



Chinese troops beneath the Potala Palace, 1951. Courtesy of Tibet Images.

limitless ways, and the multitude of teachers who teach, or assist teaching classes in FPMT centers worldwide.

Please visit the FPMT website for more extensive information on the teachers of FPMT, or visit a local center's website to see the full array of teachings being offered. More of FPMT's teachers will be featured (including audio and video) in the next *Mandala eZine*, published in August, so please stay tuned.

*\* Originally quoted in Adele Hulse's Big Love, forthcoming from Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive.*

## THE GESHES OF FPMT

It can be easy, particularly if one is new to Tibetan Buddhism, to miss just how rare and valuable teachers with Geshe degrees are. The degree is incredibly intensive (the curriculum can last up to 20 years), and graduates must have remarkable memorization and debating skills, making geshes fully qualified to help students master the most basic and advanced Buddhist concepts.

Of the four levels of Geshe degree, most FPMT geshes have been awarded the highest-level (lharampa). Many have sacrificed promising careers within their own monastic universities as the teachers of young monks in order to teach in various centers outside of India.

However, because of their dedication to Lama Zopa Rinpoche and FPMT's vision, and because of their confidence that Dharma can be successfully established outside of Asia, these teachers have allowed themselves to be thrust into foreign cultures, often far from other Sangha.

An FPMT geshe is a qualified geshe requested by Lama Zopa Rinpoche to serve in one of his centers when that center has a stable, committed community that can support a residence and salary for the geshe, and the students of that

center are ready to go deeper into Buddhist philosophy and practice. The geshe's responsibilities at the center are far-ranging. As resident teacher, he is there to teach, to provide spiritual guidance, to inspire each student on their path to enlightenment, and serve as a significant

object of merit, particularly if he is ordained. He may be faced with a student who walks through the door unaware of even the basics of Buddhism, as well as the veteran student who has been practicing for 30 years and seeks in-depth study and initiation. He becomes the heart of a center on Lama Zopa Rinpoche's behalf, an invaluable member of the FPMT community,

and critical to the training of quality Buddhist teachers for future generations.

Additionally, FPMT has four geshes who serve as touring teachers for the organization, giving teachings, initiations and commentaries in FPMT centers worldwide.

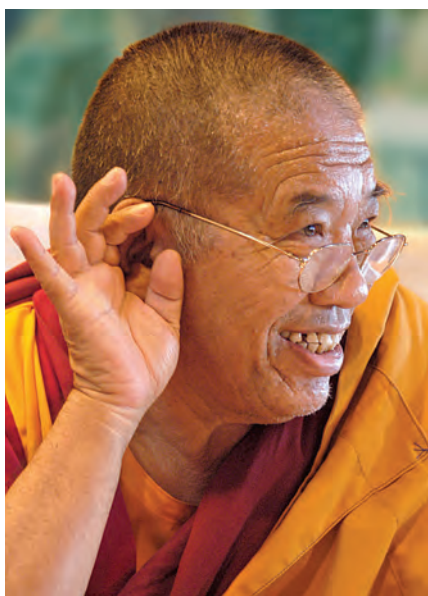
Here we meet just a few FPMT geshes, all of whom have amazing personal stories of struggle and perseverance, all of whom have served tirelessly by teaching in FPMT centers around the world.

The director is like the flower, the geshe is like the nectar, the students are like the bees.

LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

## GESHE JAMPA GYATSO, RESIDENT TEACHER (1980-2007), ISTITUTO LAMA TZONG KHAPA

Photo courtesy of Piero Strianni



Geshe Jampa Gyatso (1932-2007) not only helped establish the twelve-year Geshe Studies Program at Manjushri Institute in Cumbria, England, he also devised FPMT's seven-year teacher training program, the Masters Program, now thriving at Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa in Italy.

As Ven. Joan Nicell expressed after Geshe-la passed away, "It is probably not an exaggeration to say that he, in all likelihood, gave more hours of teaching in the West than any other Tibetan lama."

Certainly, no other FPMT geshe has thus far done more to lay the foundation for the FPMT teachers of the future.

"Geshe-la taught regular weekend courses, not only at the Istituto but at many other centers all over Italy, as well as occasionally in Spain and England," explains Ven. Joan. "On average he would teach three out of four weekends a month, in addition to the regular teachings on Buddhist philosophy from Monday to Friday. Often he would leave on Friday afternoon and return either late Sunday or Monday morning, yet still he would be in the gompa on Monday evening, teaching us the

intricacies of Buddhist philosophy with great patience and thoroughness. When his translator came down with tuberculosis in 1992, Geshe-la began to teach both weekend courses and the *Treasury of Manifest Knowledge* in what he himself always called his 'broken English.' For those of us who had deciphered his 'broken English,' it was a joy to directly receive the unmistakable Dharma from such a great master."



## VEN. CHODEN RINPOCHE, FPMT TOURING TEACHER

Choden Rinpoche was born in 1933 in Eastern Tibet. At the age of three he was recognized as the reincarnation of the previous rinpoche who himself had been one of the candidates for the Twelfth Dalai Lama, Thinley Gyatso.

Choden Rinpoche was virtually unknown outside of Tibet until 1985. He neither escaped his country after 1959 nor was imprisoned. Instead, he lived in a house in Lhasa, never leaving his small, dark, empty room for 19 years, even to use the toilet, or cut his hair or beard.

