  
Naturally liberates the six classes: sentient beings,  
Naturally liberates conceptions of good and bad,  
Naturally purifies karma, cause, and effect,

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<sup>3</sup> Or *kusāli*, it is the visualized offering of one’s body, as at that moment, the practitioner has nothing else to offer. It is also known as the beggar’s offering and is prevalent in the Severance (*gcod*) tradition.



Naturally exhausts all mentally fabricated phenomena,  
 Naturally liberates pure vision and delusion,  
 And destroys hopes, fears, and fixation.  
 All the faces of the sugatas are perceived at this time.  
 The nectar of the Dharma is imbibed at this time.  
 The darkness of saṃsāra is dispelled at this time.  
 The great poisons of beings are expunged at this time.  
 The sun's rays of compassion dawn at this time.  
 The lord of the Dharma is attained at this time.  
 Buddhahood of pure vision without delusion  
 And the Buddha's teachings are established at this time.  
 The saṅgha is exalted at this time.  
 The precious treasures are encountered at this time.  
 The guru of self-awareness is faced at this time.  
 Appearances are brought under control here at this time."

As soon as these words were spoken,  
 The Guru, his retinue, and all magical displays,  
 Vanished [369] in the sky, and there  
 The sun and moon arose simultaneously—  
 Their light filled the world.  
 And even this billion-fold world system  
 Appeared like a splayed tent of [five-colored] silk brocade.  
 For a moment, it was a magnificent, spectacle.

After that, Lady Yeshe Gyen  
 Pulled a mirror from her waist  
 And offering to me, she said:  
 "As soon as I met the Guru,  
 I obtained undying faith.  
 To be ever-connected,  
 At Tsongdu Gurmo, [he] showed [me this] symbol.  
 All those connected nearby also  
 Follow me and the Guru,  
 And to them, I have shown this symbol,  
 Which I now humbly offer."

Having said this, she removed her caprine garment,  
 And naked she pranced around three times.  
 Then having torn it into four caprine pieces,  
 They became four brocade garments.  
 These she hung on a cedar tree.



“Here in this supreme place, the secluded abode of Kharchu,  
 As long as the wind does not topple this tree,  
 Four people who delight in practice will come,  
 Who are capable of benefiting beings.  
 So, dress them in these four garments,” she said.

Then, she split her belt in half,  
 And the two became black snakes.  
 “In this place, Pekar Nagpo  
 Transformed his consciousness into two monks.  
 While living here, for all Dharma practitioners,  
 They create obstacles. After passing to the next life,  
 They will be samaya-breaking demons towards all Dharma practitioners,  
 Bind their necks with these two snakes  
 And subdue them under the Vairocana cakra.  
 Last year, after my death,  
 From the seventh day on, for one month,  
 I remained together with a group of gandharvas.  
 Then I went on a pilgrimage to Lhasa.  
 Over in Tsangrong, I stayed for half a month.  
 At Mawochokpo,<sup>4</sup> I stayed for a month.  
 Until last night I have been purifying myself. [370]  
 I’ve been offering clarified butter with burnt offerings (*sur*).  
 I offered tormas to the wicked person,  
 Who was trying to cause me harm.  
 Now that you have come, Guru, wherever you go,  
 Don’t leave me behind but take me along, I beg of you!  
 Yöntsun Gompa brought this small turquoise  
 And relics that were given by the Guru.  
 Luck brought this groundless mind of mine.<sup>5</sup>  
 Write my name and form on this silk  
 And put it into a receptacle, then take it wherever you reside.  
 My companionship with the Guru will never waiver.  
 Keep me secretly at your chest.”

As soon as I put it there, I woke up.  
 While thinking that it was in my heart,

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<sup>4</sup> This is the seat of Nyangral Nyjima Özer, BDRC G7.

<sup>5</sup> The exact meaning of this line is not clear. A1: 370.2, B2: 50.3: *brten med seMs* (B2: *sems*) *'di phyas sangs khyer/*.





I wrote “easy,” but there was nothing to grasp.<sup>6</sup>  
 Though it was a deluded appearance, I was filled with longing:  
 While praying for guardianship,  
 I fell asleep and in my vision  
 Four girls with cowrie headdresses appeared  
 And sang this song with soft, radiant voices.

“Emaho! DHARMASARVA TETE ŚUDDHE HO YĪ! When everything is realized to be one, that oneness is inconceivable, and afflictions are severed as they are. When the essence of all phenomena is realized, there is no place for afflictions to arise. As the self is inconceivable, there is no one to generate afflictions. The severing of afflictions in their own state is the Buddha’s intent. SARVADHARMA TENATETE ŚUDA DHE HO!”

