

# GESHE LOBSANG TENGYE

92, died at Institut Vajra Yogini in Marzens, France,  
on October 23, 2019, of old age

By Ven. Thubten Sherab (Michel Henry)

On Wednesday, October 23, 2019, our world lost one of the last Tibetan geshe lhampas born and educated in Tibet before 1959. Geshe Lobsang Tengye-la naturally passed away at the age of ninety-two in his room at Institut Vajra Yogini, where he lived for forty years. Geshe-la was not sick and was in no pain. He just gradually showed the aspect of old age and slowly, like the fading light of a candle—peacefully and without the slightest fear—stopped breathing on Friday, October 19, showing us his final teaching on impermanence.

Geshe-la stayed in clear light meditation for four days. Yangsi Rinpoche, Geshe-la's teacher in his previous life, immediately came from the United States to take care of Geshe-la's passing. Geshe Tenzin Loden, our resident geshe, along with Geshe Lobsang Jamphel and Geshe Jamphel Gyaltzen from nearby Nalanda Monastery, did pujas every day following the advice of His Holiness the 104th Ganden Tripa Lobsang Tenzin Rinpoche, who was a close friend of Geshe Tengye-la.

If you want to see the realizations of a lama then look at the way he died! All those who were present witnessed the extraordinary death of this great hidden yogi, far beyond our Western understanding of the death process. While he was clinically dead his holy mind continued to bless the unceasing flow of devotees who came to pay homage and pray in groups of four. The skin of the now-definitely-inanimate body stayed soft and kept a fresh and vivid color. There was no bad odor. Everyone could feel the peaceful and profound blessings.

The subtle consciousness of our Guru finally left the holy body. Yangsi Rinpoche and Geshe Loden performed the final rituals and prepared the corpse for cremation.

Geshe-la didn't want a traditional cremation. Therefore, on Monday, October 28, a mass of people, including thirty-five monks and nuns, came to see off this Tibetan monk who had intimately changed their lives before respectfully accompanying his body to the crematorium in Albi.

Geshe-la wasn't only a great scholar who taught intensively for more than thirty years. He took care and changed, as well as saved, the lives of his students. For many of us, he was more than a father: he deeply knew our lives even better than we knew ourselves.

Born in Lhatse, Tibet, in 1927, Geshe-la joined the local monastery at the age of six. He escaped to India following the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1959, and joined the Buxa Chogar refugee camp in Buxa Duar, West Bengal, where he successfully completed his lharampa geshe degree.

He was sent to Bangkok, Thailand, in 1970 and lived there for seven years comparing the Tibetan and Thai traditions on vinaya.

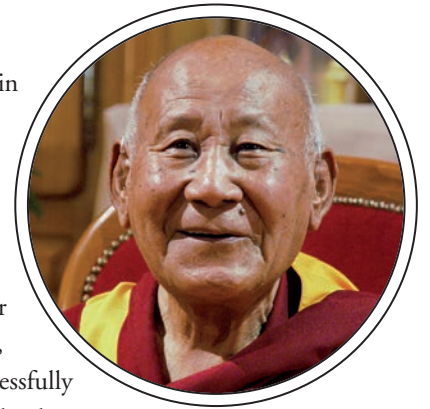
In 1978 Geshe-la came to France to live in the Vietnamese Linh Son pagoda, where he became the co-abbot.

In 1980 Lama Thubten Yeshe requested that Geshe-la become Institut Vajra Yogini's resident geshe. Due to his infinite patience, wisdom, and compassion, Institut Vajra Yogini is now one of the biggest FPMT centers in Europe.

Geshe-la touched our hearts and lives through his clear inspiring teachings, his great kindness, infinite patience, perseverance, and pure ethic.

When asked the question, "What will be Geshe Tengye-la's legacy?" Yangsi Rinpoche, after a short moment of a silent reflection, answered with a lovely and soft smile: "Probably his laugh."

Sometimes while Geshe-la was teaching we would notice a slight movement of his lips and his eyes beginning to sparkle. Without understanding Tibetan we could tell Geshe-la had a good joke in mind. It was the kind of joke that showed the nonsense of our disturbing thoughts and the absurdity of our mental hallucinations. It was the kind of joke that made you laugh when you heard it, and you would remember it later on at a time when you were under the power of a similar type of projection. When we saw this movement of his lips and sparkling eyes we knew Geshe-la was progressively developing his story, and then his smile would gradually transform into an irresistible laugh until he had tears of laughter! And we were all laughing to tears with him!