"He spent all his time on that bed, meditating," Choden Rinpoche's attendant, Ven. Tseten Gelek told *Mandala* in 2000. "They had to change the bedding once a month because it got smelly from sweat. He used a bedpan for a toilet, as he was pretending to be an invalid. Until 1980 he didn't talk to anybody, only the person who brought food into his room."

"The main thing I wanted to do was to practice Dharma sincerely, no matter what external factors were arising," Rinpoche explains. "This was my motivation, to be completely against the eight worldly concerns."

Choden Rinpoche is regarded as one of the highest of the Gelug lamas and has taught worldwide in FPMT centers at Lama Zopa Rinpoche's request. He also is founder of Ananda Dharma Center in San Jose, California.



LIKE NECTAR ON FLOWERS: FPMT-REGISTERED TEACHERS

## KHENSUR JAMPA TEGCHOK ISTITUTO LAMA TZONG KHAPA, ITALY

**K**hensur Jampa Tegchok was ordained in 1938 at the age of eight. It is amazing to consider that Khensur Tegchok has been a monk for the entire life of San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge (opened in 1937), the helicopter (invented 1939) and was ordained before the start of World War II (1939) or the founding of the United Nations (1945). For 72 years, Khensur Jampa Tegchok has dedicated his life to the service of others.

He studied the major Buddhist treatises at Sera Je Monastery in Tibet for 14 years before fleeing from Tibet in 1959. After staying in the refugee camp at Buxa Duar, India, Khensur Jampa Tegchok went to Varanasi where he obtained his Acharya (Masters) degree and taught for seven years. The next milestone in his teaching career came when Lama Yeshe invited him to teach in the West. He taught as the principal teacher of the Geshe Studies Program at Manjushri Institute in England and then brought the program to Nalanda Monastery in France, where he remained to teach for 10 years. In 1993, he was appointed the abbot of Sera Je Monastery in India by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Khensur Jampa Tegchok has also taught extensively in Europe, New Zealand and Northern California, particularly at Land of Medicine Buddha, USA.

He is the author of *Transforming the Heart, The Buddhist Way to Joy and Courage*.

FPMT-registered teacher Ven. Steve Carlier said the following about Khensur Tegchok: "When he taught at Sera the monks would say that they felt that if you listened even a little bit, you would have the qualities he was speaking of, or it was as if you almost had them. That is what it was like at Manjushri Institute and Nalanda Monastery, and



**Khensur Jampa Tegchok with Phillipa Rutherford at Chandrakirti Meditation Centre, New Zealand**

later at Land of Medicine Buddha. This must reflect Khensur Rinpoche's depth of realization, besides his unexcelled grasp of the words and context of the teachings."

Ven. Lobsang Drolma expressed the following: "He is just a Kadampa lama. One simply needs to observe a little. One will not find any super word to say or impressive description to offer. The emotive aspects are not there, the exaggeration, the 'wonderfuls.' He has the aspect of the simplest of the monks. One can see him in a corner of the Bodhgaya stupa making prayers, or in whatever center he visits, circumambulating the stupa, with modesty, at times when

nobody can see him. I have seen the ways he takes care of his disciples – his love is very big. And also he has given his life, offered it to others."

The following recent exchange between Ven. Drolma and Khensur Jampa Tegchok illustrates his incredible kindness and regard for his students:

**Ven. Drolma:** *If you had to give one piece of advice, what is the most important thing?*

**Khensur Jampa Tegchok:** The only advice I could give is that the person should take ethics and truth as principles. And then try to stay in peace as much as possible.

**VD:** *Gesh-la, please, always take care of us, will you?*

**KJT:** Yes, yes ... So, are you learning well these days?

**VD:** *I am very lazy, but I think something is coming.*

**KJT:** Sometimes it happens – feeling lazy, to feel that you cannot do this or that. But it is not something permanent; it is something to be changed. So, just try to do your best, make effort, and by effort you will get near the perfection.

*This entire exchange can be found in this issue's online exclusive section on the Mandala website.*

**I**t's up to each individual to decide precisely what to include in their daily practice depending on what one is capable of doing, but we should always try to arrest any thoughts that are concerned with the happiness of this life only.

GESHE PEMA TSERING, RESIDENT TEACHER, BUDDHA HOUSE, AUSTRALIA



Offering these centers with qualified teachers teaching the correct path to enlightenment is one very powerful thing we can do for sentient beings, we are able to give sentient beings the correct path to enlightenment. In the world, even with Buddhists, there can be misunderstandings in the teachings, wrong teachings, that if one practices one can't achieve the path, can't complete the path.

LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

## DAGRI RINPOCHE, FPMT TOURING TEACHER

Dagri Rinpoche is the reincarnation of Pari Dorje Chang, one of the very great geshes of Lhasa who was the teacher of many lamas, including Lama Yeshe. Dagri Rinpoche was born in Tibet in 1958. After his escape from Tibet in 1982, he completed 17 years' study of Buddhist philosophy and received the Geshe Lharampa degree.

Dagri Rinpoche's current teaching schedule has been taking him across Europe and Asia, where he teaches lam-rim, lojong and philosophy as well as gives initiations, conducts fire pujas and teaches tantric commentaries.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche said the following about Dagri Rinpoche: "The very nice thing about him is that he always talks about Lama Yeshe, and he very much wants the FPMT to succeed. He is one of the lamas His Holiness has great trust in and he is a lineage holder."

Ven. Kaye Miner, resident teacher at Maitreya Instituut Amsterdam and director of Maitreya Instituut Emst, had this to say about Dagri Rinpoche's 2006 "beautiful visit": "It was a rare experience to have such a warm and heart-touching lama stay with us; he made everything so easy. He was continually warm and giving, praising Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche, supporting FPMT. It really helped to inspire us all."

