

KHENPO KARMA NAMGYEL RINPOCHE BIOGRAPHY

Summer, 2024

Karma Rinpoche was born in Paro, Bhutan in 1964. Shortly prior to his birth, the 16th Karmapa of Tibet (head of the Karma Kagyu lineage) traveled to Bhutan and Karma Rinpoche's mother met the Karmapa to receive his blessing. It was then, while Karma Rinpoche was yet in his mother's womb, that he was named Karma Namgyel by the Karmapa--a truly auspicious occurrence.



Je Kunga Peljor

Karma Rinpoche was then born on Chökhör Düchen, the anniversary of Buddha's first turning of the Wheel of Dharma. When his astrological birth chart was investigated, it was revealed that his was a birth of significance. His birth chart was then sent to the Je Khenpo of that time (head of the Drukpa Kagyu lineage in Bhutan and a monk of vast accomplishments) who proclaimed Karma Rinpoche was an emanation or reincarnation of Je Kunga Peljor who was the 2nd Drukchen or incarnation of the progenitor of the Drukpa Kagyu lineage of Vajrayana Buddhism, Tsangpa Jyare. Further, Rinpoche's parents were informed he needed to enter monastic life at a young age or he would risk an early death.



Khenpo Karma Namgyel Rinpoche

However, by birth, Karma Rinpoche actually united two lineages--one from his father's and one from his mother's bloodline. His father was the heir to Pema Lingpa, the great tertön (treasure finder) of the Nyingma [Ancient] lineage--with its origins in Padmasambhava, the great Indian Tantric Master who established Vajrayana Buddhism throughout the Himalayas--which peerage held profound spiritual and political status in Bhutan.



Pema Lingpa

Karma Rinpoche's mother was of the bloodline of the Drukpa Kagyu Shabdrungs who founded and secured the State of Bhutan.

The 1st Shabdrung was that spiritual giant and 5th Drukchen who left Tibet to create Bhutan with its signature culture rooted in Buddha Dharma. In Karma Rinpoche, these two lineages with their great spiritual wealth and responsibilities, come together.



Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal

So it was that, at age seven, to honor the Je Khenpo's recognition of his lifestream and his mother's bloodline, Karma Rinpoche entered the Paro Dzong Monastery (a Drukpa Kagyu monastery in Bhutan), and then began study with his then Root Lama, H.H. Je Ngawang Thinley Lhundup, who was known as the greatest healer in Bhutan.

While at Paro Dzong, Karma Rinpoche excelled at sacred dance and became a Dance Master, teaching and performing for festivals and religious ceremonies. He still performs various dances--each, powerful rituals--such as the Black Hat, Invitation to Guru Rinpoche, Mahakala, Lord of the Cremation Grounds, and the Dakini Dance with traditional costumes and music.

During his training at Paro Dzong, Karma Rinpoche also served as Umdze (Chant Master), and learned other traditional arts such as torma making, healing mantras, and divination.



H.H. Je Ngawang Thinley Lhundup



Karma Rinpoche performing sacred Black Hat Dance



H.E. Khenchen Rigzin Dorje Rinpoche, Tarthang Tulku Rinpoche, Karma Rinpoche (from left to right)



H.H. Khenchen Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche

In 1987, after completing his preliminary monastic training, Karma Rinpoche began advanced study in the Buddhist philosophy of the Nyingma tradition at the Nyingma Shedra in Nepal to honor his father's bloodline. He studied there for nine years with H.E. Khenchen Rigzin Dorje Rinpoche--Nyingma lineage holder, revered teacher, and regent for Chatral Rinpoche and H.H. Penor Rinpoche. He also received Dzogchen transmission from H.H. Khenchen Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche--an accomplished Dzogchen Master. In addition, during this time, he received advanced teachings from Kyabjé Taklung Tsetrul Rinpoche and Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche--both, much revered Nyingma Masters.