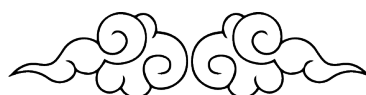
Now here are the lyrics for their rhythmic dance:

“Emaho!  
 The phenomenal world is the guru’s body.  
 The three realms sway as symbols—*shik se shik*.  
 OM ĀḤ HŪM: All sounds are the guru’s speech.  
 Resonance reverberates as Dharma—*si li li*.  
 OM ĀḤ HŪM: All thoughts are the guru’s mind.  
 Cognizance blazes as primordial wisdom—*wa la la*.  
 OM ĀḤ HŪM: Dancing as external objects,  
 Hosts of wisdom deities flash—*ya la la*.  
 OM ĀḤ HŪM: Dancing as internal subjectivity,  
 They vibrate [371] in a state of non-grasping—*cha la la*.  
 OM ĀḤ HŪM: Dancing neither externally nor internally,  
 They flicker as the great unimpededness—*ta la la*.  
 OM ĀḤ HŪM: A dance that reverberates in the dharmadhātu,  
 They take enormous joy in great simplicity!  
 OM ĀḤ HŪM: A dance that reverberates in the saṃbhogakāya realms,  
 They delight in the ornamental display of sensual pleasures.  
 OM ĀḤ HŪM: A dance that reverberates in the nirmāṇakāya realms,  
 Appearances sway as emanations—*shik se shik*.”

OM ĀḤ HŪM: Then these four girls:  
 One resided in the expanse of space,  
 And her dance pervaded space.  
 One resided in the sky,  
 And her dance pervaded the sky.  
 One resided at the confluence of three valleys,

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<sup>6</sup> Again, it is unclear. Literally, it states, “There was no reply.” It appears that he is writing down his dream since he wrote “easy,” presumably at the beginning of his document. A1: 370.3, B2: 50.5: *sla’o bris pas lan med de/*.



And her dance pervaded the earth.  
 One introduced the dances:  
 “If you realize the meaning of space, the dharmadhātu,  
 Conceptuality is the dance of the dharmakāya.  
 If you realize the meaning of self-arisen primordial wisdom,  
 Sounds are the dance of the saṃbhogakāya.  
 If you realize the meaning of the single, unique sphere,  
 Phenomenal existence is the dance of the nirmāṇakāya.  
 When subject-object fixation is liberated as it is,  
 It is the dance of the Great Perfection.  
 The meaning indicated by this song and dance,  
 Is the view free from reference points.  
 Fortunate one, when you understand it—  
 Go into the sandalwood forest.  
 Go to a land where wild bamboo grows.  
 Go to a place where *sālu* grows.  
 Realizing the indivisibility of appearance and emptiness,  
 Rest in the natural fundamental state,  
 And enjoy the seed of unobstructedness.  
 This symbolic meaning, endowed with the two truths,  
 Is your instruction, Chöwang.”

After this, she gathered those dancing in space, the sky, and on earth into herself. Facing the sun in the south, she said, “If all yogis on the path remain on the path, follow me, follow me, follow me! They will certainly traverse [372] from bliss to bliss! They will certainly traverse from bliss to bliss! They will certainly traverse from bliss to bliss! The vast benefit for beings will emerge, will emerge, will emerge!” Saying this, she flew off into the south and disappeared.

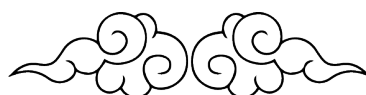
Upon waking up back at home and vomited three times. In mere conventional terms, I did not know whether this was a good or bad thing.

*At the overwhelming behest of all my retinue, I put these last parts of my dream into writing. This was “A Great Symbolic Dream of Chöwang the Monk.” Iṭi.<sup>7</sup>*

Emaho! Guru Rinpoche’s  
 Inconceivable manifestations  
 And the symbols shown to benefit beings  
 Were comprehended by Chöwang in this manner:  
 First, since the intermediate state of dreaming  
 Is not subject to restrictions or extremes,  
 It was understood to be the symbol of the ground, the natural state.  
 Then, having realized personal projections,

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<sup>7</sup> This is a Sanskrit quotation mark that Chöwang was fond of using in his autobiographical compendium.



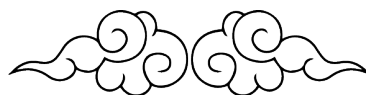
They were understood to be the mind that grasps the basis of delusion.  
 Taking the house to be my own  
 Was understood to be the confusion towards referent objects.

The white girl with a cowrie headdress,  
 Who asked all sorts of questions,  
 She refuted false, delusional appearances  
 And introduced the fundamental state.  
 With the lamp of stainless wisdom,  
 She introduced it to be without a ground or foundation.  
 Upon knowing all phenomena to be the base,  
 It was understood to be the symbol of liberation.

