

**Advice to Geshe
Conference by
His Eminence Ling
Rinpoche**

**Hosted by Kopan Monastery,
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Khenrinpoche Geshe Chonyi: Refuge protector, Vajradhara, Ling Rinpoche, paying respects with our three doors, today the geshe's of FPMT request you to give some advice. There are geshees from fourteen countries, as well as the textual teachers from Kopan Jangchub Choling Monastery and Kachoe Gakyil Ling Nunnery, and FPMT Board members.

Ling Rinpoche:

I bow my head to you, foremost of the Shakyas,
Whose body is formed by ten million perfections, virtues, and excellence;
Whose speech fulfills the hopes of infinite transmigratory beings;
Whose mind perceives all objects of knowledge.¹

First, I sincerely pay respects to our incomparably kind, supreme lord of this entire world of gods and humans, great guide to peace and happiness, the highest refuge protector, great seer of all suffering beings, His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Today the various geshees of FPMT's centers are gathered together, headed by the Abbot of Kopan, monks, nuns, Rinpoche's attendant Roger, and all present whose names there is no need to mention individually; to all of you I greet with *tashi delek*.

You can hear right?

We are all of the same intention, all of us gathered here from all corners of the world due to Lama Thubten Yeshe and Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche through great effort founding Kopan Monastery. For such an opportunity to arise often is very difficult. All of us always have many projects, much work, teaching, serving, and engaging in various vast endeavors. Therefore, we should consider this an important and meaningful occasion and make the most of this gathering.

The main thing is to fulfill the mission of FPMT from its founding by the holy Gen Thubten Yeshe. From Tibet he was a great scholar of the classical scriptures who was competent in his studies. He was someone with a relaxed attitude who could think in a vast way. Together with that, he as a very humble person who always had the sincere wish to benefit others. He went to Buxa and completed his entire studies.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche was at first a student of the holy Gen Rabten, then, Gen Thubten Yeshe also being a student of Gen Rabten, gradually Gen Thubten Yeshe came to be the main spiritual teacher of Zopa Rinpoche. Beginning like this together, Lama Thubten Yeshe and Zopa Rinpoche first founded Kopan Monastery and then gradually founded dharma centers in different countries in Europe, America, Australia and so forth. At that time people knew nothing of Buddhism or even of Tibetans in those countries. Gen Yeshe was one of the pioneers letting others in the world know about Tibet and Buddhism.

¹ Lama Tsongkhapa, *A Hymn of Experience (Lam rim nyam gur)*, as translated by Ven. Joan Nicell and published in the *FPMT Retreat Prayer Book*, 2020.

In those days things were not so easy to do as now. These two disregarded countless hardships and made strenuous efforts with the singular aim to spread the Buddhist teachings and bring happiness to transmigratory beings.

They didn't have the eight worldly concerns, or intentions mixed with a desire for wealth and fame. Foremost was simply the wish to benefit sentient beings and spread the teachings. First, they say the widespread mental suffering of Westerners, due to this many bodily illnesses, and due to this many inauspicious events, and some who even take their own lives or have to take all kinds of medicines due to mental illness. In order to help them they offered the nectar of Dharma and so have been able to extensively contribute to the welfare of transmigratory beings. With this as a substantial cause, now the Buddha's teachings in general and especially those of the gentle protector, Lama Tsongkhapa, are widely spread throughout the world. This is a very good development, and due largely to the tremendous efforts of Gen Thubten Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche who has continued his work until now.

These two lamas always took His Holiness the Dalai Lama's own advice and guidance as a basis for all their activities. They really followed His Holiness' advice from the heart, not just in mere words or as a show in some worldly way, but sincerely from the depths of their hearts with single-pointed faith in His Holiness. Otherwise, if one acts insincerely, although there may be some short-term success, it's not stable and in the long-term falls apart. After some time, three, four, or five years, the reality becomes clear. But Zopa Rinpoche and Lama Yeshe have always done things with single-minded focus and steadfast determination, year after year increasing their activities and spreading the Buddha's teachings more and more. As it says [in the *Final Lamrim Prayer* by Lama Tsongkhapa]:

With my heart going out with great compassion
In whatever direction the most precious teachings
Have not yet spread, or once spread have declined,
May I reveal this treasure of happiness and aid.

Where the teachings had not spread before, they newly spread them, and where they had declined, they restored them. As I mentioned before, in Europe and America they founded centers, and also in Asia, in places like Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan and other countries. There are over one-hundred FPMT centers now. And these were all founded not with a worldly intention to make a profit or something; rather they were all developed with a pure wish to benefit transmigratory sentient beings. Since they were developed with such a vast intention, they are incredibly beneficial to the Buddha's teachings. Much benefit has come about.

