

## A Brief Biography of the Venerable Drüpon Lama Karma

Venerable retreat master (*driüpon*) Lama Karma was born in Tashi Yangtse region in eastern Bhutan near Pemaling, a sacred hidden site of Padmasambhava.

Also known as Drub-la Karma Yeshe Tharchin, his formal education began at the age of six when his father taught him to read and write Tibetan. He was then enrolled in school where he studied for four years. When he was 13 years old he was one of the scribes on the massive project of preparing a version of the Buddhist Canon (*Kangyur*) in golden ink script. The project took place in Thimphu Trash Choedzong, the capital of Bhutan, and was commissioned by the 3rd king of Bhutan. After that, he joined at Long-Nying Chöling Monastery, at the behest of his father who was a leading lama there. In accord with the tradition he began the five-times one hundred thousand accumulations of the preliminary practices (*ngondro*) of the Longchen Nyingtik tradition. These practices commenced with a period of unique mind training (*Lojong*) contemplations. He also trained in the various aspects of the ritual tradition within the Longchen Nyingtik.

At the age of 26, he was admitted to his root teacher, Lama Naljorpa, the great yogi of mahamudra and dzogchen from whom he received the vows of a lay practitioner (*genyen*). As part of receiving the vows he was bestowed the name Gyalse Lodrö Thaye Gyurmed. Around this time he received the detailed empowerments, instructions and oral-transmission of *Chod Rinchen Threngwa*.<sup>1</sup> He was then guided in very strict retreat training in the chod practice of *Dhen-thog Chigma*. He also trained in remaining in the state of the yogic conduct of equal taste<sup>2</sup> (*tulzhug ronyom*) for a long period. He then completed the requisite mantra accumulations of *Khorwa Dongthruk*<sup>3</sup> over three months. After this he received the empowerments, oral-transmission and instruction related to *Dechen Zhingdrup*,<sup>4</sup> which he trained in for three months in retreat.

In addition to these practices he was also taught both theoretical and practical Vajrayana Buddhist teachings including the *Words of my Perfect Teacher*

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<sup>1</sup> (Eng: The Jewel Garland Practice of Severance)

<sup>2</sup> (Tib: བརྟམ་ལྷུག་པ་རྩིས་ལྷོ་སྤྲོས་པ་)

<sup>3</sup> (Eng: Stirring the Depths of Samsara)

<sup>4</sup> (Eng: Accomplishing the Pure Realm of Great Bliss)

(*Kunzang Lamai Zhal lung*), Shantideva's, *Way of The Bodhisattva*, *Ascertaining the Three Vows*, *Thirty-seven Practices of a Bodhisattva*, *Profound Instructions on the View of the Middle Way*, *Four Oral-Instructions on Freedom From Attachment* from the Sakya Tradition, *Virtuous Practice Related to The View*, Patrul Rinpoche's *Meditation and Conduct in the Beginning, Middle, and End*, *Oral-Instructions for the Practice of Mountain Retreat* by Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Three Words That Strike the Vital Point*, *Gangama Instructions: Tilopa's Mahamudra Upadesha on The Great View of Mahamudra*, the exalted practice of the *Six Yogas of Naropa (Naro Chödruk)*, starting from the preliminary practices up to the practices of yogic exercises (*trulkhor*) and the transference of consciousness (*phowa*). He received and trained in *Mastery of The Exemplary Conduct of Six Levels of Even Taste (Ro-nyom kordruk)*, and trained in the calm abiding instructions of remaining in the nine stages of meditative concentration. He studied *A History of the Nyingma School* by Dudjom Rinpoche, Karma Lingpa's *Bardo Thödrol* and the *100,000 Sacred Songs of Milarepa*. He also received the preliminary practices, three roots, and instructions related to the recitation manual of the *Konchog Chidü* Tradition, and guidance on the preliminary practices, three roots, and chod practice *Laughter of the Dakinis* from Longchen Nyingtik Tradition.