Jean-Paul Gloor, director of Gendun Drupa Centre in Switzerland, says that Dagri Rinpoche's five-day visit to the center in July 2008 was preceded by "a mixture of happiness, thankfulness, stress and impatience" as students prepared for his arrival.

As soon as he arrived, his smile and his attention towards each of us deeply touched our hearts. He demonstrated true simplicity – strength and sweetness at the same time. He made a definite conquest of our souls with his glance, his words, and sense of humor, as well as his answers – often to questions which were not even formulated out loud! We were inspired by his various and numerous interventions!

"How precious and inspiring it is to be close to a teacher who is fully what he is teaching," Jean-Paul said.



Dagri Rinpoche with Lama Zopa Rinpoche

## KHENRINPOCHE LAMA LHUNDRUP, ABBOT OF KOPAN MONASTERY, NEPAL

**K**henrinpoche Lama Lhundrup Rigsal was born in Tibet in 1941 to a poor peasant family. He joined Sera Monastery while still a boy, and in 1959 fled from the Chinese invasion of Tibet to India. In Buxa Duar, the refugee camp in North India where many of the monks were sent by the Indian government, he met Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche, and studied with great masters such as Geshe Rabten and others.

In 1972, he was called to Kopan by Lama Yeshe to teach philosophy to the Kopan monks for a period of three months. Ha!

Lama Lhundrup has been abbot of Kopan Monastery since then, taking care of the ever-growing group of monks and nuns and keeping alive Lama Zopa Rinpoche's and Lama Yeshe's vision of Kopan. Lama Lhundrup still teaches classes every day, gives advice to visitors and foreigners and is entirely available to all.

Rabjam Geshe Tashi Dondrup has been a monk at Kopan for the past 16 years, becoming a geshe there in 2004. He has subsequently taught philosophy and is now the school principal at Kopan Monastery. He had the following to say about Lama Lhundrup:

"Khenrinpoche is really a bodhisattva. He is never too tired to look after the monks and nuns here, just as a



mother would, with strong love for them all. His special quality is real compassion. He doesn't want to make anyone unhappy."

Another resident of Kopan added the following: "Perhaps Khenrinpoche's favorite activity is debate. It seems he is always having the last and best laugh in the debate courtyard and has been known to quickly leave for one of his guru's teachings. While noting that the debate is not yet over, he'll rush downstairs to join the action with the monks. After completion of his geshe exam in 1990, the monks who witnessed it all related that it would be something

they would never forget – the best geshe exam because it was the funniest. Khenrinpoche used examples like rice and dahl, to prove profound philosophical points. I once went to Khenrinpoche to explain why I couldn't accomplish something due to the external conditions not being complete and his reply became a debate, whereby the fault came back to me as a compliment. I remember leaving quite perplexed, wondering how the situation had gotten all turned around. He was laughing!"

Lama Lhundrup is the day-to-day heart of Kopan Monastery and Nunnery, for both residents and guests. As Lama Zopa Rinpoche offered in praise some years ago, Lama Lhundrup is "one lama you can completely trust."

**I** really enjoy staying here at Nalanda Monastery. It is a very nice place with great potential. It has a core group of about 10 Western monks who are dedicated and interested in studying Dharma in great depth. The discipline among the monks is excellent and the whole atmosphere of the place is friendly, welcoming and conducive to serious studies.

GESHE LOBSANG JAMPHEL, ABBOT OF NALANDA MONASTERY, FRANCE

## YANGSI RINPOCHE, PRESIDENT AND PROFESSOR OF BUDDHIST STUDIES AT MAITRIPA COLLEGE, PORTLAND, OREGON, USA

By Sara Blumenthal

In the fall of last year, Yangsi Rinpoche commented on his vision for education in an article for *Mandala* [October-December 2009]:

“Higher education in the mainstream and higher education in Buddhist Studies centers have not been communicating with each other,” he said. “Communication is dependent on an organization that is respected by both sides – not one about which some people say ‘they don’t practice,’ or one about which some people say ‘they don’t study.’ We are trying to close that gap with Maitripa, and in so doing, integrate Buddhist higher education into the mainstream. In general we should think of Buddhist higher education as something like an inner treasure. It is the internal lamp that illuminates ignorance. In today’s world, we need politicians, lawyers, businesspeople and environmentalists who are also educated in Dharma and are meditators. We need great legislators like this, and ultimately we need a great Dharma king or queen like this, too. So we need to work to create the structures to educate these individuals. This will ensure the longevity of Buddhism in the West.”

Born in Kathmandu, Nepal, in 1968, Yangsi Rinpoche identified a desire to become a monk at the age of five. His parents resisted the idea initially. When he was six, an arrival by Lama Yeshe changed things forever. “One day Lama Yeshe came and brought lots of Western toys,” says Rinpoche. “At the same time, he brought a letter from Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche saying that I was recognized. These two things came together so my parents gave up.”

Rinpoche was recognized as the reincarnation of the Geshe Ngawang Gendun, a scholar from western Tibet who was the teacher of Lama Yeshe, Geshe Lhundrub Sopa, and many other great teachers. “He was Tibetan,” Rinpoche says. “I think he was very simple, and a very qualified scholar and practitioner. He was respected in all the three major schools – Sera, Ganden and Drepung Monasteries.”