*Precious Geshe Lobsang Tengye-la, pure manifestation of the three kayas of all the buddhas: may our prayers help create the conditions for us to meet you again so that you may continue to guide us on the path. May the illusory reflection of your wisdom and infinite compassion continue to help and guide more and more pitiful beings up to perfect enlightenment.*

---

# VEN. TENSIN DRONSEL

50, died at Chenrezig Nuns Community in Eudlo, Queensland, Australia, on June 28, 2019, of cancer

---

By Ven. Thubten Chokyi

Ven. Tenzin Dronsel died from cancer on Friday, June 28, at Chenrezig Nuns Community, Australia. Her consciousness departed the body on Sunday, June 30. Ven. Dronsel, 50, was ordained by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in February 2018 and returned to Chenrezig Institute, where she had been a student for a number of years, this time joining the Chenrezig Nuns Community.

On August 18 Chenrezig Institute commemorated the forty-ninth day of her passing by offering *Guru Puja* with tsog attended by many Sangha and lay members of the Chenrezig community. An earlier private memorial service at the Garden of Enlightenment, officiated by Ven. Lhagsam, was a celebration of her ordained life by family and friends. Ven. Dronsel had been adamant she didn't want eulogies or remembrances of her lay life. Instead she wanted to offer everyone chai and cake. She also made extensive offerings to Chenrezig Institute and Chenrezig Nuns Community and to the Nalanda Masters garden project that was just getting under way under the guidance of Geshe Phuntsok Tsultrim, Chenrezig Institute's resident geshe.

Right after ordination, Ven. Dronsel attended the retreat with Lama Zopa Rinpoche in Bendigo in 2018 and tirelessly assisted in the gompa, always with an enduring smile and skies of "thank you" to everyone. Every day she offered drinks to Rinpoche, entourage, and umdzes, and joyfully assisted in ritual preparations. Back at Chenrezig Institute she helped in reception and was affectionately known as her royal "chai-ness" because she loved chai so much. An enduring image is of her bringing a pot of chai up the hill for morning puja every morning.

She had very pure and complete trust in Geshe Tsultrim. During the commemorative puja, Geshe-la reflected that during the last stages of Ven. Dronsel's life it seems she did not give up her Dharma practice and kept on studying and practicing. Ven. Dronsel was studying the *Basic Program* and learning Tibetan with great determination, despite her body being riddled with pain. She kept up her daily commitments and followed all of Lama Zopa Rinpoche's instructions exactly, until, days before her passing, Geshe-la indicated her practice of this life was finished. In whatever way she could she tried to sustain a pure and clear mind. Geshe-la indicated on that basis, the imprints she has created on her mindstream will facilitate good rebirths in the future.



She was dearly loved by all at Chenrezig. She had the kindest pure heart and only ever spoke lovingly to and about others. Never once did she complain about her pain, and only voiced caring concern for others. Her text messages were always filled with lines of smiley faces, waving hands, and loving heart emojis and flowers.

In the final months of her life, she was so excited when Geshe Tsultrim offered to give transmissions of Lama Tsongkhapa's *Essence of Eloquence* and *Middling Lamrim*. Geshe-la would spend an hour and a half minimum each time, reciting the texts and was surprised that Ven. Dronsel remained focused. She also said that reciting *Migtsema* made her mind very calm.

In her final weeks she had visions of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, and Geshe Tsultrim at the end of her bed, and of White Tara in the room. Even in the bathroom she could hear the chanting of White Tara's mantra. She had the photo of His Holiness sent by Lama Zopa Rinpoche on her altar along with the Kadampa stupa Geshe Tsultrim made and turned her bed so she could face Sukhavati pure land.

When Ven. Dronsel was unable to get up from bed and no longer able to move around there were quite a few Sangha and lay students to support her and her daughter Lani, who was caring for her for her last six months. She wanted to die in her hut at Chenrezig, and the amazing team from Cittamani Hospice provided palliative care daily to facilitate her wishes.