Subsequently he completed a seven-month retreat of *Rigzin Düpa*, the inner guru sadhana of the Longchen Nyingtik. He then also received empowerments, oral-transmission and instructions related to the *Four Feast Kusali Chod*, dream interpretation, and *Dispelling Darkness in the Ten Directions*, Longchenpa's commentary on the Guhyagarbha Tantra, Shabkar's *Flight of the Garuda*, *Commentary on the Vajra Verses of the Natural State*, *Profound Pith Instructions of Dorje Phakmo*, and instructions on the channels, energies, and yogic exercises.

He then began a long period of retreat in Delek Namkha Kyung Dzong in Pemaling, the sacred site of Guru Rinpoche. This retreat was presided over by his root guru, Lama Naljorpa Rinpoche who sealed off his retreat room. Again after that from Lama Naljorpa he received extensive teachings on the nature of mind. These included the instruction and practice of examining: the source, abiding and moving of the mind, or the practice of examining: the abiding, moving, and awareness of the mind. He was also taught and practiced the teachings of *Yeshe Lama*, and the *Lotus Essence Root Tantra (Tsa-gyud Pemai Nyingpo)* from the Kusum Gongdü Tradition. Following these teachings he again spent 6 months in retreat on the *Seven-Line Prayer Sadhana*. He also spent many months practicing solely Threg-chö and Thögal in retreat. He received teachings on consort practices such as *Zo-Gag Ned-kyi Thembu*. In addition he was taught the *Fivefold*

*Mahamudra* of Gyalwa Drikungpa (*Chakchen Ngaden*), the *Mahamudra Preliminary Practices*, Dudjom Rinpoche's *Song of the Noble Goal*, and the postures and the gazes of the three kayas along with other teachings as well.

After all of this, he spent many years with Tertön Pedgyal Lingpa Rinpoche until Tertön Rinpoche passed away in 1988. Drüpon Lama Karma was the scribe who wrote the entirety of Pedgyal Lingpa's four volume Kusum Gongdü treasure cycle. It was written directly from the word lineage of the yellow scrolls at Sengye Dzong, where Pedgyal Lingpa was in three-year retreat. He received all the empowerments and transmissions of Kusum Gongdü with Red Vajrasattava arising as his special practice. He also received piths instructions on the nature of mind, the chod empowerment called *Opening the Gateway of The Sky*, the empowerment and practice of *Sidok Raksha Tötreng*, a Vajrakilaya practice from Chogyur Lingpa, the empowerment of Apam Tertön's sadhana related to the seven-line prayer, the bodhisattva vows, various Konchog Chidü transmissions, Karma Lingpa's *Vajra Guru Mantra Commentary*, *The Seven-Chapter Prayer to Guru Rinpoche*, *Practice of The Universal Panacea*, instructions on the consecration and filling of statues and other sacred supports. Due to the great extent of teachings received, Drüpon was the pre-eminent expert in Bhutan on Pedgyal Lingpa.

From H.H. Dodrupchen Rinpoche he received the six volume Jatson Nyingpo Terma, empowerments and oral-transmissions of Rinchen Terdzö, Nyingtik Yabzhi and The Seven-chapter Prayer to Guru Rinpoche. From H.H. Penor Rinpoche he received the treasure cycles of Gesar, Rinchen Terdzo empowerments and Nyingthik Yabzhi, from H.H. Taklung Tsetrul Rinpoche Rinchen Terdzod, from Jadral Jangchub Dorji, Dudjom Thröma oral-transmission and Apam Tertön's Seven-line Prayers Sadhana, the oral-transmission of Mipham Rinpoche's collected works from Tulku Rigzin Pema, the *Choying Dzod*, Paltrul Rinpoche's *Meditation and Conduct in the Beginning, Middle, and End*, the Konchog Chidü long life practices from Mindroling Gyalse Tulku Rinpoche, *Yeshe Lama* from Dagpo Rinpoche, *Nyak's Vajrakilaya* from Rabjam Rinpoche, empowerments of the *Kabgyed Deshek Düpa*<sup>5</sup> from Yangthang Rinpoche, along with the oral-transmission from Gonjang Rinpoche, Longchenpa's *Seven Treasures* from Sangye Nyenpa Rinpoche, empowerments and oral-transmissions of Tsasum Lingpa and Pedgyal Lingpa's treasure cycle, the chod empowerment called *Opening the Gateway of The Sky*, chod cycle of *Rinchen Threngwa*, teachings on *Sampa Lhundrupma*, *Dzogchen Khordhey Rangdrol*, *Lotus Essence Root Tantra*,

