



PALPUNG YESHE CHÖKHOR

Under the direction of Tai Situ Rinpoche

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A Brief Introduction to Chöje Lama Karma Phuntsok

Chöje Lama Karma Phuntsok was born in Sikkim, India, in 1970 to a Tibetan refugee family from Eastern Tibet. After witnessing some of the distinguished Dharmic habits he had as a child, his parents felt that he had a strong karmic connection to the monastic lifestyle and decided to take him to Tai Situ Rinpoche. This was how he became a monk at the age of 10 at Sherab Ling Monastery in Himachel Pradesh, India.

Over a period of seventeen years, he received a complete traditional monastic education from several great masters -philosophy at a shedra under Khenpo Khedrup Rinpoche, ritual practices from Umze Zopa, meditation practices in a traditional three-year retreat under Saljeje Rinpoche and Druppon Lama Tsultrim. After completing his retreat in 1992, he continued his Umze duties and began teaching the younger generation grammar, Buddhist texts, calligraphy and art.

In 1996, under Tai Situpa's instruction, he embarked on his first journey overseas. He first went to Hong Kong and Taiwan to assist with new Karma Kagyu centers there and then traveled to North America to learn English. During his stay at Gampo Abbey, a Buddhist monastery in Nova Scotia, Canada, he was invited to teach the three-year retreatants and assisted in organizing and performing monastic ceremonies with the Abbey community.

In 2001, he was invited by the local community of Waterloo, Ontario to establish a new Dharma center. There he spent time teaching and in self-study and practice as well as engaging in social work, addressing students at high schools and the Wilfred Laurier University. He was a member of the Interfaith Grand River Council and acted as the Tibetan Buddhist representative. He also joined the spiritual care provider team at Grand River Hospital.

From 2006 to 2010, he returned to Sherab Ling to receive the Five Treasures and the Mahamudra, Ocean of Certainty from his root guru, Tai Situ Rinpoche. In 2006, Tai Situ Rinpoche appointed him as the Chöje Lama according to the Palpung tradition and the Tibetan editor of Omni Dharma Publications.

Since 2007, Chöje Lama Karma Phuntsok has visited Taiwan yearly at the invitation of the Palpung Zhepe Lhuyang Study & Practice Group and developed a long-term cooperative relationship with it. He has also received requests to give teachings throughout Canada and U.S.A. In April 2010, with the help of his Taiwanese and Canadian students, he established a permanent center in the outskirts of Toronto, fulfilling a long-cherished wish to set up a Dharma base under the Palpung tradition in East Canada. The center will enable him to carry out systematic teaching programs in philosophy and meditation and conduct short-term retreats according to the Karma Kagyu tradition, both for the local English-speaking and Chinese-speaking communities.

What is “Chöje Lama” in the Palpung tradition?

The Palpung monastic seat of Chomgön Kenting Tai Situ Rinpoche in Kham had been the center of Buddhist study and practice in Eastern Tibet for centuries. There were numerous branch monasteries throughout Tibet. Tai Situpa would send out qualified lamas who were well trained in both study and practice to carry the teachings of the lineage to the outlining branches. After several years if the lamas had been successful in fulfilling their responsibilities and demonstrated sincere devotion to the Palpung lineage, Tai Situpa might confer them the title of “Chöje Lama”. The lamas at this point would become official representatives of Tai Situpa in specific monasteries where they resided.