

**MAHA SIDHI(A) OF MODERN SIKKIM
(VENERABLE LAMA CHODA ALIAS LABRANG GOMCHEN)**

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Lama Choda was born at Namok Village to a humble farmers family. He had an interest in the Buddhist doctrine from his early childhood. When his family moved to North Sikkim he enrolled himself as a novice monk at Labrang Monastery. He spent most of his childhood as a monk learning to read and write the Buddhist Sutras. When he had mastered the basic sutras he came to Gangtok where he met the venerable Bermiok Rimpoche and under him he spent to learn the more advanced mantras and sutras. He spent a number of years under venerable Bermiok Rimpoche and mastered most of the advanced mantras and sutras. He then shifted to Ghanam and took to studying the tantras under the venerable Ugen Tenzing Rimpoche. Under Ugen Tenzing Rimpoche he learnt the secret tantric practices and got the empowerment to various tantric rituals. he also took lessons in advanced practices from venerable Khayche Thunka Rimpoche. To learn more of the advanced Zogchen doctrine he went to Tibet and became the disciple of the famous tantric yogi Thodhay Sakya Siri under whom he mastered the six outer and inner Yogas. He also received empowerment to the secret tantra of Rig-dzin-srog-grub-kyi-cho. After the death of Thodhay Sakya Siri he continued his studies at Cho-bu-ri under the chief disciple of Sakya Siri named Thiphay Rimpoche. He spent many years at Cho-bu-ri and mastered the Dzogchen teachings. He then came to Tsa-ri and got further teachings from venerable Khayab-ghen-dupchen Rimpoche. At Tsari he mas-

tered the art of generating psychic body heat which allowed him to meditate on snow covered mountain peaks naked without feeling cold. He also mastered the art of Tsa-lung which allowed him to travel hundred of miles per day without feeling tired. He went on a pilgrimage to all the holy sites in Tibet and then returned to Sikkim. After his arrival in Gangtok he went for meditation at Lukshama for several months and then to Takse where he spent several years in meditation. He then went for a pilgrim to Pathing and met venerable Ghongchuk Tshampa Rimpoche who taught him some tantric practices. After his return from Pathing he went for pilgrimage to Tibet and also to Bhutan where he visited the holy sites of Bhumthang, Kargay and Paro. From Bhutan he went to Kham where he learnt the secret practice of Chod from the venerable Chami Ragashey Rimpoche. After finishing his studies at Kham he returned to Sikkim and spent some time learning from the venerable Yathang Rimpoche. He again retired to meditation in a cave above Chongu Lake for several months. From there he went to Yathung in Chumbi Valley and spent two years in meditation.

He then returned to Gangtok and went to Lingdum where he meditated for several months. He returned to Gangtok and spent some time receiving teachings from his Holiness Dhujhom Rimpoche.

On the invitation of the venerable Khambu Lama of Mongolia, Labrang Gomchen went there with some followers. He was received in Mongolia with the highest honours by the lamas of Mongolia. In Mongolia he paid a special visit to the AlpoLakiand Hungress Monasteries. He gave a number of sermons to the Buddhist community in Mongolia and also cured a large number of sick people by his blessing. Labrang Gomchen and Lama Khambu also discussed the effect of the Vietnam war on the Buddhist community and appealed to them to stop the war. On his return journey from Mongolia he stopped at Moscow where he visited a small Buddhist Monastery. In the following year he went to Thailand to represent sikkim at the World Buddhist Conference and later to Malayasia for the same Conference.

Labrang Gomchen had many students from different monasteries in Sikkim most of his Students rose to the high positions of Dorjee Lopen in various monasteries. Labrang Gomchen was connected to most of the monasteries of Sikkim but he spent a major part of his life at the Enchey Monastery in Gangtok. After spending most of his life in service of Buddhist doctrine he passed away to his heavenly abode in 1985 at the age of 95 years. Labrang Gomchen will be always remembered for his many miracles of curing men and animals possessed by evil spirits. He can be said to be one of the greatest tantric yogic to appear in the last few decades of Sikkim's history.