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<sup>5</sup> (Eng: Eight Commands, Union of the Sugatas)

*Enlightened Intent of Equality of Samantabhadra, the Lion's Roar for Cutting Through Errors and Deviation, Instructions on Generation Stage* and so forth from Tulku Sang-ngag Rinpoche, and also the Rinchen Terdzod empowerments from H.H Dilgo Kyentse Rinpoche.

Other additional teachings Drüpon received include: long life empowerments from H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche, *Ornament of Precious Liberation* and long life empowerments from the 16th & 17th Karmapas, teachings on the preliminary practices from Nyoshul Khen Rinpoche, long life empowerments from H.E. Namkhai Nyingpo Rinpoche, instruction on the refuge vows, and the Avalokiteshvara sadhana of *Ngari Drupchen* from Tsultrim Zangpo, Avalokiteshvara empowerments, the *Mani Zang-dharma* and other teachings from Mani Lama, long life empowerments from Dokya Chokyi Nyima, *Mindfulness: The Mirror of the Mind* from Lupon Ugyen, and *Laughter of the Dakinis* instruction and dedication prayers from Tsampa Konchog.

To briefly summarize his life of spiritual practice, he was rigorously trained and engaged in very strict retreats under the guidance of his root teacher Tertön Pedgyal Lingpa Rinpoche and the prophesized Dharma holder, Lama Naljorpa Rinpoche for many years. To mention a few of his strict meditation retreats, he spent: eight months at Long-Nying Choling Monastery, three years at Tashi Yangtse Charnel Ground, two years at the snow peak of Pema Ling, the sacred site of Guru Rinpoche, two years at Sengye Dzong, six years at Phurpaling, and three years as a retreat Master at Paro Pema Yangdzong retreat center. He also continues with three months strict retreat annually in addition to teaching and presiding over various drupchens and drupchods in Pedgyal Lingpa affiliated monasteries in Bhutan.

Drüpon is renowned as a genuine retreat master throughout Bhutan and has been one of the most important Bhutanese lamas to maintain the tradition of Tertön Pedgyal Lingpa. This is in large part because of serving as Pedgyal Lingpa's scribe and attendant for many years. Drüpon even bestowed the oral-transmission of Pedgyal Lingpa's Kusum Gongdü in 1988 for many Tulkus, Lamas and devotees, while the empowerments were offered by the Tertön Pedgyal Lingpa himself. Since Pedgyal Lingpa's parinirvana, Drüpon continues to serve his root master's lineage by disseminating his teachings. Today, his students include many tulkus, khenpos, lamas and lay practitioners in Bhutan, primarily practicing within the Kusum Gongdü Tradition. He still continues as retreat master in one of Pedgyal Lingpa's main centers, Pema Yangdzong Monastery in Paro, Bhutan. He thereby is of invaluable benefit to the many, committed Buddhist practitioners

remaining in retreat based on his experience garnered over the past six decades.

May the life span of the glorious Guru remain firm!

May happiness arise for all beings equal to the extent of space!

May all beings, through having accumulated merit and purified obscurations,

Be established swiftly on the level of the Buddhahood!