

Thrangu Rinpoche

Short Biography of
Ninth Khenchen Thrangu
Karma LodrÄ¶ Lungrik Tulku,
Maway Senge

The Venerable Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche was born in Kham, Tibet, in 1933. At the age of five, he was formally recognized by His Holiness the Sixteenth Karmapa and Tai Situpa as the ninth incarnation of the great Thrangu tulku. He entered Thrangu monastery, where, from the ages of seven to sixteen, he studied reading, writing, grammar, poetry, and astrology, memorized ritual texts, and completed two preliminary retreats. At sixteen, under the direction of Khenpo Lodro Rabsel, he began the study of the three vehicles of Buddhism while in retreat. At twenty-three he received full ordination from the Karmapa.

Because of the Chinese military's takeover of Tibet, Thrangu Rinpoche, then twenty-seven, was forced to flee to India in 1959. He was called to Rumtek monastery in Sikkim, where the Karmapa kept his seat in exile. Because of his great scholarship and unending diligence, he was given the task of preserving the teachings of the Kagyu lineage—the lineage of Marpa, Milarepa, and Gampopa—so that one thousand years of profound Buddhist teachings would not be lost.

He continued his studies in exile, and at the age of thirty-five he took the geshe examination before 1500 monks at Buxador monastic refugee camp in Bengal and was awarded the degree of Geshe Lharampa. Upon his return to Rumtek, he was awarded the highest Khenchen degree. Because many of the Buddhist texts in Tibet were destroyed, Thrangu Rinpoche began to help recovering these texts from Tibetan monasteries outside of Tibet. He was named Abbot of Rumtek monastery and the Nalanda Institute for Higher Buddhist Studies at Rumtek. Thrangu Rinpoche, along with Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche, was one of the principal teachers at the Institute, training all younger tulkus of the lineage, including The Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche, who was in the first class. He was also the personal tutor of the four principal Karma Kagyu tulkus: Shamar Rinpoche, Situ Rinpoche, Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche, and Gyaltsab Rinpoche. Thrangu Rinpoche established the fundamental curriculum of the Karma Kagyu lineage taught at Rumtek. In addition, he taught with Khenpo Karthar, who had been a teacher at Thrangu Rinpoche's monastery in Tibet before 1959, and who is now head of Karma Triyana Dharmachakra in Woodstock, New York, the seat of His Holiness Karmapa in North America.

After nine years at Rumtek, in 1976 Thrangu Rinpoche founded a small monastery Thrangu Tashi Choling in Boudhanath, Kathmandu, Nepal. Since then, he also founded a retreat center and college at Namom Buddha, east of the Kathmandu Valley, and started an education project for Himalayan children SMD Schools which offer free education for 700 children from the Himalayas, including young nuns and monks. Rinpoche's main purpose in starting SMD Schools is to preserve the language, culture and Buddhist way of life of Himalayan people. He built Tara Abbey, which offers a full dharma education for Tibetan nuns, training them to become khenpos or teachers. He has also established a free medical clinic in an impoverished area of Nepal.

Thrangu Rinpoche recently completed a large, beautiful monastery in Sarnath, India, overlooking the Deer Park where the Buddha gave his first teaching on the Four Noble Truths. This monastery is named Vajra Vidya after the Sixteenth Gyalwa Karmapa, and it is now the seat for the annual Kagyu conference led by His Holiness the Seventeenth Karmapa. In January of this year, His Holiness the Dalai Lama came to Sarnath to perform a ceremony in the Deer Park with the Karmapa, Thrangu Rinpoche, and other high lamas.

Around 1976, Thrangu Rinpoche began giving authentic Buddhist teachings in the West. He traveled extensively throughout Europe, Asia, and the United States. In 1984 he spent several months in Tibet where he ordained over one hundred monks and nuns and visited several monasteries. In the United States, Thrangu Rinpoche has centers in Maine and California, and is currently building the Vajra Vidya Retreat Center in Crestone, Colorado. Highly qualified monks and nuns from Thrangu Rinpoche's monastery will give retreatants instruction in various intensive practices. He often visits and gives teachings in dharma centers in New York, Connecticut, and Seattle, Washington. In Canada, he gives teachings in Vancouver and has a center in Edmonton. He is the Abbot of Gampo Abbey, a Buddhist monastery in Nova Scotia. He conducts yearly Namom Buddha seminars in the United States, Canada, and Europe, which are also part of a meditation retreat.

Rinpoche has now taught in over twenty-five countries and has seventeen centers in twelve countries. He is especially known for making complex teachings accessible to Western students. Thrangu Rinpoche is a recognized master of Mahamudra meditation.

Because of his vast knowledge of the Dharma and his skill as a teacher, he was appointed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama to be the personal tutor for His Holiness the Seventeenth Karmapa.

The Namom Buddha Seminar was established in 1988, to support the vast activities of Thrangu Rinpoche across the world. It focuses on publishing authentic Buddhist teachings from a realized teacher. Namom Buddha Publications has

collected an audio library of over eight hundred tapes of Thrangu Rinpoche and has published many of these in twenty-two books. Thrangu Rinpoche's works will soon be digitized and available for download on the Internet. As well, a cyber-sangha that will present Rinpoche's teachings in a long-distance learning format on the Internet will also be available.

For more information about Thrangu Rinpoche, please visit <http://www.rinpoche.com>