

A Life Devoted to Dharma Activity

Tarthang Tulku, also known as Kunga Gellek Yeshe Dorje, was born in Golok, Eastern Tibet, in 1935. Thoroughly trained by traditional masters, he went into exile in 1958. After a short stay at the Young Lamas Home School in Dalhousie, he was asked by H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche to represent the Nyingma School at Sanskrit University in Varanasi. There he established Dharma Mudranalaya to print Tibetan Buddhist texts. In 1968 he left India for the United States, becoming the first Nyingma lama in America.

In 1969, Rinpoche founded the Tibetan Nyingma Meditation Center (TNMC), a California corporation sole, as the nucleus of his activities. He established Padma Ling as a residential center, and in 1972–73 founded the Nyingma Institute, where he taught publicly until 1978. During these years he published the first of his 34 books in English to aid students in their study. He also founded the Tibetan Aid Project to support Tibetans in exile; Dharma Press and Dharma Publishing, which has now printed and produce hundreds of art reproduction and and more than 130 books in Western languages; Nyingma Centers, to guide the growth of four international centers; and Odiyan Country Center, a mandala of temples, stupas, and libraries, including Vajra Temple, Cintamani Temple, the Enlightenment Stupa, and Variocana Gardens. Ratna Ling Retreat Center, established in 2004 as an adjunct to Odiyan, offers retreats to the general public.

In 1981, Rinpoche published the Nyingma Edition of the Tibetan Buddhist Canon in 120 atlas-sized volumes, followed by an eight-volume Catalogue and Bibliography. The Yeshe De Text Project, founded in 1983, produced Great Treasures of Ancient Teachings in 641 volumes, and has printed and distributed to the Tibetan community over five million books, including five versions of the Kanjur and three versions of the Tanjur. In its latest edition, the Yeshe De Kamjur is the most comprehensive collection ever assembled, and includes 12 historically significant karchags, or catalogues. Yeshe De is currently producing the most rare and comprehensive collection of Nyingma Tantras ever compiled, in 150 volumes.

In 1989 Rinpoche founded the Nyingma Monlam Chenmo (World Peace Ceremony) in Bodh Gaya, where 8-10,000 lamas, monks, and

nuns now gather annually. He also provided seed-money to initiate the Kagyu, Sakya and Gelug Monlams. Other offerings at Bodh Gaya include six butter lamp houses, 152 prayer wheels, 158 golden lhantsa and Tibetan Prajnaparamita plaques, support towards the restoration the Mahabodhi Temple spire, site beautification, and year-round offering of butterlamps. In 2002 he founded the Light of Buddhadharma Foundation to support annual Tipitaka Chanting Ceremonies by the Theravadin Sangha, both in Bodh Gaya and around the world; representatives from 12 countries now participate.

Rinpoche's centers have installed 16 2.5 ton World Peace Bells at holy places, and have supported renovation projects at sacred sites, including the historic renovation of the Swayambhu Stupa in Nepal. In 2005 Mangalam Light Foundation was established; operating through Ananda, Prajna, and Vajra Light Foundations, its mission is to revive, preserve, and support the heritage of the Buddha Dharma in Tibet. The Light Foundations have given substantial support to Tarthang Monastery, Larun Gar, Chokyab Gar, and Adzom Gar among other centers and over 1,000 sets of the Kanjur and 10,000 sets of the collected works of Kun khyen Longchenpa will have been distributed to monasteries throughout Tibet.

In 2009, Rinpoche founded the Mangalam Research Center for Buddhist Languages in downtown Berkeley, followed by Dharma College and the Guna Foundation, a documentary film-making unit. In 2013, he inaugurated Sarnath International Nyingma Institute to bridge the gap between East and West, support the study of the Khen Lop Cho Sum, and host the annual Tibet Peace Ceremony. The Nyingma Association of Mandala Organizations (NAMO) incorporated in 2012, helps guide and protect the work of its 17 member organizations.

Rinpoche has dedicated his life to preserve, protect, and distribute the Tibetan Buddhist heritage and manifest the sacred forms of kaya, vaca, citta, guna, and karma for the sake of the entire world. We cannot express all of his efforts here, but more information on the mandala's activities is recorded in the 45 volumes of the TNMC Annals.

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