

Lama Yeshe

✦ *Silent Mind Holy Mind* ✦

A TIBETAN LAMA'S REFLECTIONS
ON CHRISTMAS



THE CELEBRATION OF CHRISTMAS focuses on our longing for peace and deepest expression of love. Its essential spirit, therefore, appeals not only to Christians but to all people.

Until recently the Buddhism of Tibet has been largely shrouded in mystery. But as its teachers, or lamas, have more and more contact with the West they confirm the fundamental unity of the human family.

In this book a highly respected Tibetan lama trained in the lineages of compassion and wisdom shows how the modern spirit can be revitalized. Taking as his major focus the ways in which we customarily celebrate Christmas, Lama Yeshe exposes the foibles of our secular age and shows how we can surmount them. With the warmth and humor that have endeared him to so many, he takes a clear look at the ways we think. The relevance of these insights is refreshing.

—From the first edition

LAMA THUBTEN YESHE was born in Tibet in 1935. At the age of six, he entered Sera Monastery, where he studied until 1959, when the Chinese invasion forced him into exile in India. In 1967 he and Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche went to Nepal, where they established the renowned Kopan Monastery. In 1974 the Lamas began teaching in the West and created a worldwide network of Buddhist centers, projects and services—the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition. After an intense decade of imparting a wide variety of incredible teachings and establishing one FPMT activity after another, Lama Yeshe passed away in 1984. He was reborn in Spain in 1985.

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*May whoever sees, touches, reads, remembers, or talks or thinks about these books
never be reborn in unfortunate circumstances, receive only rebirths in situations
conducive to the perfect practice of Dharma, meet only perfectly qualified
spiritual guides, quickly develop bodhicitta and immediately
attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.*

Lama Yeshe

Silent Mind Holy Mind

*A Tibetan Lama's Reflections
on Christmas*

EDITED BY
Jonathan Landaw and
Nicholas Ribush



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Preface



THIS BOOK, Wisdom Publications' third title, was first published in 1978, following *Wisdom Energy* (1976) and *Advice from a Spiritual Friend* (1977). Lama Yeshe (1935–84) and I founded Wisdom at Kopan Monastery, Nepal, in December 1975.¹ In 1978, Lama moved Wisdom to Manjushri Institute in England, and a few months later *Silent Mind* became the first title published from the new location, just in time for Christmas, mainly due to the efforts of Jon Landaw and Ven. Robina Courtin.

For this edition we have made several editorial changes. The book is now divided into three parts: (1) the original material (somewhat modified), edited by Jon Landaw; (2) the only other Christmas talk Lama gave, edited by me; and (3) a Cistercian priest's tribute to Lama after he passed away in 1984. We have tweaked Jon Landaw's 1978 introduction accordingly.

Apart from the two extra sections, the main modification to the

¹ See *Big Love: The Life and Teachings of Lama Yeshe* (LYWA, 2020), p. 473: "The Birth of Wisdom Publications." At first, Lama called the FPMT publishing house Publications for Wisdom Culture, which was the imprint under which *Silent Mind* was first published ("Wisdom Culture," actually). Around 1980, the name of the company was changed to Wisdom Publications.

original material has been to chapter 3, where we have replaced Ngawang Chötak's translation of *The Eight Verses of Thought Transformation* by a more recent one by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (1945–2023).

By the mid-80s the book had sold out and has been out of print since then, but about twenty years ago, with Wisdom's permission, LYWA began distributing a PDF photocopy of the original. Recently we decided that it would be better to create an updated version with some new material added, so again, with the kind permission of Wisdom's director, Daniel Aitken, we have created the edition you are reading now.

We hope you continue to enjoy and benefit from Lama Yeshe's timeless wisdom.

Nicholas Ribush
Lincoln, Massachusetts
November 2023

Introduction²



THE LECTURES presented here were originally delivered by Lama Thubten Yeshe at the Nepalese Mahayana Centre near Kathmandu, Nepal. Lama Yeshe and his chief disciple, Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche, established this center in 1969 on a hill called Kopan within sight of the great stupa, or monument, of Boudhanath. Since 1971 Kopan has been the location of regularly scheduled meditation courses attracting students from all over the world, and it was in response to requests from this international group that these Christmas lectures were originally given.

Lama Yeshe was born in 1935 in a small town in central Tibet.³ At the age of six he entered Sera Monastery, one of several large religious universities near Lhasa. There he engaged in extensive scriptural study and meditational practice under such renowned teachers as the Senior and Junior Tutors of His Holiness the fourteenth Dalai Lama. Following the Chinese takeover of Tibet in

² This is the original 1978 introduction. As of 2023, the organization the Lamas founded in 1975, the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT), comprises more than 130 centers, projects and services in over 35 countries worldwide.

³ See *Big Love*, the definitive Lama Yeshe biography (see note 1 above).

1959 he escaped to India and continued his education at the Buxa Duar refugee camp, where he became the teacher of monks from all four Tibetan traditions of Buddhism, in particular, Lama Zopa Rinpoche.⁴

Eventually Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche moved to the Kathmandu valley and began their long and close association with Westerners. Since the establishment of Kopan Monastery, upwards of two hundred students annually have been coming to Nepal to receive intensive, supervised instruction in the practice of Buddhist meditation. Upon their return to the West several groups of students have established meditation, study and retreat centers in their native countries so that they might continue their spiritual education in more familiar surroundings. Since 1974, Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche have paid regularly scheduled teaching visits to these worldwide centers, and several of them have already been provided with resident teachers and translators.

Thus, at present there exists an international network of communities studying, practicing and attempting to preserve the living Tibetan tradition of Mahayana Buddhism. The foundation of this living tradition, and the basic subject matter of the Kopan courses, is a set of teachings known as the graded path to enlightenment (Tib: *lamrim*). These teachings can be traced back in unbroken lineages 2,500 years to Shakyamuni Buddha. They are a direct link with the insights and meditational experiences of the Buddha

⁴ See *The Lawudo Lama* (Wisdom, 2005), the definitive Lama Zopa Rinpoche biography.

himself and of such highly realized Indian Buddhist masters as Nagarjuna, Asanga, Shantideva and Atisha.