In his dedication at the commemorative puja, Geshe Tsultrim made offerings to the triple gem, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, and Chenrezig Institute Sangha, dedicating on behalf of Ven. Dronsel, with the aspiration that she be able to attain in a succession of lifetimes, rebirth in a pure realm; that she not only be born again as a human being, but that she may continue to meet Mahayana teachings, and in particular that she may meet again the teachings of the great master Lama Tsongkhapa and continue her spiritual path all the way to enlightenment.

---

## CHIARA GERA

38, died in Florence, Italy, May 8, 2019, in a car accident

---

By Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa

Chiara lived close to Florence with her husband, Leonardo, and her seven-year-old daughter. She was well-known in her town both for working in an important bank and for being a volunteer for the government-run organization Public Assistance, helping the elderly and disabled.

She was dedicated to the Dharma. Chiara was a committed *Discovering Buddhism* and *Basic Program* online student, attending Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa for weekend courses taught by our resident geshes as much as possible. We were used to seeing Chiara at ILTK. She was also a benefactor of the institute.



Chiara was always very kind toward her little child and husband, enthusiastic in her study of Buddhadharma, and big-hearted with all the students and staff. We are very sorry for the loss of Chiara Gera and so sad that she leaves a family behind.

---

## GORDEN PARLIN

64, died in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, on May 6, 2019, due to heart failure

---

By Ven. Thubten Gyalmo

Gordon was from North Carolina, US, and leaves behind a daughter, son, and five grandchildren. He was a very devoted student of Geshe Gelek Chodha, resident geshe at Kadampa Center in Raleigh, North Carolina.

I first met Gordon in 2004 at the Enlightened Experience Celebration in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, and a few months after this event, in 2005, he was appointed center director of Golden Light Sutra Centre (GLSC).

He helped GLSC become better established and expand its activities. During his stay in Darkhan, Gordon was also teaching English at the German school. Amarajargal, one of his young students at that time, shared that he was a very dedicated English teacher and for her personally, he was a father that she never had.



She also noted that he was incredibly kind not only to her family but to many other people as well.

After his directorship concluded at GLSC he moved to Ulaanbaatar, where he spent most of his time teaching English at various places to many students who valued his skill, big heart, and compassion. He was noted for being ever-ready to help those in need. In 2012, Gordon agreed to serve as Golden Light Sutra Centre's center director for a further term.

At the time of his death he was employed as an English teacher with the Absolute English School in Ulaanbaatar. Due to Gordon's skillful teaching many Mongolian people have had the opportunity to travel and study overseas after passing the necessary and quite difficult English exam to qualify.

During his last few weeks of life he was also assisting Ganden Do Ngag Shedrup Ling in Ulaanbaatar with English conversation guidance at a *16 Guidelines for Life* weekly session for adults. His presence and contributions were welcomed.

Gordon was cremated in Mongolia. Some of his ashes were sprinkled in the mountains near Ulaanbaatar and some were forwarded to his family members in the United States.

**Lama Zopa Rinpoche** requests that “students who read *Mandala* pray that the students whose obituaries are here find a perfect human body, meet a Mahayana guru, and become enlightened quickly, or be born in a pure land where the teachings exist and they can become enlightened.” While reading these obituaries, we can also reflect upon our own death and rebirth, prompting us to live our lives in the most meaningful way.

For more advice from Lama Zopa Rinpoche on death, see [fpmt.org/death](http://fpmt.org/death).



---

## GUILLERMO AGUILAR

58, died in Valencia, Spain, on October 10, 2019, due to a heart attack

---

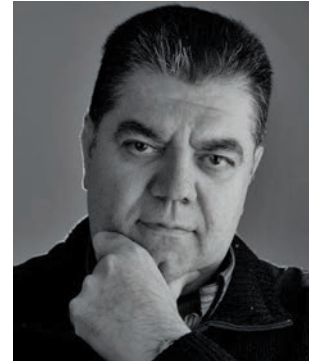
By Ven. Paloma Alba

Guillermo met the Dharma at Centro Nagarjuna Valencia and made a Dharma connection with Lama Zopa Rinpoche. He was an active student at the center and was responsible for the publication of a Dharma magazine *CUADERNOS NAGARJUNA* for several years. Guillermo did this at a time when there were no computers or almost any other magazines to keep us informed of our centers' activities, and he published

many teachings of our lamas in the magazine.

When Guillermo became sick twenty years ago, he wasn't able to attend Centro Nagarjuna Valencia regularly but was always connected to the center. His main and direct teacher was Geshe Lobsang Tsultrim, the first geshe in Spain, and Lama Zopa Rinpoche was always present in his heart.

