



LAMA YESHE, PASHUPATINATH TEMPLE,  
NEPAL, 1980. PHOTO BY TOM CASTLES,  
COURTESY OF LAMA YESHE WISDOM  
ARCHIVE.



A MONUMENTAL ACCOMPLISHMENT:

T H E M A K I N G O F

# Big Love

BY LAURA MILLER

The creation of FPMT founder Lama Yeshe's official biography has been a monumental task. Work on the forthcoming book, *Big Love: The Life and Teachings of Lama Yeshe*, has spanned three decades. To understand the significance of this project as it draws to a close, *Mandala* talked to three key people, all early students of Lama Yeshe, about the production of the book: Adele Hulse, *Big Love*'s author; Peter Kedge, who initiated and helped fund the project; and Nicholas Ribush, who is overseeing the book's publication at the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive.

*Big Love: The Life and Teachings of Lama Yeshe* begins with a simple dedication: "This book is dedicated to you, the reader. If you met Lama during your life, may you feel his presence here. If you never met Lama, then come with us—walk up the hill to Kopan and meet Lama Yeshe, as thousands did, without knowing anything of Buddhism or Tibet. That came later."

Within the biography's nearly 1,400 pages, Lama Yeshe comes to life. And his infectious love and wisdom shine through the stories of hundreds of students, accompanied by excerpts from Lama Yeshe's letters and teachings, and more than 1,500 photographs. *Big Love* also includes two forewords—one by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the other by Lama Zopa Rinpoche—and an introduction by Jonathan Landaw.

Lama Yeshe (1935–84), affectionately called "Lama" by his students, was one of the early Tibetan refugee scholar-monks to offer instruction in Tibetan Buddhism to Westerners traveling in India and Nepal in the 1960s and '70s. "In the early days, whenever Lama gave a public talk, it was the first time many in the audience had ever seen or heard a Tibetan lama," Lama Zopa Rinpoche said in his foreword to *Big Love*.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche met Lama Yeshe and became his heart disciple at the camp established in Buxa Duar, India, in 1959 for

refugee Tibetan monks. Together, the two lamas encountered their first Western student, Zina Rachevsky, in 1967 in Darjeeling. The following year, they went to Nepal, where they soon established Kopan Monastery on the outskirts of Kathmandu and later founded the international FPMT organization.

"Since then, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has been to many countries and now has a great reputation and has received many awards," Rinpoche continued. "Thanks to many other lamas as well, there are now many Buddhists in the West, but back then, for many people it was the first time to hear the teachings and they came out of curiosity, to see what a Tibetan lama was. But within an hour and a half, wow! Lama touched so many people. Lama's special way was not like other people, no question."

"In my view, this biography is deeply significant," Peter Kedge told *Mandala* in August 2019. Peter arrived at Kopan in March 1972. He had come from England, traveling overland to Nepal, and was at the second and third Kopan courses. Over the years, Peter offered service to Lama Yeshe and the FPMT organization in countless ways, including traveling as Lama Yeshe's attendant from 1976 to '79 and serving on the FPMT Inc. Board of Directors. In addition, Peter initiated the creation of *Big Love*.





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special and were a bit superior to others, he pulled you down. He gave everyone what they needed.”

“He was flesh and blood, sneezing and spitting, and laughing and having a body that was incredibly painful to be in,” Adele said. “I just want to introduce people to Lama Yeshe, so when they finish the book, they feel like they’ve met him. So he enters their hearts, and they own him in their hearts, and he’s there forever. They can feel him. They can smell him. They can hear him.”

Nicholas Ribush came to Kopan in November 1972, traveling indirectly from his home in Australia, and attended the third Kopan course. He’s held many positions within the FPMT organization since then and currently serves as director of the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive. “I’ve been involved in editing and publishing Dharma teachings, mainly Lama Yeshe’s and Lama Zopa Rinpoche’s, for more than forty-five years, and this is by far the biggest publishing project that I and the FPMT have ever undertaken,” Nick, who co-founded Wisdom Publications with Lama Yeshe in 1975, told *Mandala* in August 2019.

In addition to sharing the life story of Lama Yeshe, Nick noted how *Big Love* also serves to outline the early history of the FPMT organization. “Most of today’s FPMT students never met Lama Yeshe and, I would guess, have little idea of how the Foundation started and developed. So it’s important to have an official record of all that, and this book is it.”

“Nick’s the perfect publisher for this book,” said Adele, who has continued to be involved with the book’s production through the fact-checking and proofing process. “No one else would have done as much work, put in as much detail, and have been as careful as Nick has been.”

Arguably, Nick’s greatest contribution to the biography has been filling its pages with hundreds of photographs. “I started collecting historic FPMT photos when I was running Wisdom Publications in London in the 1980s, and we had started publishing what was supposed to be the FPMT magazine, *Wisdom* (the forerunner of *Mandala*). That effort fizzled out, but a large collection of photos remained. When I left Wisdom to start the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive in 1996, I took some of those photos with me and we started digitizing them around 2005,” Nick explained.

“When we signed the contract to publish *Big Love* in 2008, I realized we needed many more photos to properly illustrate the story, so Wisdom kindly handed over the rest of the relevant photos still in its possession, and then we wrote to all the early FPMT centers and students asking them to send us what they had as well. Around that time, we brought in David Zinn, a Dharma student and digital imaging specialist we knew, and he brought with him years of experience and expertise, which helped enormously, as thousands of photos, slides, and negatives began pouring in.”

David scanned and organized these images. Then he and Nick

went through the manuscript word for word, selecting 1,550 photos to go with the text from the more than 100,000 images they had collected. The result is color photos placed right next to the accompanying text throughout the entire two volumes of *Big Love*.

“Our guiding principle has been for the book to be as accurate and as beautiful as possible, as a tribute to our beloved Lama Yeshe,” Nick said.

Both Adele and Nick point out that there are more stories and photos of Lama Yeshe out there. And they encourage anyone who has historic, FPMT-related photos and stories to send them to the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive. Materials not included in the printed version of *Big Love* will be published on the book’s companion webpage at [LamaYeshe.com](http://LamaYeshe.com).

Lama Yeshe’s profound impact on Western Buddhism as a whole is impossible to measure. *Big Love*, however, illustrates his lasting importance on the personal scale.

“Lama Thubten Yeshe changed our lives. He taught us how to live, raise our children, and die. He also introduced us to the unlimited potential of our minds and the value of being of service to others,” Adele said.

“Lama’s life work—everything Lama did for Kopan and the FPMT—was accomplished in just fifteen years from 1969 to 1984. From basic introductory teachings to a handful of students on Sunday afternoons at Kopan to mahamudra, the six yogas of Naropa, and other highest yoga tantra practices, Lama methodically delivered a structured path from beginning up to enlightenment,” said Peter Kedge.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche summed up how integral Lama Yeshe is to the FPMT organization: “[T]hose who meet the Dharma by coming to an FPMT center do so because of the kindness of Lama Yeshe. Even though center students may not have met Lama, they learn from the resident teachers; all their education happened because of Lama Yeshe. Therefore they, and we, are all being guided by Lama Yeshe.”

## HOW TO ORDER *BIG LOVE*

As *Mandala* goes to press, *Big Love: The Life and Teachings of Lama Yeshe* is being indexed and publication is expected in December 2019. Thanks to the kindness of many benefactors who contributed to the book’s publication, Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive has been able to keep the purchase price down. *Big Love*, which is being published as a set of two hard cover volumes nestled in a slipcase, will be available for US\$85.

For more information and to order a copy, please go to:  
[www.LamaYeshe.com/BigLove](http://www.LamaYeshe.com/BigLove).