During his forty-five years of teaching, the sole aim of Shakyamuni Buddha, the Fully Awakened One, was to help beings of all levels of mental development discover their individual paths to the cessation of suffering and dissatisfaction. After his passing, his extensive teachings were collected and eventually written down, and in this way the Buddhist scriptures came into being. In addition, the detailed personal explanations of how these scriptural teachings can be applied to one's own life were passed down directly from teacher (Skt: *guru*, Tib: *lama*) to student. Thus, not only were the Buddha's words preserved, but the insights they contained were kept alive within the minds of his successors.

At the Kopan meditation courses these scriptural teachings and the unbroken lineages of orally transmitted insights are made available to students in a way that is most meaningful for them. Within a disciplined environment students have an opportunity both to listen to the graded path teachings from a fully qualified lama and to meditate deeply on what they have heard. Discussion groups, question and answer sessions and interviews with the lamas enable them to receive personal guidance, but the emphasis is always on each person's individual exploration of the mind and its functioning.

Of paramount importance in this exploration is a detailed investigation of one's motivation: the conscious and subconscious reasons and impulses for engaging in any type of action whatsoever. According to Buddhist thought, motivation is the primary factor

determining whether happiness or suffering will result from a particular action. Therefore, the spiritual journey, as outlined in the graded path teachings, is a progression from lower, self-centered motives to higher, more altruistic ones.

Before engaging in spiritual training, a person's motivation is limited by near-sighted and egocentric views of loss and gain. The individual seeks satisfaction and peace of mind by chasing after the alluring but ephemeral pleasures of the senses, wealth, power, reputation and the like, but the hoped-for gratification of desires remains elusive and beyond reach. In fact, this self-centered striving results only in increased disappointment, insecurity and alienation.

With the realization that objects of worldly desire are unable to provide true comfort either during this life or especially at the time of death, the person is motivated to begin spiritual, or Dharma, training. By understanding the impermanent, changeable nature of things and by seeing the causal relationship between actions and their fruit—that actions done with greed and hostility bring misery while those done with love and wisdom bring happiness—the trainee looks for a source of guidance and refuge and tries to create the causes for his or her future wellbeing.

Eventually it becomes clear that even within the higher, more comfortable realms of existence there is no true satisfaction or comfort to be found. As long as the mind remains obscured by the delusion of separate and independent egohood, it remains bound to the wheel of perpetual dissatisfaction and misery. Thus the trainee's motivation becomes one of seeking liberation from

the whole of conditioned and cyclic existence (Skt: *samsara*) and achieving the unconditioned peace that passes beyond all suffering (Skt: *nirvana*).

At an even higher level of spiritual development, the trainee realizes how selfish it would be to strive for personal liberation while all about are helplessly trapped in the mire of their self-created misery. With an unbounded compassion that cannot bear their suffering, the trainee develops the matchless *bodhicitta*: the motivation to win the full enlightenment of buddhahood and thereby be able to lead each and every being to freedom by means of a buddha's enlightened wisdom, compassion and skillful methods.

By following this briefly outlined training of the sutra path, it is definitely possible to attain full enlightenment, but only after an extraordinarily long period of time. However, with these sutra teachings as the basis and with an especially powerful *bodhicitta* motivation, the trainee can enter the diamond-hard path of tantra. By following advanced tantric teachings purely with intense devotion to a fully qualified spiritual master, it is possible to achieve enlightenment—the eradication of all mental defilements and the attainment of all positive qualities—within one short lifetime.

In an extremely abbreviated form, this is the graded path of sutra and tantra taught by all Tibetan traditions of Buddhism.

The Kopan meditation courses on the graded path are generally held in November and are followed by a month or more of supervised retreat and additional teachings. Thus, for many Western students, Christmas is celebrated in a Buddhist monastic setting.

Chapter 1 of this present volume, “Giving,” is a series of Christmas lectures Lama Yeshe gave following courses held between 1971 and 1974. Its three sections contain remarks made a week before Christmas, a few days later and on Christmas Eve itself. The question-and-answer section that follows is from an interview given in 1978 at Manjushri Institute in England.

Chapter 2, “Unity,” comes from a lecture given on 27 December 1975 at Kopan following three days of special teachings and ceremonies during which students read from the biographies of Jesus, Buddha and Je Tsongkhapa, the great fourteenth century reformer of Buddhism in Tibet. Finally, chapter 3, “Transformation,” is the translation of a concise teaching in verse on thought transformation containing the core instructions for developing the compassionate mind of bodhicitta.

May this short work be of some benefit to all who read it, and may whatever merit it contains be dedicated to the long life of all teachers showing true paths to temporary and ultimate happiness.

Jonathan Landaw
Ulverston, Cumbria UK
October, 1978

Part 1

The Original Content

Reflections on Christmas

THIS IS the week of Holy Jesus's birth, and I suggest that in honor of this special event we make some sort of celebration. But we should try to make it meaningful. It should not be some kind of physical sensation, bringing only more confusion and superstition to our mind.

For a Christmas celebration to be a good one, it must be of a truly religious nature. Jesus came to this Earth and presented his teachings, but worldly beings completely disregard this fact. For them Christmas means—first and foremost—shopping, spending money, buying presents and creating confusion. Such confusion is entirely of our own making. We have the power to make Christmas meaningful, peaceful and truly religious, but instead of using this power we succumb to worldly negative energy. We go shopping to buy presents, but generally this is not done with anything even resembling a loving attitude. We think, “I really must buy something for my sister because if I don't give her anything, maybe she won't like me anymore. Maybe she won't give me anything either.” Or, “I better not get my friend a cheap present or I might not

get anything valuable back from him next year.” Such thoughts are extremely negative, leading to nothing but further dissatisfaction. They are totally involved with egotistic and immature notions about what true happiness is. They have nothing whatsoever to do with religion.

True religion brings peace and satisfaction to the mind. Actions that arouse only confusion serve no religious function at all. They stem instead from a political mind that thinks, “If I give this, I’ll get that in return.” Such a mind is extremely immature and selfish. It delights when many presents are received and is depressed when expectations go unfulfilled. What difference, then, is there between such a mind and that of a small child? We consider ourselves to be grown up, but our actions and attitudes show us to be little different from our children. They exaggerate the importance of receiving gifts, and so do we. In fact, their exaggerated expectations—their mind of confusion and dissatisfaction—develops largely from watching us.