Although Guillermo wasn't actively involved since his sickness began—he needed hemodialysis three days per week and of course that limited him a lot—Guillermo was fundamental to the development of the Dharma throughout the FPMT centers in Spain.



---

## THUBTEN MONLAM

age 57, died in Ponca City, Oklahoma, US, on May 7, 2019, of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS)

---

By Tom Waggoner

Thubten Monlam Sherpa was born in a small village just below Lawudo in Solo Kumbu, Nepal. At the onset of the building of the Lawudo Gompa, Thubten's mother was hired on to help. At the age of eight, his parents separated. Shortly after that his father brought him to Lama Zopa Rinpoche, saying that he could no longer care for his son and requested Rinpoche to take him. He agreed.

Thubten was in the first class of eight to ten boys to be educated at Lawudo. Thubten said that during the breaks in the curriculum he would go stay with Rinpoche's mother.

"She was so incredibly kind to me," he stated many times. When staying with Rinpoche's sister in Lawudo he was tasked with carrying lumber—being milled for the gompa—on the opposing mountain top, through the river valley, and back up to Lawudo. He said, "The boards were so big that I had to walk down the mountain backwards." Later he said, "I didn't have my first pair of shoes until I went to Kathmandu when I was nine."

Thubten eventually moved to Kopan and started serving Lama Yeshe, helping with cleaning, and eventually becoming his cook.

When Lama Yeshe was ill in Delhi for two months Thubten helped take care of him. When Lama Yeshe had his stroke, he was called to come to the United States to continue caring for him. Thubten joined Lama Yeshe's California care team and attended to him until his passing. Lama Yeshe would often ask

Thubten, and only Thubten, to place his hand and hold it on his heart. It was very moving to witness. It was like it took the two of them to keep Lama's heart from failing.

After Lama's passing Thubten, per Lama Yeshe's advice, stayed in the United States.

He disrobed, married, started working, and eventually became a flooring contractor. He got his pilot's license, and in the last years was licensed as a Certified Nursing Assistant and home health care aid. In 2018 he was diagnosed with ALS. During this period Rinpoche was in frequent contact with Thubten, which was a great comfort to him.

He moved from Santa Cruz, California, to Oklahoma where his wife, Linnea, grew up. He passed on May 7, 2019. Upon his passing Linnea stated, "After I contacted Lama Zopa, I did all the prayers as he instructed, and then left the room for a while. When I returned there was this contented smile on his face that was not there before. The room was so peaceful and vibrant I couldn't believe it. I brought my sister-in-law in to witness. She too was amazed. The hospice folks that came after his passing kept commenting on how peaceful the house was and how good it felt." Linnea stated, "He stayed in that state for the next two days."

Lama Zopa was very involved during Thubten's illness and passing. As Thubten's disease progressed Rinpoche became his absolute refuge. There is no doubt that he got "a great assist" on his transition.

May all of us and all beings throughout space be so fortunate to have such care, refuge, and faith as we each negotiate our own certain "relocation" into our next lives.



**THUBTEN IN FRONT OF LAMA YESHE'S CREMATION STUPA**

---

## MIMI DONNER

92, died in Boca Raton, Florida, US, on April 8, 2019 of natural causes

---

*By Brian Burns, Jacie Keeley, and Linda Melisano*

Mimi was a life-long seeker of the spiritual truth and a great student of Buddhism. She was part of the original group, led by Jacie Keeley, that in 1998 established the Thubten Kunga Center in Deerfield Beach, Florida, US. She was the oldest member of the center at 92, and also one of the most loyal.

Remembering her early life in Brooklyn, New York, US, during the depression years, she watched her mother serve soup to hungry people outside the kitchen door. She understood the importance of generosity and never entered the center empty-



handed. Her little tin Merit Box filled with coins for Lama Zopa was one of the possessions she left behind. Mimi was a world traveler and in her eighties went to China, Japan, and India to study Buddhism. While in Paris, she was thrilled to attend a special symposium on the History and Art of the Bodhisattva Kwan Yin.

Mimi was a gifted professional astrologer using both Western and Ayurvedic systems, which she studied in India. She used astrology not merely to predict outcomes but as a way to communicate with her clients, always wanting to go deeper. She was one of the biggest fans of the yearly Liberation Prison Project calendar and she never got her bright red hair cut on the wrong day.