Notably, Karma Rinpoche became an active assistant to Tarthang Tulku Rinpoche, sponsor of the Nyingma Shedra, and in 1989, participated in organizing the Menlom Chenmo world ceremony in Bodgaya. Today, more than ten thousand monks regularly attend this annual world event.

Karma Rinpoche came to the United States in 1996, shortly after his graduation from the Nyingma Shedra. However, when Karma Rinpoche first came to the U.S., he knew little to no English. So, prior to initiating his teaching mission here, he spent many years working various mundane jobs to remedy this situation by learning English. When time had ripened, Karma Rinpoche founded the Drukpa Mila Center. He now resides in Longmont, Colorado with his wife and children.



The Drukpa Mila Center
Founded by Lama Karma Namgyel

The mission of The Drukpa Mila Center is to help spread the authentic teachings of the Drukpa Kagyu lineage of Bhutanese/Tibetan Buddhism in the world, and benefit sentient beings everywhere. The Drukpa Kagyu is a subsect of the Kagyu tradition, one of the four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Drukpa Mila Centers and Rinpoche's students are presently located in Longmont, Colorado and Salem, Oregon, California, Canada, and now Vietnam.

The Drukpa Mila Center has organized and sponsored several visits by Karma Rinpoche's present Root Teacher and The Center's official sponsor, H.H. Ngawang Tenzin Rinpoche. For these tours, His Holiness has traveled from Bhutan in order to give teachings & empowerments to students of The Center, as well as groups throughout Colorado, Oregon, and across the United States. The Center aspires and is working to bring His Holiness--and other Bhutanese teachers of note--back to the U.S. for further series of special teachings & empowerments.

H.H. Ngawang Tenzin Rinpoche, Dorje Lopen (Ret.) of Bhutan's Drukpa Kagyu lineage, is a highly revered teacher, scholar, and Meditation Master. He has studied under many of the most accomplished Masters of the 20th century. Beyond this, he has spent more than 28 years in retreat. H.H. Ngawang Tenzin Rinpoche's blessings and great accomplishment are tangible to all who have the good fortune to be in his presence. We of the Drukpa Mila Centers are deeply honored to receive his sponsorship.



H.H. Ngawang Tenzin Rinpoche



Shrine Room--Drukpa Mila Center-Longmont

As practice is the essence of the Dharma, Karma Rinpoche has established regular weekly practices at Drukpa Mila Centers. The practices, recited in Tibetan, and executed in traditional fashion, include combined Green Tara and Kurukulle "Red Tara" Sadhanas, and combined Chenrezig Sadhana with an Offering Ritual of Mahakala. This Chenrezig Sadhana, *"A Short Accomplishing Practice of the Buddha of Compassion,"* was compiled by H.H. Ngawang Tenzin Rinpoche specifically for The Drukpa Mila Centers.

Karma Rinpoche also offers classes, for individuals or groups, at Drukpa Mila Centers. Such classes include Tibetan language, Shinè Meditation, introductory instruction for setting up a shrine and for sadhana practices, lama dancing, torma making, and ritual musical instrumentation.



Torma Making



Sadhana Recitation with
Ritual Musical Instruments

Devoted to the well-being of others--individuals, students, and the broader community--Karma Rinpoche offers his time, resources, wisdom, and generosity of heart by providing many services, such as, divinations, astrological readings, blessings and clearings for the home and office, pet blessings, purifications through water blessings, and fire ceremonies.

To elaborate here just the fire ceremonies, the power and intention of the fire ceremonies is to bless, heal, purify, and protect the environment and its inhabitants from disaster, disease, imbalance, and all negativities. For those who are dying or deceased, the fire ceremony also brings peace and comfort in their transition.

In point of fact, in 2017, Karma Rinpoche completed his 108th Chenrezig (Avalokiteshvara) Buddha of Compassion Jinsek fire ceremony in fulfillment of his vow to accomplish such number for the benefit of the United States and all beings everywhere.