If we were to act in a consistently mature and meaningful way, our children would also become peaceful. We sometimes think that they are naturally berserk and that we are something special, but this is not so. Check up and see exactly what happens when a holiday approaches. We are the ones who create the commotion. The first thing that happens at the beginning of a holiday is that husband and wife, uncle and aunt and so forth begin to fight with one another. Can you imagine that? Be honest and investigate the truth of this. And nearly all their fights are over material possessions. This is especially true at Christmas time. I am not trying to

be excessively negative; just check up and see if this is true or not. Holiday bickering has so much jealousy in it: “Let me see, what did you get? What did he get?” Such a dualistic mind is totally submerged in selfishness and wrong conceptions.

This deluded type of behavior is not common merely to one culture. It can be found everywhere. Similarly, the antidote to this confusion is not taught merely in Buddhism. All religions strive to counter unsatisfactory, confused attitudes and bring us peace of mind.

It is characteristic of materialistic people that they believe their happiness and frustration to be totally dependent on external phenomena and possessions. If they do not receive enough ice cream and cake they are despondent: “I feel so empty. This Christmas has been such a flop I could die!” They actually think like this. For them the success or failure of a religious holiday depends entirely on material things; that is why they are called materialistic. They cannot discover peace and happiness within their own consciousness and look instead for some external, physical sign of love. It does not matter how much they might profess to be spiritual; their minds are completely obsessed by the gross, material level of reality.

When we look deeply with penetrative wisdom into such things as our attitudes and behavior at Christmas, we are truly practicing Dharma. This is the true religious pursuit. Dharma study does not mean to think about something coming out of the sky from another world. It deals directly with such questions as our motivation—what we are thinking and feeling right now in the midst

of our everyday life. If we do not make an attempt to control and transform the negative, confused minds of jealousy, greed and so forth, then there is no such thing as Christianity. There is no Buddhism, no Mahayana, nothing worthwhile at all. We must recognize the negative mind for what it is and then slowly begin to find a solution for the pain it causes ourselves and others. In this way our mind can be brought to a state of everlastingly peaceful realization. If we do nothing to correct our motivation and distorted ways of thinking, then Christmas exists merely for the ego. Although we are supposedly making a celebration for Jesus, what we are actually doing is completely degenerate.

Therefore, if you want to come to this Christmas celebration and bring a present, the best present you can bring is a peaceful mind. If you can make such an offering with true love for one another, that is enough. There is no need for too much physical preparation and activity.

Many Westerners have come to the East to study with gurus and lamas after becoming dissatisfied with the religions they found in their native countries. There then arises the great danger that when they return to the West they will speak harshly of their native traditions. This is not only a useless activity; it is also extremely harmful to oneself. From a psychological point of view, such discriminations and angry criticism are a sign of mental illness. Why? Because the source of all our problems is our own faulty mental projections. On the entire Earth there is no such thing as a self-existent, permanent “problem” independent of the mind experiencing it.

Therefore, since difficulties arise only because of the deluded way we view things, our emotional criticism of another religious tradition is completely misguided and psychologically unsound. It is a form of egomania to deny our own responsibility for what bothers us and instead place the blame on a completely inappropriate object.

Furthermore, Buddha himself set, as one commitment upon receiving an empowerment to practice his most profound tantra teachings, the vow not to disparage with hostility any philosophical or religious doctrine whatsoever. He knew that receiving such special initiations and teachings could lead to arrogance, and established this precept specifically to counter it. For these reasons, then, we should guard ourselves against all sectarian thought.

It is our habit to make constant comparisons between things. Our thoughts run to partisanship very readily. Whatever we identify as our own trip automatically becomes “the best,” and we feel it our duty to fight with anyone who holds a contrary opinion. This is the way in which a deluded mind naturally works. Our false feeling of superiority compels us to look down on anything we feel to be opposed to our beliefs. As a result, we often end up criticizing something merely because we do not understand it. This is nothing but a sign of ignorance.

For example, in the Bible it says that God created everything. Many of us might rebel at such a statement and react to it in a rigid and closed-minded manner. But perhaps we do so only because we are unable or unwilling to grasp its psychological importance and make the appropriate interpretation. Maybe it would be better

for us if we could learn to interpret things less literally and be more flexible in our approach to ideas that are foreign or difficult to understand. In this way realizations would have a chance to grow. In terms of this example, we should understand that we Westerners have such a strong desire to be free and independent. “I want to take care of myself.” “I want to do my thing.” “I, I, I, I, I.” Even if someone offers us help, we reject it. Such a selfish misinterpretation of freedom is the cause of so many problems that it would be extremely beneficial to correct it somehow. Therefore, the teaching that says God created everything, including ourselves, can be a very effective antidote to our false pride. Our self-attachment lessens as respect for something greater than ourselves grows. This presents us with an alternative to respecting only ourselves and taking refuge only in our own petty ego.

We here have great respect for Jesus, and since so many of my students are from the West, we have decided to follow their custom and hold this Christmas festival. But we must try to make it meaningful. From the time we were born until now, how many festivals have we attended? How did we behave during them? How did they affect our mind? Check up. Because of materialistic concerns, troubles often came, didn't they? For instance, when shopping for food and presents, we argued over the price: “How much did you say that was! That's much too much. Don't try to cheat me! Blah, blah, blah....” And at the actual party or festival itself we experienced the pains of overeating, disappointment and the like. In such ways Christmas has often brought us nothing but

confusion. This is not a criticism of Christmas; I have great respect for Lord Jesus. It is we ourselves who are confused and therefore responsible for Christmas's confusion. Jesus brought teachings to show us how to be peaceful. Out of respect for him, his birth festival should also be peaceful. If it is not, this clearly shows that we have not understood what he taught at all.

We may think that a proper show of respect, a true festival, depends on how much physical preparation we make. But only a very advanced and controlled mind can deal with external material without attachment. Ordinary minds quickly become involved in petty, selfish ego concerns.

Similarly, we think that the sign of a true religious teaching is that a large number of people profess to follow it. But it is not necessary for a true teaching to attract many people. Here again it is only the materialistic, political and confused mind that thinks the highest truth must have a big congregation, great temples or churches, many monks and nuns and so forth. No! These things in themselves are a sign of nothing. They do not determine the purity and quality of what a particular religion teaches. If such external criteria are used as guidelines, there will be no way to discover the treasure of everlasting peace existing within the mind of all sentient beings.