Rinpoche was brought by Lama Yeshe to Kopan Monastery where he lived for four years. George Propps, a long-time FPMT student, remembers his relationship with the young Yangsi Rinpoche:



Photo courtesy of Marc Sakamoto

“I first started communicating with Rinpoche around 1974, when he was a young monk at Kopan. Lama Yeshe is the one that put us together. We have communicated for many years, and one of my greatest treasures is a picture that he drew for me, when he was young. It was drawn with crayons, and was a picture of airplanes flying out of Kathmandu airport. Rinpoche was intrigued by airplanes. Even at that age, the drawing was very accurate. Over the years, we have had many experiences together. He is a great teacher. If you get a chance, you might ask him how many names he has. It seemed like I was getting mail from all of the monks at Kopan when, in fact, they were all from Rinpoche.”

At the age of 10, Rinpoche left Kopan to start his formal studies at Sera Je in South India. He trained in the monastic system for 25 years, graduating in 1995 with his Geshe Lharampa degree, the highest scholastic degree offered by the Gelug school. After completing three years of tantric studies at Gyume Monastery, he came to the West. Rinpoche had the desire to teach and benefit Western students of the Buddhistharma.

For five years he was the resident teacher at Deer Park Buddhist Center in Madison, Wisconsin, at the side of Abbot Geshe Lhundrub Sopa. After leaving Deer Park, he engaged in chaplaincy training at a



Seattle, Washington hospital and authored *Practicing the Path: A Commentary on the Lamrim Chenmo*, before founding Maitripa College in 2005. He is currently the president of Maitripa College as well as a professor of Buddhist Studies. Yangsi Rinpoche is also the spiritual director for Ganden Shedrup Ling Buddhist Center in San Juan, Puerto Rico and Dharma Friendship Foundation in Seattle, Washington, and he is a frequent visiting teacher at Institut Vajra Yogini in France, among other international centers.

Linda Marshall, an alumna of the M.A. Buddhist Studies program shares this story about the wonderful moments that

Rinpoche creates outside of class: “One summer Rinpoche took several of us to the slopes above Timberline Lodge at Mt. Hood for a Tara practice. He purchased tickets for all of us to ride the chairlift, which we did – both up and down. We did the puja above tree line at about 7,500 feet beneath an extremely large lava rock, within sight of the summer ski racing camps on a bright sunny day. The summit rose above us and civilization below us. Never has the mountain seemed so tender, the air so fresh, the breeze so sweet.”

*Sara Blumenthal is the Director of Student Services & Public Information at Maitripa College. Maitripa serves as the first Buddhist college in Northwest America.*

## GESHE TSULTRIM TSULGA, RESIDENT TEACHER, KURUKULLA CENTER, MEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS, USA



**G**eshe Tsulga was born in Tibet in 1939. A novice monk by the age of seven, he joined the Je college of Lhasa’s Sera Monastery at 17 to begin his geshe studies. In 1959 he fled Tibet after the Tibetan uprising against Chinese occupation. After a decade in the refugee camp of Buxa Duar, he went to Bylakuppe in South India to help build Sera Monastery in exile. In 1988, he graduated as a geshe lharampa with highest honors at the top of his class.

He arrived in the United States in December 1992, having been requested to come by Lama Zopa Rinpoche to teach at the FPMT centers on the East Coast. Since 1995 he has been resident teacher at Kurukulla Center near Boston. Those who know Geshe Tsulga will attest to his great kindness, humility, and his being a shining example of one who truly embodies the teachings of the Buddha. He has extensive knowledge of Buddhist philosophy and has authored several books published in Tibetan and the latest, *How to Practice the Buddhadharma: A Lamp Illuminating the Path to Liberation*, published in Tibetan and English is forthcoming from Wisdom Publications.

Geshe Tsulga’s tenderness toward his students is remarkable. Debra Thornburg, a close student of Geshe Tsulga, remembers when Ed Softky [obituaries, *Mandala* January-March 2009] died in early October, 2008: “We were holding a Medicine Buddha puja at Kurukulla Center for Ed, who died a few days before in a tragic car accident. Shortly before the puja, Geshe-la’s doctor called and said that a scan showed a growth on his liver. Geshe-la thanked him and told no one – his focus was on Ed and all of us.”

**H**is deep kindness, humility and wisdom have won the hearts of many disciples throughout Italy. After 21 years of imprisonment by the Chinese in Tibet, he fled to India to complete his Geshe degree. It is hard to imagine the courage and perseverance this must have required. An incredible example for us all.

FROM A STUDENT ABOUT TULKU GYATSO RINPOCHE, RESIDENT TEACHER,  
CENTRO TERRA DI UNIFICAZIONE EWAM, ITALY

## GESHE TENZIN ZOPA, RESIDENT TEACHER, LOSANG DRAGPA CENTRE, SELANGOR, MALAYSIA

**B**orn in 1975 to a family of farmers and nomads in the village of Tsum, located in the foothills of the Himalayas, Geshe Tenzin Zopa was the first of seven children.

Ever since Geshe Zopa could crawl, he showed magnetic affection for the late Geshe Lama Konchog (1927–2001). He laughs and says it is because he could stay warm in the thick blanket and could get good tsampa from Geshe Lama Konchog.

Geshe Lama Konchog taught Geshe Tenzin Zopa the Tibetan alphabet when he was only two years old and as he was growing up, Geshe Lama Konchog gave him teachings on Buddhist philosophy, commentary, prayer and ritual as well as sutra and tantra.

In 1984, Geshe Tenzin Zopa was ordained in Kopan Monastery at the age of nine. At Kopan he studied Tibetan language, grammar, English, Nepali, art, lama dance, ritual, puja and philosophy.