108th Buddha of Compassion Jinsek--Oregon, USA

Currently, beyond his teaching and other duties related to the Drukpa Mila Center, Karma Rinpoche has taken upon himself a number of additional projects of crucial significance. Highlighting just a few of these endeavors, there was, for one, the substantial and costly “Tankha Project” for Paro Dzong Monastery. This entailed the re-creation of 35 large tankhas (sacred iconographic paintings set on brocade) of the lineage Lamas of the Drukpa Kagyu related to this monastery. The original tankhas, some 100 or more years old, had become damaged and new ones were needed for the indispensable lineage empowerment of monks living and practicing at the Dzong. With the November 2023 consecration ceremony, this project has now reached successful completion.



Phajo Drugom Zhigpo

Then, there is the newly established Vajrayana Foundation in Thimphu, Bhutan. This is a specialized Center, created by Rinpoche, meant to help laypeople--be they tourists, pilgrims, or Bhutanese--learn about Bhutanese Vajrayana Buddhism, ritual, meditation, and sadhana recitation.

Further, there are two temples in Bhutan for which Karma Rinpoche carries considerable responsibility. Through his mother's bloodline he bears responsibility for the Phajo Drugom Zhigpo Temple in Paro, which is an important historical and sacred site to the Drukpa Kagyu.

Through his father's bloodline, he bears responsibility for the Tamzhing Monastery in Bumthang, which was built by the great Pema Lingpa himself. Both of these sites are suffering extensive disrepair and will need dedicated funding to accomplish essential repairs, maintenance, and artistic preservation.