When Jesus was living on this Earth, there were no churches as such. His religion was not divided up into many groups and societies with people saying, "I'm a member of this sect; what denomination do you belong to?" Things had not yet tightened up to the point where the devoted seeker felt compelled to choose one path

over another. In this respect, at least, the people then were much more liberated than we are today. Whatever they did in terms of their religion was done honestly and sincerely. Nowadays, however, when you ask someone why he or she follows a particular religious tradition, you are likely to hear, "Because my father did" or "Because that church is near my house." It is ridiculous to follow a particular set of teachings for these reasons alone. Others belong to a certain religion because it has the largest congregation in town. This also has nothing whatsoever to do with the true spiritual journey.

One solitary being sincerely actualizing the everlasting peaceful path to liberation is more precious than a whole host of confused beings shouting, "This is my religion!" Such people may easily criticize the sincere seeker, despising him for holding beliefs contrary to their own, but this is only to be expected. The thoughts and actions of highly realized beings are often contrary to those of the multitudes. In spiritual matters, popular opinion counts for nothing. It does not matter how many people are engaged in building a church, temple or monastery; if they lack true religious feeling, their actions mean next to nothing.

I am not against religion. I like all religions. But religion must be meaningful, and for this to happen we must transform ourselves inwardly. We do not become more religious by constructing more buildings, wearing beautifully adorned robes or even by escaping into a mountain retreat. Without wisdom, these actions are meaningless.

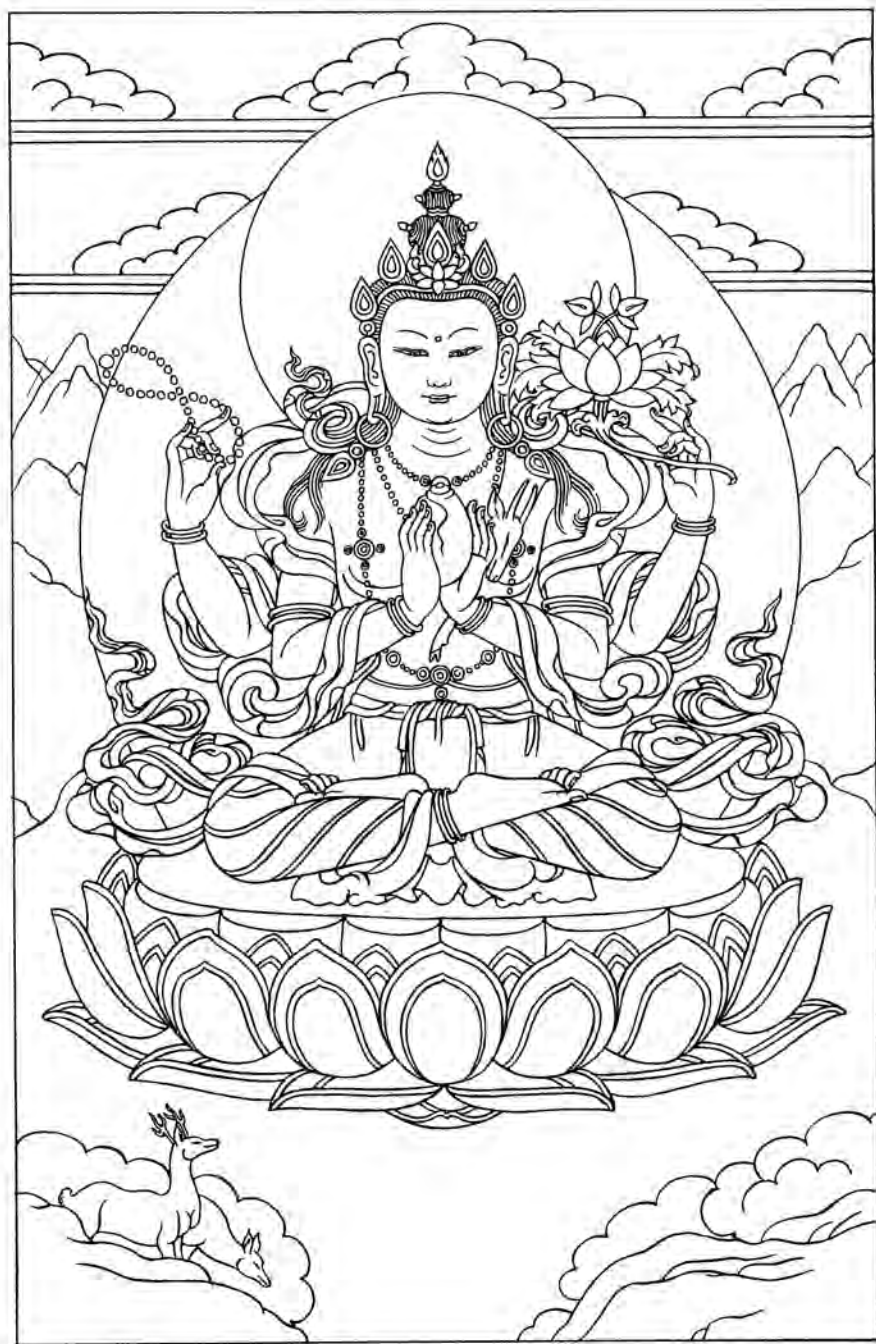
An individual's religion is the wisdom they have integrated into

their consciousness. It is this and not the external trappings that is the true mark of religion. Religious art, for instance, is not religion. An image of Jesus or of Buddha is not religion. Religion is understanding. It is a completely internal matter.

Therefore, if our Christmas celebration is to be truly religious, it is important to remember who Jesus was, what he did and what he stood for. In this way we can understand how he benefited so many beings and why he has been such a positive force, not merely in his own time, but throughout the past two thousand years and up to the present day. Jesus had exceptionally great compassion. It is very good to check up on this fact and consider it deeply. If the thought comes to our mind, "I must gain his realizations and become as compassionate as he was," then this is the most perfect basis on which to have a celebration of his birth. With this feeling in our hearts, a Christmas festival can be very meaningful and worthwhile.

Therefore, I request all of you who want to come here next week for the festival, please do not think materialistically. This week try to meditate. Isolate your mind from such distractions as worrying how to make your lives more comfortable. "What shall I wear?" "Where should we eat?" "Should I buy this one or that one?" Forget these things for a while. Instead, try to develop compassion and destroy selfishness. Remember that giving presents does not necessarily signify that you have overcome selfishness and have become a holy person.

