

Lama Yeshe

1935 to 1974



Lama Thubten Yeshe was born in Tibet in 1935 not far from Lhasa in the town of Tölung Dechen. Two hours away by horse was the Chi-me Lung Gumpa, home for about 100 nuns of the Gelug tradition. It had been a few years since their learned abbess and guru had passed away when Nenung Pawo Rinpoche, a Kagyü lama widely famed for his psychic powers, came by their convent. They approached him and asked, "Where is our guru now?" He answered that in a nearby village there was a boy born at such and such a time, and if they investigated they would discover that he was their incarnated abbess. Following his advice they found the young Lama Yeshe to whom they brought many offerings and gave the name Thondrub Dorje.

Afterwards the nuns would often take the young boy back to their convent to attend the various ceremonies and other religious functions held there. During these visits—which would sometimes last for days at a time—he often stayed in their shrine room and attended services with them. The nuns would also frequently visit him at his parents' home where he was taught the alphabet, grammar and reading by his uncle, Ngawang Norbu, a student geshe from Sera Monastery.

Even though the young boy loved his parents very much, he felt that their existence was full of suffering and did not want to live as they did. From a very early age he expressed the desire to lead a religious life. Whenever a monk would visit their home, he would beg to leave with him and join a monastery. Finally, when he was six years old, he received his parents' permission to join Sera Je, a college at one of the three great Gelug monastic centers located in the vicinity of Lhasa. He was taken there by his uncle, who promised the young boy's mother that he would take good care of him. The nuns offered him robes and the other necessities of life he required at Sera, while the uncle supervised him strictly and made him study very hard.

He stayed at Sera until he was twenty-five years old. There he received spiritual instruction based on the educational traditions brought from India to Tibet over a thousand years ago. From Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche, the Junior Tutor of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, he received teachings on the Lam-rim graded course to enlightenment which outlines the entire sutra path to buddhahood. In addition he received many tantric initiations and discourses from both the Junior Tutor and the Senior Tutor, Kyabje Ling Rinpoche, as well as from Drag-ri Dorje-chang Rinpoche, Song Rinpoche, Lhatzün Dorje-chang Rinpoche and many other great gurus and meditation masters.

Such tantric teachings as Lama Yeshe received provide a powerful and speedy path to the attainment of a fully awakened and purified mind, aspects of which are represented by a wide variety of tantric deities. Some of the meditational deities into whose practice Lama Yeshe was initiated were Heruka, Vajrabhairava and Guhyasamaja, representing respectively the compassion, wisdom and skilful means of a fully enlightened being. In addition, he studied the

famous six yogas of Naropa, following a commentary based on the personal experiences of Je Tsongkhapa.

Among the other teachers who guided his spiritual development were Geshe Thubten Wangchug Rinpoche, Geshe Lhundrub Sopa Rinpoche, Geshe Rabten and Geshe Ngawang Gedun. At the age of eight he was ordained as a novice monk by the venerable Purchog Jampa Rinpoche. During all this training one of Lama Yeshe's recurring prayers was to be able some day to bring the peaceful benefits of spiritual practice to those beings ignorant of the dharma.

This phase of his education came to an end in 1959. As Lama Yeshe himself has said, "In that year the Chinese kindly told us that it was time to leave Tibet and meet the outside world." Escaping through Bhutan, he eventually reached Northeast India where he met up with many other Tibetan refugees. At the Tibetan settlement camp of Buxaduar he continued his studies from where they had been interrupted. While in Tibet he had already received instruction in prajnaparamita (the perfection of wisdom), Madhyamika philosophy (the middle way) and logic. In India his education proceeded with courses in the vinaya rules of discipline and the abhidharma system of metaphysics. In addition, the great bodhisattva Tenzin Gyaltzen, the Kunu Lama, gave him teachings on Shantideva's Bodhisattvacat yavatara (Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life) and Atisha's Bodhipathapradipa (Lamp of the Path to Enlightenment). He also attended additional tantric initiations and discourses and, at the age of twenty-eight, received full monk's ordination from Kyabje Ling Rinpoche.

One of Lama Yeshe's gurus in both Tibet and Buxaduar was Geshe Rabten, a highly learned practitioner famous for his single-minded concentration and powers of logic.

Osel Hita (Lama Osel Rinpoche)



Lama Osel likes to be known as Osel Hita. He is pursuing a course of Western studies, at which he is doing extremely well. He has agreed to write something about his life at the present time, and we look forward to being able to publicise it when we receive it.

Brief Update from Ven Roger Kunsang:

In September 2006, we had a surprise visit from Lama Osel (Lama insisted he be called, simply, "Osel"). He suddenly appeared in Aptos, California at Rinpoche's house - actually, he was on summer vacation. We spent a few days together, and Osel spent a lot of time talking with Rinpoche about Dharma and his experiences of the last few years. He also met some of Lama Yeshe's older students, and stayed with Karuna Cayton.

Osel said he was awed by Rinpoche's house, and the "vibe of the holy objects." In conversation with me he said "I am creating my world, FPMT is doing well creating its world, later we will merge my world and FPMT."

Osel was very happy with the visit, and so were we, especially Rinpoche; we all felt we connected again.

Osel's parting advice to me with a hug was
"No matter what bad things people say or do to you... just give love!"