In 1990, Geshe Tenzin Zopa started his life in Sera Je Monastery and lived there until 2006. In between his studies, Geshe Tenzin Zopa also attended to Geshe Lama Konchog and traveled with him to Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Europe, India and the various Himalayan regions.

Geshe Tenzin Zopa was not only the top student in all the examinations of debate, writing and memorization in Sera Je, he also completed his studies and graduated with flying colors as a geshe in March of 2007.

Geshe Tenzin Zopa speaks fluent English, Tibetan, Nepali, Hindi and a little Mandarin.

Currently, Geshe Tenzin Zopa is the project director of a number of monasteries and nunneries in the Tsum Valley. He is also undertaking the important responsibility of overseeing the physical, mental and spiritual development of Tenzin Phuntsok Rinpoche, the unmistakable reincarnation of Geshe Lama Konchog.

Zhou Chen, a 10-year-old, feels very close to Geshe Tenzin Zopa: “Geshe Tenzin Zopa is both a



Geshe Tenzin Zopa with Losang Dragpa Centre students on pilgrimage in Nepal

guru and a family member to me. I find him unique because he is a modern monk, with the will to practice Dharma and help others, but also has the ability to relate to kids like me. He has inspired me to do many things and how to be a better person.

“Another reason why Geshe Tenzin Zopa is my idol is because he has a great sense of humor. During a pilgrimage to Nepal, I was eating lunch and he invited me over to eat with him. I felt honored and at the same time nervous. All of a sudden, music started to play and Geshe-la got up, swung his hands around and moved his hips in dance and asked me to join him and soon enough we were both swaying to the music. I think no other geshe would do that.”

Losang Dragpa Centre’s spiritual program coordinator, Yeo Puay Huei, reflects on Geshe Tenzin Zopa’s ability to be everything to everyone: “Using skillful means, Geshe-la is the playful and gentle teacher to the children; the dynamic, cool geshe to the teens in their community projects; he is the quiet ocean of wisdom for adults with problems and he is the thunder of awareness for those difficult to tame. He always finds an appropriate way to guide those in need of Dharma. A rainbow in a bottle, an old lama in a young body, a 24-hour Dharma fountain; all are synonyms for Losang Dragpa Centre’s Geshe Tenzin Zopa.”





## GESHE TASHI TSERING, RESIDENT TEACHER, JAMYANG BUDDHIST CENTRE, LONDON, UK

Geshe Tashi was born in 1958 in the area of Purang, Tibet. When he was only one year old, he fled with his parents to India following the Chinese invasion. At age 13, he was the first young monk to enter the re-founded Sera Me Monastery established in South India. He was a diligent student during very difficult times and graduated with a Lharampa Geshe degree 16 years later.

He taught the monks at Kopan Monastery for a year before moving to Nalanda Monastery in France as assistant teacher to the-then abbot Geshe Jampa Tegchok. After a couple of years there, he kindly accepted to serve as resident teacher at Jamyang Buddhist Centre, London where he has remained for over 15 years.

Shortly after arriving in London, working closely with Jamyang's spiritual program coordinator, Gordon MacDougal, he devised a successful course to help students of Buddhism bring together and deepen their studies of key ideas in Buddhist theory and practice. The *Foundation of Buddhist Thought* course is now an online FPMT-approved course that has graduated over 30 students. Running over two years, it gives a solid foundation in the four noble truths, relative truth and ultimate truth, Buddhist psychology, the awakening mind, emptiness and tantra. Geshe Tashi now has five books published with Wisdom Publications and is working on a sixth book on tantra that will also be published by Wisdom.

As a follow-up to the *Foundation of Buddhist Thought*, again working closely with Gordon MacDougal and Kay Cooper, Geshe Tashi developed a two-and-a-half-years-long online course on the *Lamrim Chenmo*. This introduces Lama Tsongkhapa's work to students through a close reading of the original text informed by the vast oral tradition.

Geshe Tashi has not restricted his activities to London. He teaches regularly in the Jamyang Leeds center and at the Yeshe Study Group in Cumbria and has taught over many years at Jamyang Salisbury. He has also traveled extensively in Europe and most recently to the USA, teaching at the request of FPMT centers and study groups in Spain, France, Switzerland, Austria and in Bay Area of California, USA.

"Geshe Tashi is a thoroughly modern geshe!" confirms Sally Barraud, current director of Jamyang London. "He



has lived in London for about 17 years now and speaks excellent English. From the beginning, he paid careful attention to how Westerners learn best, and then tailored his teachings to fit these methods.

"I was used to following fairly formal traditional behavior when around Tibetan teachers, so it was a difficult transition in my mind when I began work at Jamyang Buddhist Centre to not follow those traditional ways, as I quickly discovered that Geshe Tashi clearly did not want to be treated in this way. Geshe-la is very humble, yet has a commanding pres-

ence, and he has always made himself accessible to staff and students, such as joining the shared lunch offered daily at Jamyang. This lack of formality has endeared him to staff and students alike."

Ven. Lobsang Jinpa from Nalanda Monastery remembers Geshe Tashi's hands-on and practical approach to every aspect of daily life in the center: "When we had a retreat with Khensur Jampa Tegchok one summer, I remember one day the sun was falling on Khensur Jampa Tegchok's face during the teachings. I could see Geshe Tashi looking around for some way to provide shade. In the break, a few of us tried to put a sheet up near the skylight but it wasn't working. Geshe Tashi came in with a potato and some string! We tied one end of the string onto the potato, the other onto the sheet, and then threw the potato over a beam in the ceiling, the weight of which kept it in place."