There are so many ways to give, and to do so arrogantly, thinking about your reputation and so forth, has nothing to do with



charity and true love. If you cannot give material things without miserliness or some other political consideration polluting your thought, it is better not to give at all. First train your mind. Try to be less attached to external things and work instead on your interior, mental training.

This week, instead of planning and partying, going here and there performing confused actions and meeting with confused beings—instead of all this, try to meditate. Even if you have never meditated before, try to meditate now on love. Ask yourself, “What does true love really mean?”

This is such a simple practice, but I think it can be extremely rewarding. It is not sufficient to say we know the meaning of love by thinking of our relationships with specific people such as friends, our husband or wife, and so forth. Giving presents to our family, for instance, is not necessarily a practice of religious charity or a sign of true love. Acting in a so-called loving manner only to these people can be a form of selfishness and have nothing to do with true love. True love is directed toward all beings without discrimination. Furthermore, the quality of any action is determined principally by the motivation behind that action, so we must be as aware as possible of the reasons why we are doing something for someone else.

Why do we give presents to those we like and not to those we dislike? Since this is the way we in fact behave, what is the reason for it? Also, we do not give presents to people who dislike us. Why not? When we are making up our mind whom we shall buy presents for, what is going on inside us? How do we make these

decisions? Asking ourselves questions like this about actions we generally take for granted is very beneficial, and very revealing as well. It is not like trying to stump someone else with a difficult question, trying to gain advantage in a typically political way. It is questioning our own motivation, and this is a private, individual and completely internal process. So please try as much as possible to check up on your motivation.

We all agree that Jesus and Buddha must be holy beings. Yet neither of them made a practice of giving material things to others. Their principal giving was through showing the teachings on how to gain perfect realizations. Even when Jesus gave bread this was just a relative expression of his primary concern: leading people to a realization of the Holy Spirit within. He knew how to give bread in such a way that it would help others gain everlasting peace and happiness. After all, Jesus was not stupid; he knew what he was doing. He had a much higher level of understanding than any of us.

Our normal way of giving and of showing love to others is quite ignorant. The feeling that often rises in us while saying to someone, "Oh, I love you so much!" is one of heightened emotionality, generating much confusion and internal conflict. And the presents we give at such a time are not given freely, but mask some underlying, ulterior motive. Is this love?

If we are really intelligent and have gained some understanding, we can see that the essence of true religion is completely opposite to the way we have acted in the past. So now is the time to check

up. This week, before we do anything, think what it would be like to act with a completely different motivation. What is the reaction in our mind to this suggestion? If we want to have a meaningful Christmas, we should think to act in a manner completely contrary to the usual. This does not mean, however, that we should alter our behavior on an external, physical level, but rather work on changing our mental attitude. In this way, the festival of Jesus's birth can become truly worthwhile. Therefore, please try to keep these thoughts in mind and stay as alert as possible during the coming week.

Try to discover within yourself the meaning of true silence: the silence of a peaceful, satisfied mind. Do not be concerned if the lama's lectures contain many words or just a few. Words are cheap; the best thing to do is think deeply about whatever you hear. It is sufficient to hold just a simple phrase in your mind—"How can I achieve inner peace?"—and question yourself about it regularly. If you give yourself enough time during the day to think about this, then sooner or later an answer will come.

Generally, our mind is like stone. Although we have listened to the teachings of so many religions and philosophies, they have never penetrated our consciousness. The words we have heard have done nothing to bring us a better understanding of ourselves and the world around us. I truly feel this is our situation.

If we had truly satisfying realizations, then it would not matter to us what the outside conditions were. We would always remain peaceful and happy. But we are not like this at all. For instance, if someone were to taunt us for some lack of knowledge—no matter

how insignificant—we would immediately become upset. “Do you know how they make Coca Cola?” “No, I’m so ignorant; I don’t have even the faintest idea how it is made.” But who cares; what is the ultimate benefit of knowing how to make Coca Cola? Buddha discovered everlastingly peaceful realizations within himself, without having to know how to manufacture Coca Cola. Think about what is important.

Jesus also discovered the source of peace within himself. He did not have to build an atomic bomb to find this peace. But modern men, women and children are so completely hemmed in by their own unexamined opinions that they do nothing but make more confusion for themselves. They do not possess integrated minds. The incredible amount of schooling they have received has not been digested and no conclusions have been drawn. Their education has not enabled them to solve their inner problems and achieve peace of mind. We say that the modern person is so intelligent, but what good is our intelligence if we only use it to cheat one another?

I hope that you who have come a long way to listen to this lama’s words are not offended by the fact that I have not had pleasant things to say to you. Almost every word of mine has been a criticism. But I did not mean to imply that you people possess the negative qualities I have been talking about. However, if some of what I have said strikes a chord within you, then maybe you should check up. In this way you can grow beyond such tendencies. Whenever you feel confused, penetrate within and analyze

yourself. Observe what is happening to you on the inner levels. In this way you will be able to draw integrated conclusions based on wisdom concerning your own behavior. Thus it may prove possible to gain some satisfaction from your life. Remember that Shakyamuni Buddha himself started off as a deluded being and eventually became enlightened by checking in this very same way.

Peace, satisfaction and security are primarily internal matters. Therefore, it is more important to be concerned with your own state of mind than to be distracted by society's confusion. Do not think, "How can I possibly gain peace when so many countries are at war? Down with the oppressors!" In most cases, such thoughts are merely vain words. Instead of expending your energy in such a fruitless way, try to be peaceful within yourself. This is much more realistic—and has greater benefits—than superficial political talk. Besides being of no help whatsoever in changing the external situation, such talk only adds to your own nervousness and makes matters worse. It is ignorant emotionalism, completely devoid of knowledge-wisdom. On the other hand, if you gain some true inner experience of peace by checking on your motivation and training your mind you can share this peace with others. This will make a profound difference in the external situation, and will be the most effective way of bringing peace to the world.

We pride ourselves on being logical. Well then, if everyone were to become inwardly peaceful and fully satisfied, the causes for war would cease, wouldn't they? Isn't this logical? Choose any international conflict at all and imagine what would happen if the people on both sides were peaceful and inwardly satisfied. What would

happen to the conflict? It is the height of ignorance to think that peace can be won by violent means. “We must have peace, therefore I am going to kill you.” How absurd! As I said before, the only way to gain true peace is by discovering your own inner, peaceful nature. This is the only effective solution.

