

# Young Tulkus Give Contemporary Advice



Ven. Tenzin Rabchog from South Australia recently filmed interviews at Sera Monastery in South India with four young tulkus – Serkong Tsenshap Rinpoche, Ling Rinpoche, Cherok Rinpoche, and Gomo Tulku. They offered young people practical advice for overcoming problems, finding happiness, and making the most out of their lives. In excerpts from these interviews by contributors Allys Andrews and Ven. Roger Kunsang, we see snapshots of lamas-in-the-making, just beginning their ascension as future lights of the tradition yet already blessed with remarkable insight.



## Serkong Rinpoche on Drugs and Alcohol

**Allys Andrews:** *Rinpoche, sometimes young people are influenced by friends who are engaged in negative activities, like taking drugs, smoking, even criminal activities, and it can be very difficult for them to take themselves away from that situation. Does Rinpoche have some advice about how to develop strength to stay away from friends who aren't helpful?*

**Serkong Rinpoche:** All of this comes about because some people really don't know themselves very well. Some people don't get what they want, and some people do it because they have lost their hope. But the best way to avoid this is to think deeply before doing what they are going to do.

Even if you are not happy, drinking alcohol might make things okay for a while, but by the next morning your time has gone quickly and you have to face the problem again.

It's really difficult to answer this because people who do this are not that stupid. They really know that they are wasting their lives. Even if they know it is inappropriate or illegal, if you ask them when they are engaged in the action, "What are you doing, do you really want to do this or not?" they say, "I really don't want to do it, but I can't stop myself because of my background and my problems." The people who engage in negative actions need to recognize that if there is no other way, then okay, we have nothing to say, but in fact there is something they can do to solve their problems.

If [for example], you have a family problem, you fight with your father and mother, if you really cannot get along with them, then you can live away from home and still love and respect them. Being near them doesn't necessarily mean that you will love or respect them

## Serkong Tsenshap Rinpoche,

22, is studying toward his geshe degree at Ganden Jangtse monastery in South India. He is the reincarnation of Kyabje Tsenshab Serkong Tugse Rinpoche (1914 – 1983) who was born in southern Tibet. His father was one of Tibet's outstanding masters, Serkong Dorje Chang, the highest incarnate lama of Ganden Jangtse monastery, and the only one of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's seven spiritual assistants to escape from Tibet in 1959. Serkong Dorje Chang, who came from the area of Loka in southern Tibet, was a renowned master of both sutra and tantra.



## Ling Rinpoche,

21, is studying at Drepung Loseling monastery in South India. He was recognized in 1987 as the reincarnation of Kyabje Yongdzin Ling Rinpoche (1903 – 1983) who was the senior tutor of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the ninety-seventh holder of the Ganden throne and thus head of the Gelug tradition of Tibetan Buddhism.



## Cherok Lama Rinpoche,

14, (center) is studying at Sera Je monastery in South India. He is the reincarnation of Kusho Mangde (1905 – 1992), a meditator from Charok, near Mt. Everest in the Himalayan Mountains, close to where Lama Zopa Rinpoche's cave is located. Kusho Mangde was very close to Rinpoche and Lama Yeshe.



## Gomo Tulku,

18, (with the Dalai Lama) is studying at Sera Je monastery in South India. He is recognized as the twenty-third reincarnation of Sonam Rinchen, a highly-realized Tibetan yogi who was one of the main disciples of the Indian mahasiddha Padampa Sangye, a contemporary of the eleventh-century Tibetan saint Milarepa. Gomo Tulku's grandfather was recognized as the twenty-second incarnation of this long and hallowed line of teachers, and Gomo Tulku's father was also a highly-respected tulku, well-known in Europe for the extensiveness of his teachings.





For a monk, you just have the same clothes, nothing is ever different, just the clothes you need and the Dharma. Life is steady. The key point is that in monastic life you understand that to be content, you live a simple life.

more. But when your father and mother need your help, then you can go and take care of them.

Of course, in the West there are more problems than that, but for certain, there are ways of solving them other than [taking drugs and alcohol].

So I request that young people read some advice books. There are lots of advice books you can start with; for example, something on peace. From the Dharma or Buddhist side there are books that deal with every kind of suffering. All the religions have them, that's what religion is for, isn't it? Non-religious people, no matter what they believe in, can pick up something from religion.

If you really don't want to become a Buddhist, you don't need to have faith in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, and you don't need to take refuge. Of course, if you are Buddhist, you have to take refuge, but for non-Buddhists and people from other religions, they can take some advice about how to become peaceful. And if a person has some kind of problem, ask for help from someone. People love to share problems. For us, we really love to help.

So I request young people not to waste their time, and don't waste your life because there are better ways of solving problems.

## Ling Rinpoche on Dealing with Depression

**Allys Andrews:** *Many people in the West, in Australia, in America, one person out of four, will suffer depression and anxiety at some time in their life. Sometimes this can end in suicide. Does Rinpoche have some advice about how to lift the mind when it is very depressed or very low?*

**Ling Rinpoche:** Well, depression means many things. There are many types of depression. Some people want to be very rich. They struggle to become rich, but don't. They struggle a lot. They are really making their own suffering. You can have a happy life without becoming as rich as you would like. Whatever they have, whatever their belongings, whatever facilities they have, they should be happy. This shows that you make your own suffering. That is very clear.