"Jamyang has been located in an old Victorian courthouse building which was quite derelict when purchased." Sally adds, "Geshe-la was amongst the first to don a builder's apron and get stuck into cleaning up the building and making it habitable. He has lived onsite the longest time of anyone else and literally knows every nut, bolt and nail in the building. As such, I often consult him for advice on many very practical matters."

Geshe Tashi has proven his dedication to Jamyang and his students time and again. Lynne Knight, now a student at Jamyang Bath recalls: "One day towards the end of a grueling schedule (hosting a geshe's conference and leading

a retreat), I caught sight of him slipping away for five minutes' relaxation and looking utterly exhausted. Then the bell went, and there he was in the dining hall, smiling and joking, making sure that everybody had enough to eat and was happy.

"Geshe Tashi is undoubtedly a skilled teacher, and he teaches with every single action. For me the real test is that, whenever I am around him, I am the best person that I can possibly be," Lynne said.



Geshe Konchok taking Om Mani Padme Hum, the resident galah, around on his daily circumambulation around the Thubten Shedrup Ling Monastery and stupa

## GESHE KONCHOK TSERING, RESIDENT TEACHER, ATISHA CENTRE, EAGLEHAWK, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA

Geshe Konchok was born in India in 1963 to Tibetan parents. His parents had fled Tibet for India in 1959 following the Chinese invasion. Geshe Tsering became a novice monk at age twelve, and studied for four years at Gyuto Tantric College. At 22, Geshe Tsering took full ordination from His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and continued his studies for the next 16 years at Sera Je in India. In 1995 Geshe Tsering was awarded his Geshe degree and began teaching at Sera Je. He accepted an invitation from Lama Zopa Rinpoche to teach in the West, and arrived at Atisha Centre, located in Bendigo Australia in May 2003 as the resident teacher.

Noel Maddock, Geshe Konchok's interpreter for seven years, has seen how his authenticity has transformed others. "He convinced a company executive working in the pork industry earning \$300,000 a year to leave his job and purify. He exemplifies dedication to reason and logic, and the law of karma as a means of overcoming all difficulties."

"Blessing babies, animals, houses, blocks of land, praying for those close to death, comforting mourning relatives, public talks, and of course teachings ..." Ven. Thubten Lhundrup, director of Thubten Shedrup Ling Monastery, explains, "I've seen someone totally committed to the teachings and putting them into practice."

One student from Atisha Centre remembers meeting with Geshe Konchog for a personal interview. "I was not sure how he would feel about me seeking advice about a personal family matter rather than asking Dharma questions. I walked into his room slightly overwhelmed by a family crisis. Geshe Konchok was so kind and so wise in his advice. He reminded me to use the situation as practice. I felt much lighter and more in control afterwards."

Ven. Thubten Lhundrup remembers the day a new resident of Thubten Shedrup Ling Monastery (the monastery located a short walk from Atisha Centre) arrived. "There was never any doubt that we were about to take in a new resident. A badly injured galah had been brought to Geshe Konchog. The galah was then taken to the veterinarian who removed a badly damaged wing. This most fortunate bird has been named "Om Mani Padme Hum" (so he/she will hear the mantra often) and accompanies Geshe-la each morning doing korwa [circumambulation] around the monastery buildings and the stupa. Lots of positive imprints for the galah, and a wonderful lesson for all of us."



## MEET KAZHAB TASHI TSERING

I was born in 1937 and earned my Lharmapa Geshe degree in 1984. Following repeated requests by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, I came to teach at Chenrezig Institute in Australia. I arrived in 1990 and stayed for 19 years until His Holiness the Dalai Lama appointed me as lama umdze (chief lama and ritual master) of Gyume Tantric College in South India.

## GESHE THUPTEN WANGCHEN, RESIDENT TEACHER, DORJE CHANG INSTITUTE, AVONDALE, AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

**G**eshe Wangchen was born to Tibetan parents in India in 1966. At the age of 10, he began studying at Sera Je Monastery in South India as a young monk.

In 1998, he was granted the Lharampa Geshe degree. He then furthered his education at the Gyuto Tantric College in Arunachal Pradesh. Following his studies, Geshe Wangchen taught Tibetan and Western students at Kopan Monastery and later taught as a tenured lecturer of Buddhist philosophy at Varanasi University in India in 2001.

At the request of Lama Zopa Rinpoche in 2003, Geshe Wangchen kindly agreed to become the resident teacher at Dorje Chang Institute in Auckland, New Zealand.

Geshe Wangchen is known by his students to be genuinely culturally sensitive and enthusiastic about understanding the minds of Westerners. Anne Stubbings, Geshe Wangchen's English teacher, describes their time together: "During our English lessons we often discussed cross-cultural issues and Geshe-la would share his experiences and observation of adjusting to life in New Zealand. I was impressed by the depth of his curiosity."

Nichole Craig, a student, remarks, "He understands how hard things can be for Westerners, how we complicate simple instructions. After my Dad died, I went to see Geshe Wangchen. He had to repeat himself to me three times in the space of 10 minutes to not worry and relax about what we cannot do, and to focus on what we can do."



Geshe Wangchen with Dharma Kids Club of Dorje Chang Institute, 2006



## GESHE LAMSANG, RESIDENT TEACHER, NAGARJUNA C.E.T. VALENCIA, SPAIN

**B**orn in 1941 in Tibet, Geshe Lamsang holds a doctorate in Buddhist philosophy from Ganden Jangtse Monastery.

Geshe Lamsang has been the resident teacher at Nagarjuna C.E.T in Valencia, Spain since November 2000.