Do not trust my words about this matter. Think about them and check up if they make sense or not. Use your wisdom and do not blindly accept what someone dressed like a lama tells you. Listening to a lot of words without coming to some sort of conclusion from your own experience and insight is a waste of time and only creates more confusion. You must integrate what you hear and bring it together single-pointedly. Be observant and have an open mind until you reach a satisfying conclusion. There is no place in this short life for the arrogance of mere words. Try to actualize your understanding and make it a part of your daily practice.

Thank you, and have a merry Christmas.

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Jesus has definitely blessed you because you are already blessed. I am sure there is a circular pattern, even astrologically speaking, to your relationship with him. It was necessary for Jesus to come at the time he did and give teachings. Furthermore, there must have been a special connection allowing you to receive realizations from these teachings, bringing blessings to your inner being, to your deepest level of consciousness. I am sure of this. You would never have gained fundamental insights if you had not prepared yourself in some positive way, laying a foundation with your own

understanding. Do not think it is enough to look expectantly into the sky and Lord Jesus will give you something without any effort at all on your part.

Nowhere in Jesus's teachings does it say that it is unnecessary to do anything to gain realizations. Nevertheless, many people have misunderstandings about this. They feel that there is nothing they can do from their own side to develop their mind. This is a great problem. God wants everyone to become pure and holy without making any discrimination between East and West, black and white and so forth. For me, "God" means to be without superstitions causing confusion in the mind. But to think, "I cannot do anything; I am powerless to help myself" only adds to one's ignorance. Each of you has the power to create a peaceful mind and the power to create a berserk mind. The choice is up to you.

This does not mean that you have to do something physical. Rather, you should try to understand the nature of your mind. Only by using your understanding to actualize your own spiritual path can you ever reach the supreme goal of peace and happiness. Therefore, instead of attending the regularly scheduled classes between now and Christmas, you students should act. You have plenty of material already for meditation, so think deeply about all that you have heard. In other words, go into retreat—not physically, but within your mind.

When we see each other again on Christmas Eve for the celebration of Holy Jesus's birth, let us do so in peace with a good vibration and a happy mind. I think that would be wonderful. To attend the celebration with an angry disposition would be so sad.

Come instead with a beautiful motivation and much love. Have no discrimination, but see everything as a golden flower, even your worst enemy. Then Christmas, which so often produces an agitated mind, will become so beautiful.

When you change your mental attitude, the external vision also changes. This is a true turning of the mind. There is no doubt about this. I am not special, but I have had experience doing this, and it works. You people are very intelligent so you can understand how the mind has the ability to change itself and its environment. There is no reason why this change cannot be for the better.

Some of you might think, "Oh, I want to have nothing to do with Jesus, nothing to do with the Bible." This is a very angry, emotional attitude toward Christianity. If you really understood, you would recognize that what Jesus taught was love. It is as simple, and as profound, as that. If you had true love within you, I am sure you would feel much more peaceful than you do now. How do you normally think of love? Be honest. It is always involved with discrimination, isn't it? Just look around this room and see if everyone here is an object of your love. Why do you discriminate so sharply between friend and enemy? Why do you see such a big difference between yourself and others?

In the Buddhist teachings, this falsely discriminating attitude is called dualism. Jesus said that such an attitude is the opposite of true love. Therefore, is there any one of us who has the pure love Jesus was talking about? If we do not, we should not criticize his teachings or feel they are irrelevant to us. We are the ones who have misunderstood, perhaps knowing the words of his teachings but

never acting upon them. There are so many beautiful sentences in the Bible, but I do not recall reading that Jesus ever said that without your doing anything whatsoever—without preparing yourself in some way—the Holy Spirit would descend upon you, *whoosh!* If you do not act the way he said you should act, there is no Holy Spirit existent anywhere for you.

What I have read in the Bible has the same connotation as the Buddhist teachings on equilibrium, compassion and changing one's ego-attachment into love for others. It may not be immediately obvious how to train your mind to develop these attitudes, but it is certainly possible to do so. Only our selfishness and closed-mindedness prevent us.

With true realizations, the mind is no longer egotistically concerned with only its own salvation. With true love, one no longer behaves dualistically: feeling very attached to some people, distant from others, and totally indifferent to the rest. It is so simple. In the ordinary personality the mind is always divided against itself, always fighting and disturbing its own peace. Check up inside now and discover how you look at your neighbors. Visualize first a friend and then an enemy and see how your mind reacts. Instinctively we feel attachment for the one called “friend” and aversion for the one called “enemy,” but such reactions are the opposite of peace. They are negative and do nothing but produce suffering.

The teachings on love are very practical. Do not put religion somewhere up in the sky and feel you are stuck down here on Earth. If the actions of body, speech and mind are in accordance

with loving kindness, you automatically become a truly religious person. To be religious does not mean that you attend certain teachings. If you listen to teachings and misinterpret them, you are in fact the opposite of religious. And it is only because you do not understand a certain teaching that you abuse religion.

Lack of deep understanding leads to partisanship. The ego feels, "I am a Buddhist, therefore Christianity must be all wrong." This is very harmful to true religious feeling. You do not destroy a religion with bombs but with hatred. More importantly, you destroy the peacefulness of your own mind. It does not matter whether you express your hatred with words or not. Words do not mean anything. The mere thought of hatred automatically destroys your peace. Similarly, true love does not depend on physical expression. You should realize this. True love is a feeling deep within you. It is not just a matter of wearing a smile on your face and looking happy. Rather, it arises from a heartfelt understanding of every other being's suffering and radiates out to all of them indiscriminately. It does not favor a chosen few to the exclusion of everyone else. This is true love.

Furthermore, if someone hits you and you react with anger or great alarm crying, "What has happened to me?" this also has nothing to do with a mind knowing the meaning of true love. It is just the ignorant preoccupation of the ego with its own welfare. How much wiser it is to realize, "Being hit does not really harm me. My delusion of hatred is an enemy that harms me much more than this." Reflecting like this allows true love to grow.

That is all for today. I hope that what I have said helps make the

celebration of Jesus's birth meaningful for you, for this was the sole ambition behind all my remarks.

Thank you so much.