Geshe Konchog Kyab, Thubten Kunga Center's earlier resident geshe, used to call her "strong lady" because of her challenging questions and analytical mind. She was strong-willed and loved to debate, but she was also one of the deepest listeners I have ever known.

---

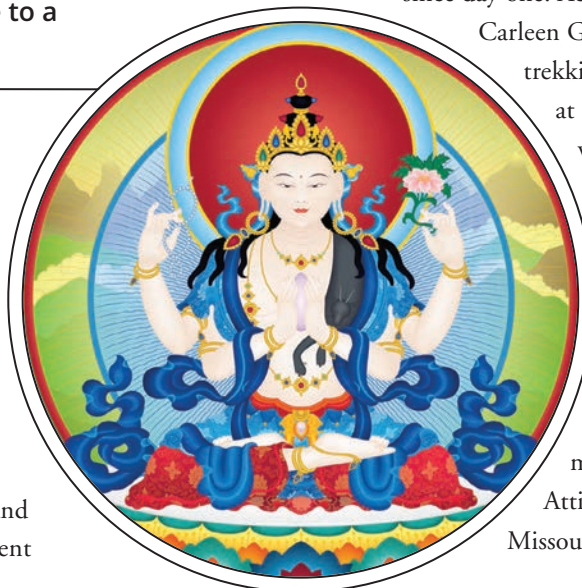
## BOB JACOBSON

62, died in Missoula, Montana, US, on June 5, 2019 of complications due to a heart condition

---

*By Bill Pfeiffer and Kim Runge*

Center director Bob Jacobson of Osel Shen Phen Ling in Missoula, Montana, US, passed away peacefully at his home on June 5, 2019. Bob was involved with the center for over thirty years, serving on the board of directors, and as spiritual program coordinator and center director on several different



occasions since 1987. He also worked for the FPMT International Office in Santa Fe, New Mexico, US, for a period of time.

Bob was an integral part of Osel Shen Phen Ling history since day one. Actually, since even before that. It was 1987:

Carleen Gonder had gone to the Everest Region for trekking, but instead took a detour and ended up at Lawudo Gompa. Lawudo blew her mind wide open, which inspired her to attend the November Course at Kopan Monastery. After the course, Carleen was intent on starting a Dharma center upon returning home to Montana. She never did go trekking.

Once she was back in Missoula, Carleen's first step was to begin leading meditations. Deanna Sheriff ran the Attitudinal Healing Center in downtown Missoula at that time. It was an open, airy office

space where you could buy crystals, New Age books, and “weird” things of that nature. Carleen needed a place to lead meditations and Deanna’s office space fit the bill.

There were only about three people who came to that first meditation. Bob was one of them. Bob attended nearly every meditation session from then on. After a year, the group had grown to about ten people. Bob and the other core Dharma students rented a house with acreage outside in Target Range, invited Lama Zopa Rinpoche to teach, and Osel Shen Phen Ling was born. Hundreds of people came from all over the world for Rinpoche’s two weeks of teachings out on Sundown Road. After Rinpoche left the center was promptly evicted. Apparently the neighbors didn’t like being awakened every morning at 5 A.M. by

the sound of bells, drums, and conches. The first of the center’s many ups and downs.

Bob was an integral part of Osel Shen Phen Ling for nearly all of the years since that time. We have Bob, in large part, to thank for many qualified teachers, retreats, meditations, pujas, and potlucks.

A talented digital illustrator, Bob was well-known for his incredible digital thangka paintings, which have circulated widely on the internet for many years. (The image of Chenrezig included here is by Bob.) The Osel Shen Phen Ling website, which he coded himself from scratch, was one of the first Buddhist websites on the web, appearing sometime in the 1990s. Bob will be missed above all for his great kindness to everyone he met as well as his steadfast service to FPMT and Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

---

## PATRICIA (PAT) NEWALL MC SHAY CANNON

age 61, died in Beverly, Massachusetts, US,  
August 26, 2019, of Alzheimer’s disease

---

*By Ian McShay*

As a young girl Pat’s family moved from Marblehead Massachusetts, US, to San Jose, California. Pat flourished growing up in the California scene with its open-minded lifestyle, including horseback riding on the beaches of Santa Cruz, living and learning among diverse races and cultures, and family lunch trips to the Haight-Ashbury. It was during this time that she realized her desire to do things differently and perhaps better. As a young woman Pat began to strive for fairness and to fight for what she believed in while acting with passion, love, and acceptance for all others.