Although, this vast benefit has come about through the efforts of Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche, of course it is impossible for them to directly do everything. Therefore, much of the actual work has consistently been done by the many geshe without whom it would be impossible. Many geshe have been invited to the various centers in Australia, Europe and other places as you all know. These geshe are true masters, possessing the essence of both scholarship and spiritual

accomplishment, learned in both sutra and tantra, able to explain any topic with ease, each gaining more and more renown. For example, Geshe Jampa Thegchok, Gen Jampa Gyatso, Gen Thubten Löden, and on and on; so many. There's no need to list all their names. Through such fully qualified geshe coming to the centers FPMT has truly been able to produce huge results. Geshe from the Three Seats are not afraid of anything.

Therefore, until now, all have followed the advice and intentions of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, as well as fundamentally following the wishes of Zopa Rinpoche. This is excellent. I rejoice and thank you all on this occasion, both those present now and those who were unable to attend.

Now, as for the future, on one hand this is a sad situation. Last year the holy Lama Zopa Rinpoche, not due to obstacles but, although his body had declined a little, in terms of age he was not so very old, suddenly passed away. It was extremely sad. At that time, I was in Switzerland. At first Roger contacted me and said, "There is some difficulty breathing. Please make prayers." I said of course but I didn't think it was anything very serious. Then later he contacted me to say that Rinpoche's breath had stopped. It was like something I couldn't believe or was beyond my comprehension. I didn't know what to do for some moments and my mind was very dejected. Gradually there was no choice but to recognize that fact that his intentions had been completed [i.e. that he had passed away.] I was very sad and wondered what could have been his motive in doing this. I thought, "He could have lived another five years at least if not ten. Why did he pass away now?" My mind turned like that. But no matter how many thoughts like that you have, once the lama has decided to absorb his sacred will, there's nothing to be done about it.

When Rinpoche was alive, he would often come to see me and I would always request him to live long and continue to take care of his health in order to continue his vast activities as he had been doing. Rinpoche would always reply saying something like, "Yes, I'll do just that," so I had no suspicion that he would absorb his intentions.

Therefore, in such a sad circumstance as this, it is extremely important for all the geshe to meet together. There is nothing more important at this time than to support the FPMT. It was predicted that the Buddha's teachings will remain for 5,000 years in this world. Now 2,500 years have passed so it is possible that the teachings will remain for another 2,500 years. But for the teachings of both scripture and realization to remain depends on making effort in both scholarship and practice. For this purpose, it is important for the spiritual teachers giving teachings, and especially all the geshe who are still alive, to continue today to make efforts as they have so well in the past until now. It is important for those who've gathered for this meeting to share their intentions to accomplish the holy wishes of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and especially the intentions of the respected Lama Zopa Rinpoche as you all have been long acquainted with Rinpoche's wishes.

You all have a great variety of experiences to share through having taught in different countries and regions. For example, the experiences of those serving in Europe are certainly different from those serving in Asia, and those are different again from others serving in America and so forth. There's

definitely much that you can learn from each other, also, such a meeting as this is rare, it's not an opportunity you have all the time, so it's important to have meaningful discussions.

One of the main things that Lama Zopa Rinpoche would say to me again and again is, "Now there are many FPMT centers. The organization is vast. I'm very concerned that the Buddhism offered in these centers does not go down the road of 'new age Buddhism.'" Rinpoche would use that exact phrase, "new age Buddhism" which seems to mean something like explaining Buddhism according to current ideas. Rinpoche would say again and again, "Our centers shouldn't go this route. This is my biggest concern." Therefore, it is important to continue the lineage of explanation according to our uncommon methods; to give the oral transmissions of lamrim and lojong in line with the uncommon practice instructions of this lineage handed down by holy beings of the past. Until now, great effort has been made to teach by taking these as a basis and the situation is very good, but in order for it to remain so it is important for all to take care not to let those customs decline.

In general, it is important to teach the Dharma in accordance with the times. When Shakyamuni Buddha himself lived and taught, he spoke with consideration for the dispositions, attitudes, and latent capacities of the students. To those who could fathom selflessness he taught selflessness, to those who could not, due to the needs of the moment, he said that a self exists and so forth. There are reasons to adjust the way of presenting Dharma in accordance with the disposition and attitudes of the audience. However, these days new age Buddhism is spreading in the West. I don't clearly understand what it is and I didn't have a chance to ask Rinpoche more about it.