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I think we are very fortunate. We should rejoice and be glad mainly because we have this precious human body giving us the ability to discover, during this present lifetime, the Holy Jesus nature, or Spirit, within each of us. From a relative point of view, Jesus was a man who was born on such-and-such a day, looked like this and lived like that. Because this man brought us certain teachings, we observe Christmas to celebrate his birth. From an ultimate point of view, however, the significance of Christmas is that this very day we can realize this Holy Jesus nature within our own psyche, or mind. We can develop continuously and achieve the same type of power Jesus possessed. We can definitely do this. Do not think that Jesus and God are something else while we are only small, insignificant beings. There is no difference at all between the ultimate nature of Jesus's Holy Spirit, the transcendent quality of God's nature and the ultimate nature of our own mind.

At present our mind is clouded by false views and wrong conceptions and therefore is temporarily obscured. We do have the ability to see things clearly and accurately, but instead we are groping in the darkness of attachment, clinging to the hallucinatory world of our senses. Because of our obscurations, we have not yet discovered the Holy Spirit, the absolute true nature within our own consciousness. The true character of this consciousness,

our human soul, is that it possesses knowledge enabling it to unite with the infinite true nature of God: the universal waking state consciousness. But we need to discover how to bring about this unification. It is definitely possible to do this and thereby achieve union-oneness with Jesus, with the immaculate nature of his Holy Spirit.

In relative terms, Jesus was just one man. But in ultimate terms, he is this ultimate nature of the Holy Spirit. That means that everyone—not only every human being, but every sentient being without exception—can reach his exalted level. There is not a single living creature who lacks this potential.

The Bible says that Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit—the Son of Man and of God. We can also become the children of God. We should not think that we are permanently caught in sin. There is not a single being who is suffering permanently, nor is there a single sin that is permanent. Only as long as our mind is polluted with defilements, with wrong conceptions about reality, shall we suffer. Suffering is not everlasting; all things are changing. The environment is changing and so is the character of our suffering and dissatisfaction. If sin were permanent, we too would be permanent. It is exactly the same as if a part of our body, our hand for instance, were permanent, never changing. Then again it would follow that we ourselves would be permanent. How lucky we would be; there would be no reason to worry about dying. We would be the first people on Earth to suffer permanently! But such a view is totally illogical, existing solely for the deluded mind. It is not at all in accordance with reality.

There is no human problem that cannot be solved. The idea of permanent sin and suffering only causes an agitated, guilty feeling which in turn produces neuroses and other forms of mental illness. A person laboring under such a misconception reaches a hopeless state in which ignorance and delusion become overwhelming. He or she has deprived life of meaning and has nothing to fall back upon but despair. However, as we develop deeper understanding, we receive more powerful realizations and thereby become purer inside. This results eventually in our attainment of the true power of God: the pure wisdom-knowledge power of love. In this way it is possible to achieve oneness with Jesus and be reborn in the Holy Spirit.

We have so many reasons to rejoice, blessed as we are with the freedom and opportunity afforded us by our humanity to enjoy and contemplate the effect of a life such as that of Jesus. We can understand his divine wisdom-love, seeing it as a force having nothing whatsoever to do with the gravitational force field of dualistic attachment. That is why I think we are so very fortunate; there is no doubt in my mind how fortunate we are.

Also, it pleases me greatly to see that all you many Westerners have come together here in such a feeling of oneness. There is no belief here that the lama has come from somewhere in the sky while you poor people have crawled out of the Earth. Nothing like that. We have come together from so many different countries that we are truly international. That is so beautiful: to be from such varied backgrounds and yet share the same feelings. This is reality, true compassion. Here there is no thought, "He is British; you

are Tibetan; I am American. Each one of us is so different.” This very experience of oneness blesses you. So do not worry or doubt whether God is blessing you or not. This unified feeling itself is God’s blessing. There are so many reasons to be joyful that I am very happy.

Thank you all so much.

Questions and answers

Q. Do you have any special message for Westerners concerning the present Christmas season?

Lama Yeshe. The purpose of Christmas is for people to be healthy and happy. Therefore we should be concerned that the way we celebrate Christmas is organic and natural, rather than customary and concrete. We have to be more aware of the natural flow of things and not be restricted by old habit patterns. This flow relates both to our thoughts and to our physical actions. We should be aware of our body and mind and of the importance that they both be sound and healthy.

Q. Christmas, which is a celebration of a birth, is largely a children’s holiday. How does this relate to its more natural celebration?

Lama Yeshe. Jesus said that unless we become like little children, we cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven. There can be a problem for people as to the connotation of this advice. I think it means that generally our body and mind are unhealthy because our ideas—what life is, etc.—are too concrete, too fixed. Thus to

become more like children means to be more natural, to discover the natural reality of what we as humans can be and do, rather than being trapped in the fantasy world of our fixed ideas. Normally we ignore the natural and cling instead to a fantasy image of reality. This is an important point to recognize.

Q. In spiritual terms, then, becoming a child means being more natural. But for some people being natural means being neurotic. What about them?

Lama Yeshe. As I have been using the word, the meaning of “natural” is to be other than merely intellectual and dry. It means to be more organic, and this can be very profound. Children, for instance, have a certain kind of openness that we have all noticed. They don’t block themselves intellectually. Instead, they let their feelings flow. They show their bad side and they show their good side. In other words, they express themselves openly. But adults are often too controlled by their intellectual ideas. This type of rigid control puts too much pressure on the subconscious parts of the mind, not allowing them their proper expression. The results are unnatural: bad communication and cruel thoughts. Children, on the other hand, are different. If they are angry, they express their anger immediately. If they are happy, they come right out and say, “I’m happy with you.” This kind of openness is more natural and closer to our basic human nature than the artificial reactions of the neurotic mind.

Unsatisfactory relationships between adults develop because they block their natural energy in some way. This results in blocked

communication. If, for example, a husband and wife are having a bad time, it is generally because their communication has become disconnected. In general, all types of neurotic and unsatisfactory behavior result from causes such as this.

Q. For people who have grown accustomed to blocking their energy, who have lost their ability to be open and direct, what is a good way to rediscover the more natural child within?

Lama Yeshe. The simple way is, first of all, to accept what they are rather than always wanting to be something else. People ruled by their fantasy intellect do not accept what they are. Therefore they are not really intelligent, because they are unable to discover their own internal good qualities. Instead, they look for such qualities externally, outside their own reality. This is like thinking, “I wish I were a flower.” But they would be much happier if they could see their positive qualities and learn to accept their reality as it is. This would be much better.

Q. You have talked about being born, or born anew, in the Holy Spirit. From a Buddhist point of view, what does this mean?