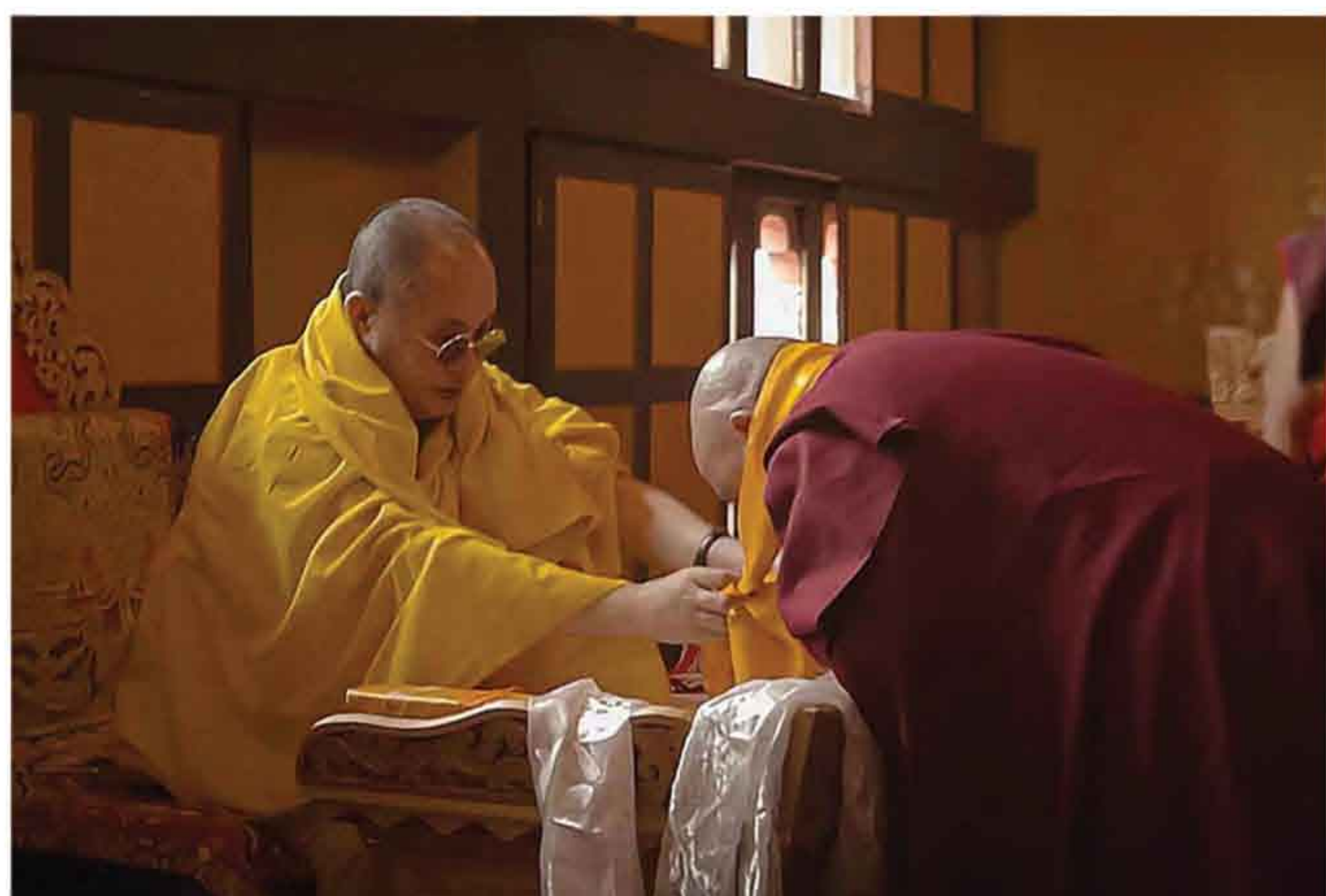
Tamzhing Monastery--Bumthang, Bhutan

In addition, here in the United States, there are an ongoing temple project and a retreat center project in varying stages of development. Concerning these constructions, Rinpoche intends to enlist artisans from Bhutan, accomplished in the traditional sacred arts, to aid in their creation. These structures will prove critical to our growth and essential to the development of Dharma in America.

Of particular note, it also must be communicated here that on September 4, 2022, Karma Rinpoche was elevated to a newly created official position by the present 70th Je Khenpo of Bhutan, Tulku Jigme Chhoeda. The position is to act as the appointed representative of the Je Khenpo of the Drukpa Kagyu lineage of Bhutan, not only to the world, but more particularly to Bhutanese embassies worldwide, and all Bhutanese communities outside Bhutan. The creation of this new position then can be seen as manifesting a twofold intent. For one, it expresses the deepening desire of Bhutan's Drukpa Kagyu lineage to introduce itself to the world as a longstanding leading light of Vajrayana Buddhism. For the other, it acknowledges the increasing need to spiritually shepherd the growing numbers of Bhutanese people living outside of Bhutan--a situation only known to contemporary Bhutan.