Pat attended North Shore Community College and the Bouve College of Physical Therapy at Northeastern University in Boston and became a gifted physical therapy professional and health care provider for thirty years. She was a devoted and passionate mother to her three sons Marc, Ryan, and Ian. She supported them in every aspect of their lives, championing their



successes and helping them learn from their failures. Pat provided fully for them and never let them go to bed at night without a hug and a kiss. The boys’ close friends were gladly welcomed into their home and became extended family members, sleeping over, sharing meals, and realizing her unbounded love.

Pat reconnected with Ian Cannon, a boyfriend from high school, who became the love of her life. They were married in 2012. Ian furthered Pat’s deep love for music while they both participated in the Salem Jazz and Soul Festival. They became avid beach goers and dedicated Buddhists, living together in Beverly, Massachusetts, and enjoying the New Hampshire lake house until her passing.

In recent years Pat began to widely share the message, “It’s all about love” while reflecting on the love and happiness she felt for her friends and family. Many of those close to her have adopted this caring expression, which was her wish.

My mom first introduced me to Buddhism and was the one who brought me to Kurukulla Center over ten years ago.

She took refuge in the Nyingma tradition and received teachings and initiations from Lama Zopa Rinpoche and Choden Rinpoche. She always had a lot of faith in the Dharma and in Tara particularly. The Tara mantra was her most recited mantra.

She passed away peacefully in her room at 7:04 P.M. on Monday, August 26, to the sound of Lama Zopa Rinpoche and the Sera Je monks chanting the “King of Prayers” on a twenty-four-hour loop on the computer next to her.



---

# MARGARET VINCENT

85, died in Cumbria, UK, on August 9, 2019,  
of a stroke

---

By Susan Bacchus

Cumbria born and bred, Margaret very rarely left the area throughout her whole life, but in fact found almost everything life can offer there, experiencing marriage and the bringing up of her two sons. When that ended in 1978, she had the amazing good fortune to meet Mahayana Buddhism, right on her doorstep so to speak, when Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche made their annual visits to Conishead Priory in Cumbria.

High lamas visiting the Priory during that time also included Zong Rinpoche and Serkong Tsenshab Rinpoche, from whom she received teachings and empowerments. When His Holiness the Dalai Lama visited Europe and the UK she would make a rare departure from Cumbria to attend his teachings, including a Kalachakra empowerment in Switzerland, and during


these years she also studied some of the major Mahayana texts, including the *Madhyamika*.

Margaret was still having to work full-time as a busy school secretary, enduring the stress of trying to balance work and study, but still managing, at one point, to open her home to other Buddhists so they had somewhere to regularly meet, and she even found time to write a book, together with a friend, on the many monuments of Cumbria. She eventually remarried and during that period made her furthest departure from Cumbria yet to briefly visit a brother in Australia.

Margaret really loved Cumbria and roaming its high hills, and like them she was someone with a gentle appearance that hid great inner strength, and like the many beautiful lakes of Cumbria a deep, quiet person who took endless pains with all she did, keeping her strong faith, despite many difficulties, in all the lamas, especially Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche, her two root gurus. Her favorite book of all time which she always kept beside her was *The Bliss of Inner Fire* by Lama Yeshe.

She was a greatly-loved and now, greatly-missed friend.



**TIBETAN SPIRIT** 

AUTHENTIC BUDDHIST ARTS  
AND RITUAL ITEMS


- Singing Bowls
- Wall Hangings
- Statues
- Malas
- Incense
- Thangkas
- Ordained Robes

Wholesale & drop-  
ship accounts available.

Owned & operated  
by a Buddhist Temple.

100% of our profits go  
toward the support of Dharma  
activities in the U.S. and Asia.

**TIBETANSPIRIT.COM**

 **Himalayan Designs**

**Authentic Tibetan Art & Sound**

Mandalas ♦ Thangkas ♦ Prayer Wheels  
Bodhisattva Rupas ♦ Singing Bowls ♦ Tibetan Rugs

[HimalayanDesigns.com](http://HimalayanDesigns.com)