

PEMA DORJEE BHUTIA

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Geshe Pema Dorjee was born in 1951 in Shillong, near the border between Tibet and India. From 1963 to 1973 he attended the Tibetan Homes Foundation School which had been established by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Thereafter, he attended the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics which was co-founded in Dharamsala by His Holiness and Lobsang Gyatso. The Institute offered a six-year program in Prajnaparamita (Perfection of Wisdom) Philosophy and a four-year program in Madhyamika (Middle Way) Philosophy, and he attained degrees in both, the equivalent of an undergraduate and two Masters degrees, in 8 years.

From 1981 to 1997, Geshe Pema Dorjee dedicated himself to the Tibetan Children's Village School located in Dharamsala. There, he began as a teacher of Tibetan Buddhism, language, and culture. In 1990, he became Principal of the school and three years later the Director of the school.

In 1995, as a result of his continued studies in Buddhist philosophy, he was awarded the Geshe degree from the Drepung Loseling monastery. In Tibetan Buddhist education, this is the highest degree that can be earned, and it is at least the equivalent of a Ph.D. Geshe Pema Dorjee is one of the few Buddhists with a Geshe degree who is fluent in English.

He was then appointed Principal of the Tibetan Teachers Training Center and served in that capacity for two years. At that point in time, Geshe Pema Dorjee was asked to become the first Principal of the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics Sarah, which is now called College for Higher Tibetan Studies Sarah. There, from 1997 to 2002, he was in charge of the College for Higher Tibetan Studies.

Geshe Pema Dorjee recognized that an important part of Tibetan Buddhism, the Bodong tradition, had fallen into desuetude and needed to be revived. Some of its writings were hard to find and lacked a modern translation. In 2001, at an audience with His Holiness, he presented his thoughts about how to revive and promote the Bodong tradition. His Holiness gave advice and guidance and later money to the project, and in 2003 Pema Dorjee founded and became Director of the Bodong Research and Publication Center in Dharamsala.

The Tibetan government-in-exile has honored Geshe Pema Dorjee by asking him to undertake various tasks. The Cabinet appointed him to the Higher Level Textbook Review Committee. His Holiness appointed him as a member of the Public Service Commission. The Department of Health appointed him as spiritual counselor to former political prisoners who had been tortured.

Even as a simple monk, Geshe Pema Dorjee has taken on the responsibility of organizing, directing, and raising funds for numerous charitable projects. He helped to establish a Buddhist monastery in Nepal in the Bodong tradition. He is a Trustee of the Bright Horizon Children's Home, an orphanage in Nepal. He has organized and is directing various social work projects in Nepal and India, especially in remote villages. The projects include establishing schools, building a bridge for a remote village, bringing sick and injured Nepalese and Indians from remote villages to New Delhi for medical care. His latest project involves bringing equipment and experts from Israel, Norway, and Sweden to remote villages in Nepal to teach modern agricultural techniques.

Since 1997, he has lectured and taught in countries around the world, including Sweden, England, Switzerland, Belgium, Germany, Finland, Norway, France, and Israel.

In 2009, Geshe Pema Dorjee made his first visit to the United States where he taught and lectured at The William Alanson White Institute, the Erikson Institute for Education and Research at the Austen Riggs Center, the psychology doctoral program at C.W. Post, the Namgyal Institute of Buddhist Studies, and the Rubin Museum.