

Khenchen Rinpoche Drupon Trinley Paljor

Born in 1930 in the Kham region of Tibet, Khenchen Rinpoche Drupon Trinley Paljor received a traditional monastic education in the Bakyod Monastery, beginning his training at the age of five and taking his full monk's vows at age 19.

Shortly after, he undertook a series of three long-term retreats—traditionally each three years, three months and three days. During the second retreat, he was given the title of Druponla, or retreat master.

The third retreat was ended prematurely during the massive destruction of Tibet in 1959. With four other lamas, Druponla made a perilous one-year sojourn to Nepal, during which he faced life-threatening situations, hunger and physical exhaustion. These deprivations only deepened his confidence in the Dharma, as he regarded them as the result of karma. Once settled in Nepal, Druponla made pilgrimages to the eight holy places of the Buddha in Nepal and India, then made wishes to see 16th Gyalwa Karmapa, the head of the Karma Kagyu lineage.

That wish was fulfilled in 1960. When Druponla met the Karmapa at Rumtek Monastery in Sikkim, His Holiness instructed him to stay. Several years later, the Karmapa dispatched Druponla to Bhutan to take care of the Tashi Choeling Monastery, which had been offered to the Karmapa by the King of Bhutan.

During his three-year stay, Druponla received many teachings from Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, a prominent teacher in the Nyingamapa lineage. He also visited numerous holy places, including the famous “Tiger’s Den” cave where Guru Rinpoche had subdued hostile forces.

In 1972, Druponla received a letter from the Karmapa conveying a special assignment: To serve as tutor for the eight-year-old Trungram Gyalwa Rinpoche. Druponla hesitated, then asked Karmapa if he was indeed qualified for the task. "If I were not sure, why would I choose you?" the Karmapa wrote back. "I chose you from many lamas."

Therefore, on an auspicious day, he began to teach Rinpoche the Tibetan language, then various rituals and practices.

Teacher and student formed a strong personal and Dharmic bond. In 1992, Trungram Gyalwa Rinpoche asked his tutor to move to Taiwan and work mainly on behalf of the United Trungram Buddhist Fellowship. Rinpoche had founded this worldwide organization to advance the principles of non-violence, social justice and mutual understanding. Druponla's duties have included teaching Buddhist precepts and leading Dharma activities.

In recognition of tireless efforts and spiritual realization, the title of Rinpoche was conferred upon Druponla by Shamar Rinpoche, the second-highest ranking lama of the Kagyu lineage. In 1999, he was granted the full title of Khenchen Rinpoche—or "Senior Abbot of Monastic Ordination"—by the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa, Trinley Thaye Dorje. In 2001, Khenchen Rinpoche was asked to extend his teaching duties to Dharma centers in Hong Kong and the United States. The next year, he led a retreat for the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa, Trungram Gyalwa Rinpoche and two other realized masters.

Most recently, Khenchen Rinpoche has dedicated himself to guiding retreats and leading sadhana practices on behalf of Dharmakaya in New York State. His love, insight and powerful practice has given great joy to students in different parts of the world.

Khenchen Rinpoche is the retreat master at the Dharmakaya Center for Wellbeing.