We are not talking about Buddhist terms such as delusions – that becomes a little complicated. But in a very simple way, if you don't have an unrealistic goal then you are already happy. [Having unrealistic goals] drives your mind crazy. Whatever you have, you have to be content.

There are many types of depression; this is just one example. With strong delusion, strong anger, strong hatred, you should always say, "It is taught in the teachings that these are negative, and now I am doing something negative."

Whenever there is somebody who is not nice to you, who is angry, you should always think, "Whatever negative things are happening now is the result of the bad things I have done in my past. Now it is purified, now the result has happened, and now it is gone." You should be happy about that. And you should be happy because those people who make you unhappy are the people with whom you can practice impermanence, so you should be grateful to them.

And before you sleep in the evening, you should think about what you have done in the day, the good activities and the bad activities. Whatever bad activities you have done, you should purify and try to have regret.

All the positive activities, whatever good things you have done, that should become the cause for becoming enlightened. We say in the teachings to "put it in the bank." We should pray that all the good things we have done will be the cause for becoming enlightened. If you have some money and put it in the bank, it cannot be lost. If you keep it in your house it can become lost. So before we sleep, we should pray that all the good things we have done will result in enlightenment.

If you dedicate the merit, then even if you get angry it cannot be destroyed. But if you don't dedicate, even if you have done good things, the merit can be destroyed by [one moment of] anger.

## Cherok Rinpoche on Patience

**Ven. Roger Kunsang:** *Do you find anything useful in what you have learned from Buddhism that helps you with stress, to cope better, to be more patient?*



**Cherok Rinpoche:** Patience maybe; that is one of the main things, patience; and another is not looking on the bad side. Nearly everything that your guru or your teacher teaches you is for your own benefit. That's one of the main things we learn. Everything your teacher teaches is for your benefit. He won't teach you anything bad. He is appointed as your teacher so that you can learn good things, such as having a kind heart, helping, leading you the right way.

Any activity the teacher does in front of you is for your own good. That is the main thing we learn – to trust your teacher and do whatever he says, and not do what he tells you not to do, because he is the one who is appointed to lead you on the way. When we look at it in this way, we see that there is a benefit in having a teacher and listening to what he teaches so that we don't go on the wrong side of the road. Everything your teacher says is for your own benefit and there is a result. The result might not come immediately, and sometimes maybe there is no result. But there will [definitely] be a result from the bad things you do. Your teacher might try to stop you doing the bad things before the bad results come out. But you only realize that after you have experienced them.

## Gomo Tulku on the American Way

**Ven. Roger Kunsang:** *Rinpoche, as a teenager, you have experienced the West and the East. Recently you went back to the States for a year or so. How did you find it different from living in the monastery?*

In the monastery, all you need is a place to stay, food, enough to survive, and the Dharma. That is the main focus. Lay people have to think of themselves, their kids, parents, their wife, whatever. You want more and more. In America when you are sixteen, you are able to drive, then you want a car, then you want clothes; for women, fancy stuff, fashion things. I'm just guessing. It never ends.

For a monk, you just have the same clothes, nothing is ever different, just the clothes you need and the Dharma. Life is steady.

The key point is that in monastic life you understand that to be content, you live a simple life. In the West there tend to be so many things out there that just give rise to dissatisfaction and make it hard to be happy. There are so many material things and advertisements that make you want more – a new iPod, a new car, just wanting.

**Ven. Roger:** *And the point of that is to be happy, right?*

Yeah, that's how they think. They are probably satisfied just for that short time. When you feel happy, you

have to ask yourself: Is it happiness in the long term? Will that happiness last forever? The answer is: No, it will only last for a short time, because you always want the new version, the new model, you are never satisfied. For a monk, life is simpler.

**Ven. Roger:** *What would your advice be for young people who are growing up in the West where there is so much emphasis on external things?*

I wouldn't call it advice but these are my thoughts: Try not to be so influenced by these new upcoming things. Of course, if something helps you, okay. But if you think it can make you happy, ask yourself, why? And consider, does this happiness last forever? ☸

*Serkong Rinpoche and Ling Rinpoche were interviewed by Allys Andrews from Tara Institute [Melbourne, Australia], while Cherok Rinpoche and Gomo Tulku spoke with Ven. Roger Kunsang, Lama Zopa Rinpoche's long-time attendant and CEO of FPMT. The full interviews can be viewed at [www.lkpy.org](http://www.lkpy.org)*

## TULKU

"Tulku" is a term meaning nirmanakaya, or supreme emanation body. The nirmanakaya, or "form body" of a buddha is the enlightened manifestation that is able to communicate directly with sentient beings and teach them the Dharma. As a title, the term tulku is similar to the term Rinpoche (precious); it implies that this particular individual has gained control over the cycle of death and rebirth. Tulkus are recognized as having attained very high levels of realization, if not full enlightenment. As such, they are under no obligation to return to this human realm. However, out of their great compassion to help others, they have emanated a human form in order to teach and benefit others.