Atop the rocky Palpuk Ring,  
 As I and Yeshe Gyen, together,  
 Looked into the vastness of the sky,  
 The clouds, rainbow colors, and luminous expanse  
 Had no separation from the all-base. Atop the rock,  
 Ignorance and primordial wisdom simultaneously  
 Were the objects severed in space, the dharmadhātu,  
 Resulting in nirvāṇa appearing as rainbow-like deity forms  
 And saṃsāra like cumulus clouds.  
 Yet, they dissolved into the nature of mind, which was illuminating.  
 This was understood to be the symbol of the non-duality [373] of appearance and mind.

Atop Dragri Senge Karmo  
 The black man as big as a mountain,  
 Who was adorned with serpent braids  
 And had flames flaring from his mouth that burned down the entire forest—  
 On the stone mountain (Dragri) of the empty nature of mind,  
 The stainless lion (Senge) of conceptuality—  
 He was the transmuting, supreme man of awareness,  
 Adorned with afflictive emotions, like the serpents of aversion.  
 Since the fire of realization burned down the forest of ignorance,  
 This was understood to be the symbol of the view.

Guru Padmākara himself—  
 With the disks of the sun and moon conjoined  
 On his crown, in the center of a lotus of swirling light,  
 Seated with his legs crossed:  
 The man in whom method and wisdom are unified  
 Understood all of it to be the unwavering meditation



On the meaning of bliss, clarity, and non-thought, free from extremes;  
 The unsurpassed, faultless, and self-arisen abode;  
 And the Great Perfection, the nonduality of meditation and post-meditation.

The dark blue body adorned with the six ornaments,  
 The topknot and ornamentation,  
 The two hands holding a vajra and bell,  
 The three eyes gazing piercingly,  
 The garland of skulls with various voices,  
 The engagement of meditative union,  
 The ten ḍākinīs bestowing nectar,  
 The great lion roaring on the right,  
 The peacock exhibiting its feathers on the left—  
 The one who employs the union of method and wisdom,  
 Possesses the six unchanging higher perceptions,  
 And is adorned with the compassion that loves all beings,  
 Who looks after the three realms,  
 Propounds the appropriate Dharma to disciples,  
 Confers empowerment of non-dual great bliss,  
 Guides on the path of the ten perfections,  
 Fearlessly expresses,  
 And provides medicine that dispels poisons and attractions—  
 These were understood to be the symbols of enacting the taming of beings.

The swine, snake, and bird pinned  
 Beneath his two crossed legs  
 With light rays emanating from their mouths  
 That coalesced into a five-pronged crystal vajra,  
 The radiating and absorbing of the three seed syllables,  
 The heroes on the right and the heroines on the left,  
 The encircling hosts of ḍākinīs and goddesses of delight,  
 The planting of the four great victorious flags,  
 The encircling hosts of music coming from the ten directions,  
 And the ones sitting in the center:  
 When these are connected to view, meditation, and conduct,  
 The three poisons are purified as the three kāyas;  
 The five kāyas are present without the stains of the afflictive emotions;  
 Beings are liberated through body, speech, and mind;  
 The hero of appearance-emptiness and method-wisdom  
 Gathers all wealth for everyone  
 And becomes a great victor over the four demons—  
 Triumphant in all directions and spontaneously accomplished.



Thus, these were understood as the symbol of the spontaneously accomplished result.

As I requested to turn the wheel of the Dharma,  
 The symbols were self-explanatory.  
 The instructions of the Guru and consort  
 Were symbols indicating instant maturation and liberation.  
 The instructions of the ten ḍākinīs  
 Were symbols indicating gradual maturation and liberation.  
 The instructions of the heroes and ḍākinīs  
 Were symbols indicating the definitive approach and accomplishment.  
 Offering the illusory body as a gaṇacakra,  
 Was the symbol of liberation by casting away self-grasping.  
 Telling me to decipher  
 The meaning of the Guru's manifestation  
 Was understood to be liberation through the analysis of phenomena.  
 Thus, wisdom decodes the symbols.

*For the symbol of liberating all conceptual thoughts as they are,  
 This commentary on the symbols of "The Great Symbolic Meaning"  
 Was professed by me, Chökyi Wangchuk.*

*Iṭhi. Sarva Maṅgalaṃ! Thus it was written.*



## SIGLA:

- **A1 and A2:** Guru Chöwang (gu ru chos dbang). 1979. *gu ru chos dbang gi rang nam dang zhal gdams*. 2 vols. *rin chen gter mdzod chen po'i rgyab chos*, vols. 8–9. Paro: Ugyen Tempai Gyaltzen. BDRC MW23802.
- **B1–3:** Tertön Guru Chökyi Wangchuk (gter ston gu ru chos kyi dbang phyug). 2022. *gter ston gu ru chos kyi dbang phyug gi ran nam dang zhal gdams bzuqs so*, vols. 1–3. Edited by Dungse Lama Pema Tsewang (gdung sras bla ma pad+ma tshe dbang). Lamagaun, Nepal: Tsum Library.



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