

## **BIOGRAPHY**

Geshe Losang Jamphel was born on 1<sup>st</sup> February 1961 in a small village, on the Lhasa-Tsetang Road, in the Lhoka area of Tibet, about 40 km south of Lhasa,

His parents were simple peasant farmers who worked in the fields to provide for their eight children. The Chinese allowed him to attend school for four or five years, but at the age of 14, they changed the law and all Tibetan children had to work rather than go to school. He was made to cut down the forests that covered the mountains surrounding his village. The trees were so large and old that he had to use explosives to fell many of them. The wood was used to build and heat the local Chinese army garrison. And now the once lush forests are totally gone. If you look at the area using Google Earth, you can see that there is not a single tree left!

After the death of Mao Tse Tung in 1976, the Chinese grip over religious freedom in Tibet gradually loosened. Up to then, Geshe-la had never seen a single ordained person. They simply didn't seem to exist in Tibet. However, from a young age he had heard a lot about sangha, monasteries, and the practice of Buddhism from the elders in his village and surroundings. Those stories moved his mind to a great extent and eventually generated a strong desire to follow the Buddhist path. In 1979 he secretly received getsül and in 1981 gelong ordination at Ganden Monastery near Lhasa. He was among the first group of Tibetans to take monastic vows in U-Tsang (Central Tibet) since the Chinese takeover in 1959.

Having heard about the possibility to meet His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala and to study the traditional monastic curriculum at Sera, Ganden, or Drepung, in 1982, Geshe-la decided to flee Tibet and become a refugee in India. This was an extremely difficult decision for him to make as he was very close to his family and in particular to his mother; but Geshe-la had a very strong wish to see His Holiness, whom he, like every Tibetan, considers his spiritual father. Due to the grave danger involved, he couldn't even tell his teacher or parents, but had to leave Ganden secretly. Thus, he began the arduous journey over the Himalayas into Nepal – a journey that took him three months to complete.

Once safely in Kathmandu, Geshe-la and the five monks that he travelled with were able to send a photo to their parents, showing that they were still alive. Geshe-la has not been able to return to Tibet and wasn't able to see his parents, or two brothers, before they died.

Geshe-la went to Sera Je Monastery in the South Indian state of Karnataka and entered Tsethang Khangtsen. The first six years there were the most difficult years of his life. For six years, Geshe-la lived on a porch exposed to the Indian sun and monsoon rains, surviving on one meal a day. Only until a kind English person offered to sponsor his studies by sending the equivalent of £10 per month, could Geshe-la afford to move into a shared room and eat regularly.

Geshe-la studied very hard and devoted all his free time to debates and self-study, distinguishing himself amongst his peers in both the debate yard and in examinations. As one would expect from such a humble master, at his insistence, none of his outstanding achievements can be listed here.

In 1998, he successfully passed the Dratshang (Sera-je) Geshe examination and, in 1999, the Monlam examination resulting in the Lharampa Geshe degree. Geshe-la then continued his studies at Gyuto tantric college.

Due to his outstanding scholarly results, Geshe-la was offered teaching positions in Sikkim (at the largest Karma Kagyu Monastery), Varanasi (at the Tibetan University of Higher Studies), and Nalanda Monastery in France. Following the outcome of various divinisations, Geshe-la accepted the position at Nalanda Monastery, where he duly arrived on 11 January 2000.

Geshe-la taught at Nalanda full-time from 2000 to 2003. Since 2004, he has been dividing his time and energy between Nalanda and Nagarjuna Centre in Barcelona, as well as regularly teaching in Paris and Granada. Despite this heavy schedule, Geshe-la has fulfilled his dream of establishing a serious study programme at Nalanda, one which is appropriate for a monastic institution. Gen is also teaching the Basic Programme at Nagarjuna Centre in Barcelona and Kalachakra Centre in Paris.