Steve Milton, director of the center recalls the following: "As the new director of the center I asked Geshe Lamsang for any advice that he might have for me. Geshe-la told me to remember that 'the most important thing is the people.' For me, one of the most inspiring things about Geshe-la is the fact that whatever he teaches on the

throne, he is practicing himself in daily life. Geshe-la lives in the center and his door is literally always open. He is happy that people pop in just to say hello or to chat if they have a problem of some sort. There is always a supply of fruit juice and biscuits in Geshe-la's room ready to offer to anyone who might call in."

"Geshe Lamsang was the dream and aspiration for students of the Nagarjuna C.E.T. Valencia," says student Yolanda Bordón. "It took nearly three years of prayers and waiting, trying to overcome problems and obstacles until finally in November of the year 2000 Geshe Lamsang landed at Valencia airport. A group of students went to welcome him at the airport, trying to catch a glimpse of him through the glass doors of arrivals. When at last he appeared, he looked at us all with compassionate curiosity. There we were, his future disciples. Ten years have passed and Geshe Lamsang has conquered the hearts of those who have come to know him."





## GESHE SONAM GYALTSEN, RESIDENT TEACHER, MAITREYA INSTITUUT EMST, NETHERLANDS

At the moment of Geshe Sonam's birth in 1941, his mother could hear the sounds of cymbals and horns as the young Dalai Lama passed their home on the way to the Norbu Lingka, a truly auspicious event for Geshe Sonam's devout family. He was eventually sent to Ganden Jangtse Monastery with three of his brothers, and remained there until 1959, fleeing from the Chinese army with seven friends to take refuge in India.

In 1969 he met Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche in Buxa Duar.

In 1972, he was selected by the Indian government to study at Varanasi to earn an Archarya degree. After this, he went back to the monastery and was awarded the position of umdze, chant master, which for Ganden Jantse

Monastery at the time also carried disciplinary responsibilities. Geshe Sonam admits he was a strict umze, requiring monks to memorize longer texts than usual, and making sure that monks wore the appropriate sets of robes during daily pujas. At the same time, he studied to become a geshe lharampa, completing his final set of exams in 1978.

Although Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche had asked Geshe Sonam earlier to teach in one of their FPMT centers, it was not until 1992, when he arrived at Maitreya Instituut, that he could finally fulfill their request. Since then, he has continuously given teachings and guidance to many eager Dutch students. Clearly appreciative of his knowledge and skill, Maitreya Uitgeverij, Maitreya Instituut's publishing outfit, has translated and printed four of his books.



## GESHE THUBTEN CHONYI, RESIDENT TEACHER, AMITABHA BUDDHIST CENTRE, SINGAPORE

Resident teacher of Amitabha Buddhist Centre (ABC) since 1999, Geshe Chonyi was born in Nepal in 1962. A geshe lharampa, Geshe Chonyi spent more than 20 years at Sera Je Monastery. After spending some time teaching at Kopan Monastery in Nepal, Geshe Chonyi was asked by Lama Zopa Rinpoche to teach in Singapore. Although he originally intended only to stay at the center for three years, an eight-year extension has allowed him to teach FPMT's five-year *Basic Program*. Currently, Geshe Chonyi teaches 60 students, an impressive number for such a rigorous program.

Geshe Chonyi has undeniably made a positive and profound impact on the students from ABC. In celebration of Geshe Chonyi's 10-year anniversary as resident teacher, ABC's community went out of their way to publicly express how much he means to them and to share anecdotes indicative of his generous, kind nature. Alison Wong, one of ABC's *Basic Program* students recalled, "Geshe-la has always made time for me, going out of his way to help and spend time with my family members. He jokes with them at different levels, shows concern and interest, and gives advice to them (for example, to my children about their exams). Once, he even held my husband's hand when he was troubled! I was so touched."

Fiona O'Shaughnessy shared an example of Geshe Chonyi's authentic concern and intimate knowledge of his students: "While on retreat in Kopan in 2003, I was craving Western food. My offering cloud mantras were visualized filled with clouds of cheese sandwiches and cappuccinos. When my lunch was dropped off at the door of my room the next day, along with the chapattis and curry there was a great big block of cheese, and a knife. Baffled, I looked at the monk from the kitchen as if I was hallucinating. 'From Geshe Chonyi,' he said, and walked off."



**GESHE GELEK CHODHA,**  
RESIDENT TEACHER,  
KADAMPA CENTER, RALEIGH,  
NORTH CAROLINA, USA

**G**eshe Gelek was born in Tibet, the eldest of five children. At the age of seven, Geshe Gelek went to South India to live at Sera Je Monastery and become a monk. He earned his Lharampa Geshe degree in 1997, continuing on to the Gyume Tantric College to learn the intricacies of tantric ritual. At the suggestion of his classmate, Yangsi Rinpoche, Geshe Gelek was requested by Lama Zopa Rinpoche to come to Kadampa Center in North Carolina as resident teacher in 1999. Since his arrival, the center has benefited from his knowledge and presence.

Robbie Watkins, the center’s current director, sums up Geshe Gelek’s contribution to the center pithily: “He represents the teachings, he doesn’t just mouth them.” Robbie goes further, “He has taken the effort to present the teachings in English, even though it means a lot more work for him. That’s a tremendous help to all the students. And he has a great sense of humor, I really appreciate that. He’s very practical and down to earth. It makes it easy to deal with him both on an administrative level and for people to relate to him as a teacher.”