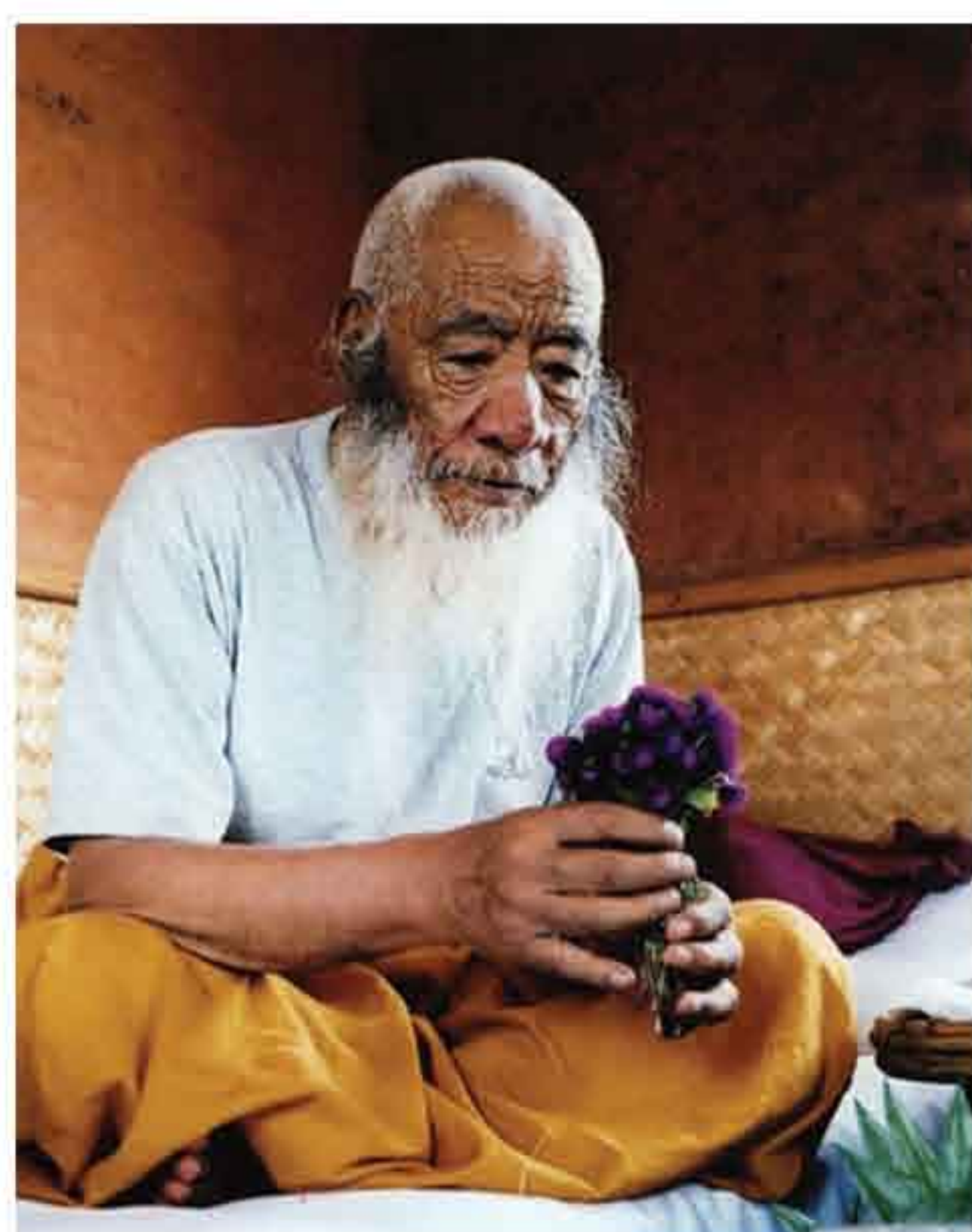


70th Je Khenpo



Karma Rinpoche's Entilement Ceremony with 70th Je Khenpo

This is a significant and high spiritual appointment. Among other issues, it is a recognition of the profound accomplishments of Khenpo Karma Namgyel Rinpoche. While living in the United States, establishing the presence of Bhutan's profound and precious Drukpa Kagyu lineage here, and caring for his American students, he yet attends to the needs of his birth country, all the while actualizing a truly international reach, now in Canada and now in Vietnam and beyond. It is for the success of these many accomplishments and activities that we pray. May all beings benefit!



Chatral Rinpoche

Universally renowned Dzogchen Master of the Tibetan Nyingmapas and Mountain Yogi, Chatral Rinpoche is the Great Exemplar for practitioners of the 21st century. Karma Rinpoche's Nyingma teacher, H.E. Khenchen Rigzin Dorje Rinpoche, was Chatral's regent.

In a previous life, H.H. Gyalse Rinpoche was the brother of our present-day H.H. Ngawang Tenzin. It was he who built the Taktshang (Tiger's Nest) Temple in Paro, Bhutan, at the site of a cave wherein Guru Rinpoche, Padmasambhava, meditated. It is popularly accepted that he will be a future Je Khenpo of Bhutan's Drukpa Kagyu.



H.H. Gyalse Rinpoche Mipham Tenzin Wangpo with Karma Rinpoche



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