The gist seems to be that we should take as a basis the ways of explanation and practice that have been passed down by many holy beings of the past. There is certainly some room for making the teachings easier to understand, but the sequential way of instruction handed down from past masters in the Tibetan tradition is really something outstanding. For example, the way of teaching impermanence, suffering, emptiness, and selflessness in that order benefits the mind; and likewise, there is no superior method for ripening the minds of disciples then guiding them in sequentially generating of the attitudes of renunciation, then bodhichitta, and then the correct view in their continuums. Taking such methods as a basis for explanation is something that has been done until now, and it is very important to continue doing so in the future. It seems to me something significant to discuss and share your experiences related to this.

There are certainly those who are responsible for giving guidance to and managing the FPMT. Because there is no limit for improving things, it's important to not just preserve what has been accomplished but rather consider how to develop further. If all can annually meet to have earnest and frank discussions about ways to gradually develop the organization, I'm sure you will be able to succeed in your aims and produce good results.

This is all I had in mind to say. Khenrinpoche asked me to give some advice but I'm not so audacious as to offer advice. I don't really have any advice to give since in terms of knowledge, studies, and years of experience I'm not qualified. However, my main reason for meeting with you all is to discuss

Rinpoche's holy wishes and, to speak directly, to stoke your determination and offer my support in whatever endeavors you decide on. I will genuinely make prayers for all of you.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche and also Gen Thubten Yeshe, both of them, of course followed the advice of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and also repeatedly consulted with the Two Tutors, took their advice to heart and showed great respect for the Two Tutors in their affairs. Lama Zopa Rinpoche for example, often met with the former Kyabje Ling Rinpoche from a very young age, from sometime in the 1960's probably. At that time Kyabje Ling Rinpoche was somewhat ill and stayed at Ghum Monastery to restore his health. He stayed there for almost one year. During that time, Zopa Rinpoche also stayed there, perhaps right when he came from Tibet, before going to Buxa. At that time, I think Rinpoche was about thirteen, fourteen, or fifteen and he became like a student of Ling Rinpoche. He would regularly wait on Ling Rinpoche, serving him food, and each day going for walks with him in the evenings. He would always meet Rinpoche at that time. While eating, they would often listen to the radio together; at that time there was the All India Radio. They became like teacher and disciple, and Rinpoche was like a member of the [Ling Rinpoche's] household (labrang) acting as an attendant, serving tea and food and so forth. They would also play ball sometimes, hitting a small ball back and forth, ping-pong. Many things like that happened by which they first made a connection. Then Zopa Rinpoche went down to Buxa to study. Later, from Ling Rinpoche, Zopa Rinpoche received many teachings on lamrim, lojong, Yamantaka initiation, and similarly many detailed instructions on sutra and tantra. Thereby, Zopa Rinpoche formed a very close bond with Ling Rinpoche and regarded him dearly.

When I was small, Rinpoche would also come often to see me. He would often come, talk, and treat me very affectionately. Gradually, Rinpoche took me into his confidence, talked with me about all kinds of affairs, asked for my ideas about things and trusted me like one of his own. It was really nice. Therefore, as I said before, it was very upsetting that Rinpoche suddenly passed away. Now there's nothing to do. But it's important for all of us gathered here to create causes for a good unmistakable reincarnation to come very quickly, one who is able to take responsibility to continue whatever enlightened deeds remain unfinished. It is extremely important for all of us who have a direct or indirect connection with Rinpoche to pray for this. I take this opportunity to request you all to continually make extensive prayers that Rinpoche's unmistakable reincarnation can quickly come, that Rinpoche's activities can be continued, and that all the aims of the FPMT organization to benefit sentient beings in a vast way through the various centers are successful.

I don't have anything else especially special to say. I'm very glad that you all have gathered together there. Thank you.

The main thing is for Kopan Khenrinpoche, the geshe and all assembled to be harmonious in pure morality, see that FPMT is stable, and that all activities are increased even more before. I will also make as much effort as I can for the same. All of you please continually do so as well. I'm happy to have met with you all. Thank you sincerely. Tashi delek.

Venerable Michael Yeshe: Kyabje Dorje Chang Ling Rinpoche, headed by Kopan Khenrinpoche, on behalf of all the geshe here assembled, the entire organization of the FPMT, and we three organizers of this conference together respectfully offer our highest sincere thanks for this advice and extensive guidance. It is incomparably kind. We of the FPMT pledge that we will strive to act exactly in accordance with the holy wishes of Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche and Lama Yeshe in working for the benefit of transmigratory sentient beings by preserving the teachings. We request you again and again to please pray that we are able to act in accordance with your guidance.

Ling Rinpoche: Yes, of course. Thank you. Tashi delek.