Describing how she earned the nickname “Steep,” Stephanie Smith, a close student of Geshe Gelek, recalls, “He used to call me Steep. I thought he was saying Steve. I kept saying my name is Stephanie, and he said, ‘I know that. I’m calling you Steep, because you’re going straight up. You’re trying to jump right up the mountain.’ I took it as a Dharma name meant to inspire me.”

Another student remembers just how funny Geshe Gelek can be: “Someone was asking about karma, saying it’s not fair because they don’t remember committing these deeds but still have to pay. He said, ‘Yeah, it’s like farting in your sleep. You don’t remember farting but you still have the stink.’”



**MEET GESHE LOSANG TENGYE**

**I** was born in 1927 and earned my Lharampa Geshe degree in 1968. I was sent to Thailand by His Holiness the Dalai Lama to study the differences between the vinaya traditions of South-east Asia and Tibet. Lama Yeshe requested me to become resident teacher of Institut Vajra Yogini in 1978. I taught sutra and tantra there for 25 years, and was simultaneously the co-abbot of Lhin Son Monastery, an important Vietnamese monastery in Paris. I retired in 2003 and Institut Vajra Yogini has kindly supported me since then – they even offered me a small house on their property.



**GESHE LOBSANG DOGA,**  
RESIDENT TEACHER,  
TARA INSTITUTE, BRIGHTON EAST,  
VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA

**B**orn in 1935 in the Kham region of Tibet, Geshe Doga, was admitted into his local monastery at the age of seven. At 17, he went to Lhasa to study at Sera Monastery. Seven years later, in 1959, Geshe Doga was forced to flee Tibet in response to Chinese occupation, making his way to the Tibetan refugee camp in Buxa. There, he

spent several years not only completing his traditional monastic education in preparation for his geshe exams, but also studying Sanskrit at Varanasi University and earning an Archarya degree.

Geshe Doga became a geshe lharampa in 1982, and it was then that Lama Yeshe asked if he would teach the monks at Kopan Monastery. Geshe Doga agreed and taught there for several years until Lama Yeshe asked him to move to Australia to become the resident teacher for Atisha Centre. While at Atisha, he would occasionally teach at Tara Institute, and was eventually asked to serve there as resident teacher.

For 16 years, Geshe Doga has skillfully and patiently served Tara Institute, helping them move into a larger building and supporting a growing community.

Ven. Michael Lobsang, Geshe Doga's translator for the past three years, describes the time spent

continually guiding and benefiting others: "A typical day for Geshe-la begins around 5:00 A.M. with meditation and prayers until 11:30 A.M. This is followed by appointments with students and members who seek guidance and direction in their Dharma practices and daily lives. He listens patiently to every possible distress and complaint, and imparts valuable advice which has transformed many lives for the better. In between his appointments he is either doing continuous prayers with mala in hand or totally immersed in reading scriptures ... From mid-February to mid-December, Geshe-la never has a break, year after year. On any given teaching evening, the gompa is packed with no less than 65 students. Even during his annual White Tara retreat, which is dedicated to the long life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, he doesn't take a break from teaching."



**H**is lifestyle of humility and contagious smile are an inspiration and great example for us.

FROM A STUDENT ABOUT GESHE THUBTEN CHODEN, RESIDENT TEACHER, NAGARJUNA C.E.T. MADRID, SPAIN



Geshe Sherab blessing prayer flags for Losar with students

## GESHE THUBTEN SHERAB, TOURING FPMT TEACHER

**B**orn in Nepal in 1967, Geshe Sherab entered Kopan Monastery at the age of nine, completed his geshe studies at Sera Je in South India, followed by a year at Gyume Tantric College. From 2005-2009, he served as headmaster of Kopan Monastery's school, overseeing debate training and tantric training activities.

As a touring FPMT teacher, Geshe Sherab has made a significant impact in several communities in North America, particularly the Canadian students from Gendun Drubpa Study Group. Their ambitious project to build a nine-foot (three-

meter) stupa has been generously supported by Geshe Sherab.

Student Catherine Whitman saw in Geshe Sherab many inspiring qualities: "Being in Geshe Sherab's presence is a precious gift in itself – one that is perhaps even transformative in nature, as he shares his knowledge and wisdom so freely, always with patience, compassion and gentle humor. At the same time, Geshe Sherab exudes a sense of strong confidence and he displays tremendous focus and concentration as well as a quiet, yet unmistakable aura of authority."

"The quality of his teachings is outstanding," share Don and Sylvia Doherty, "He is able to explain complex concepts in a masterfully clear and simple way, giving us just the right amount of information, tailoring his explanations and examples to our Western mind to help us understand."

Actually, the main purpose for a Dharma teacher to go to the center is purely to teach Dharma. At the same time, the teacher also tries to maintain a harmonious community, to inspire people to practice Dharma, to establish a strong Dharma community in the center and to advise students how to lead the center based on Lama Zopa Rinpoche's intention and advices.

KHENRINPOCHE LAMA LHUNDRUP

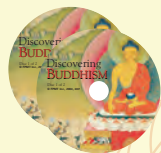
In brief, to whichever center you are attached, it is very important to know that your main potential should be used for their service, including the introduction of Dharma, and for the benefit of the members of the center. If you serve them with a compassionate mind, then you will earn their respect and friendship accordingly.

ADVICE TO FPMT GESHES FROM HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA IN 2001

Mandala would like to offer general recognition to all of the current FPMT geshes not mentioned in this article who are equally valuable and noteworthy as those mentioned. ☸

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