

Curriculum Vitae of Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche

Lama Zopa Rinpoche, the spiritual director of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition, was born in Thangme, Nepal, in 1946. At the age of three he was recognized as the reincarnation of the Lawudo Lama, Lama Kunzang Yeshe, who was a Tibetan Nyingma yogi and one of the most revered lamas in the Lawudo region.

Rinpoche left Thangme when he was about four years old and entered a monastery that was very close to the border of Nepal and Tibet. Rinpoche stayed at this monastery for several years until he went to Tibet, where he took getsul ordination in 1958 and continued his studies in Domo Geshe Rinpoche's monastery in Phagri, Tibet.

At the age of ten, Rinpoche went to Tibet and studied and meditated at Domo Geshe Rinpoche's monastery near Phagri. He studied there until the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1959 forced him to flee Tibet for the safety of Bhutan and then India. Rinpoche then studied at the Tibetan refugee camp at Buxa Duar, West Bengal, India, that Rinpoche became the disciple of Geshe Rabten Rinpoche and then Lama Yeshe. Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche's contact with Westerners began in 1967 in Darjeeling, when they met "Princess" Zina Rachevsky of Russian and American descent. She became the Lamas' first Western student

The Lamas went to Nepal in 1968, and over the next few years built Kopan and Lawudo Monasteries. In 1971 Rinpoche took full monastic ordination from His Holiness Ling Rinpoche in Bodhgaya. Also in 1971, Rinpoche gave the first of the famous annual lamrim retreat courses, which continue at Kopan to this day.

In 1974, Lama Yeshe and Rinpoche began traveling the world to teach at the Dharma centers started by their Western students, which numbered twelve by 1975. In 1976, the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT) was established as an official organization. When Lama Yeshe passed away in 1984, Lama Zopa Rinpoche took over as spiritual director of FPMT, which has continued to flourish under his peerless guidance. FPMT is now a thriving and dynamic international, non-profit Buddhist organization encompassing over 160 centers, projects, and social service initiatives around the world.

FPMT currently has seven standard Buddhist education programs that are taught in many centers. Two of these, the *Masters Program* and the *Basic Program* are committed courses of six and five years of study, respectively. Based on the great philosophical

texts studied in the monasteries of Tibet, FPMT holds to rigid standards of translation to ensure the meaning of these profound texts is not forfeited in their transmission from East to West. FPMT has also published hundreds of translated prayers, practice manuals, and sutras under the advice of Rinpoche.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche has many other projects around the world; one of the most important is the construction of two large Maitreya Statues in Bodhgaya and Kushinagar, these projects will also include schools and other social projects. Lama Zopa Rinpoche founded the Sera Je Food Fund, which offered breakfast, lunch, and dinner every day to all of the 2000 monks of Sera Je Monastery for twenty-six years. In 2017 Rinpoche offered an endowment fund to Sera Je Monastery large enough to support the long-term health of the Sera Je Food Fund, whereby the interest from the endowment would cover the annual costs associated with offering three nutritious meals daily for all the monks of Sera Je Monastery, for as long as the endowment remains. This enabled the Sera Je Food Fund to become self-sustainable and it is now run from the interest of this endowment. Sera Je Monastery is now managing the endowment and the ongoing management of the food fund. The Lama Tsongkhapa Teacher Fund offers an allowance to the main one hundred teachers in the Gelug tradition from various monasteries. Rinpoche has a number of funds for building holy objects around the world, such as stupas, statues, prayer wheels, and so forth. In addition, Rinpoche has a very strong interest in supporting social service projects which help the disadvantage with education, elderly care, medical attention, and other needs.

Rinpoche's teachings have been widely published including many titles by Wisdom Publications and Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive. Popular titles from Rinpoche include *Door to Satisfaction*, *How to Be Happy*, *Transforming Problems*, *Ultimate Healing*, *Heart of the Path*, as well as a number of other books and commentaries that are utilized by students the world over.

More details of Rinpoche's life and work may be found on the websites of FPMT (fpmt.org/teachers/zopa/)