Lama Yeshe. In Buddhist terms, the beginning of such a spiritual rebirth is known as taking refuge. It can be explained briefly in this way. At a certain point in life a person gains a realization of the weak or undeveloped side of their own nature. It then becomes clear that this dark, shadowy, unfulfilled energy acts in a way that causes confusion and suffering to arise and continue. Seeing this cause and effect evolution, the person comes to seek the liber-

ated—or Buddhadharma—qualities of true wisdom. The seeker takes refuge in these qualities, sincerely wishing to actualize this wisdom, or Dharma understanding, and to exchange old habits for something better.

Q. Then even for a non-Buddhist, entering any spiritual path is still a matter of taking refuge.

Lama Yeshe. Exactly. Whenever I conduct a refuge ceremony, I explain that the actual taking of refuge is the cultivation of a state of mind that seeks release from suffering and its cause. However, the specific, technical details of what is to be visualized during the ceremony should be whatever people find comfortable. They don't have to use the traditional Buddhist figures. For example, if it is easier for them, they can visualize Christ.

Q. This raises a related question. Many people who consider themselves Buddhists feel great devotion to Jesus. Is this a contradiction?

Lama Yeshe. No, not at all. In fact, it is very beautiful. That is my feeling. Many people come to our courses who feel they are Buddhist yet have much devotion for the profound deeds, the bodhicitta actions and the divine qualities of Jesus. They have much respect for him. Also, many Christians come to these courses seeking some kind of method, contained in Buddhist meditational practices, through which they can exercise their own faith. This has often been my experience. Therefore, at certain times I have given the refuge ceremony in accordance with their own devotional experience.



The practice of taking refuge involves the visualization of a specific object of refuge, and I encourage people to use whatever they find truly meaningful for them. This object—in some schools of psychology referred to as an archetype—can be either Buddhist or from another tradition. For example, in 1975 I was with a group of Christians in Indiana who were very interested in the principle of refuge. They thought it would be worthwhile to have a method to channel their energy for spiritual growth, so I led them in a refuge ceremony specifically built around their devotion to Jesus. And recently in Switzerland, at a course where most of the two hundred people attending were Christian, we did the same thing. People received a very good feeling from this.

Q. Would you give a brief outline of a meditational practice that someone devoted to Jesus could do?

Lama Yeshe. As a daily practice, you could do the following. Sit, or kneel if you like, in a comfortable position, relaxed but with your back straight. In your mind's eye, visualize Jesus before you. His face has a tranquil, peaceful and loving expression. A picture of the resurrected Christ or of Jesus teaching may be used as a model for this visualization.

Then visualize from the crown of his head much radiant, white light coming to your own crown. This white light is in the nature of blissful energy and as it enters your body it purifies the physical contamination, or sin, accumulated over countless lifetimes. This blissful, white energy purifies all diseases of the body, including

cancers, and activates and renews the functioning of your entire nervous system.

In a similar manner, red light is visualized radiating forth from Jesus's throat and entering your own, completely pervading your vocal center with the sensation of bliss. If you have difficulties with your speech—always telling lies, being uncontrolled in what you say, engaging in slander, using harsh language or the like—this blissful red energy purifies you of all these negativities. As a result, you discover the divine qualities of speech.

Then from Jesus's heart infinite radiant blue light comes to sink into your heart, purifying your mind of all its wrong conceptions. Your selfish and petty ego, which is like the chief or president of the delusions, and the three poisons of greed, hatred and ignorance, which are like the ego's ministers, are all purified in this blissful, blue radiance. The indecisive mind, which is especially doubtful and caught between "maybe this" and "maybe that," is clarified. Also purified is the narrow mind, which cannot see the totality because its focus is too tight. As the light energy fills your mind, your heart becomes like the blue sky, embracing universal reality and all of space.

This three-part purification of body, speech and mind can be very helpful for anyone having great devotion to Jesus. If you are unable to visualize all of the above, you can concentrate merely on Jesus's heart. From this center much blissful, white radiant energy comes to your heart, purifying all defilements. This is a simplified practice, but still can be extremely helpful.

You can conclude this meditation by visualizing a white lotus flower blooming in your heart. The compassionate figure visualized in front of you then sinks into your heart and manifests on this lotus seat. Afterward, whatever you eat or drink becomes an offering to this Jesus within your heart. If this meditation is done daily with good concentration and a pure motivation, it can be very effective in transforming your ordinary actions, words and thoughts and bringing you closer to the divine qualities of Jesus.

Q. Considering the many cultural differences between people, is it possible—or even beneficial—for there to be a unity of world religions?

Lama Yeshe. Yes, that would be very useful.

Q. Even with all the differences between people?

Lama Yeshe. Definitely.

Q. Then what would be the basis for this unity? Where would it come from?

Lama Yeshe. Unity—in an actual, realistic sense— would be for everyone to follow the teachings of his or her religion exactly as they were given. Why? Because disunity or lack of harmony arises when people do not practice the teachings, but only grasp onto dry, intellectual opinions of philosophical theories about them. That is what causes conflict and disunity. However, it has been my experience in meeting so many truly religious people from various

traditions that all of those really actualizing the teachings they have received always come to a common conclusion. There is never any disharmony. This has been my repeated experience.

Q. How would you summarize the shared conclusion, the essential agreement, reached by such people? What is the one point on which all religions come together?

Lama Yeshe. That's so simple: loving kindness and serving others sincerely. This is the essential teaching: to help others and completely destroy one's self-attachment.

In Tibetan Buddhism, this compassionate attitude is called bodhicitta and is the very essence of our religion. I believe that all religions and all elevated systems of ethics agree that we should serve others and reach beyond our habitual attachment to self-gratification.

Because each tradition emphasizes the importance of such a selfless attitude, I think that every religion has a deeply beneficial quality. But nowadays when people study Buddhism or any of the other major religions, they concentrate only on philosophy and doctrine. They neglect to apply the key of method to their everyday lives. This is the problem. As a result of this neglect, the actual method originally taught is lost. Instead, people cherish their individual theories, philosophies and concrete ideas about this and that and have absolutely no idea how their philosophy or theology is linked to the reality of human existence.

True religion has to do with realizing the highest human potential. Therefore, we must research and rediscover the key of appli-

cation, the effective methods for transforming the mind. Anyone can talk philosophy, but who knows how this philosophy is related to one's inner potential? The key has been lost. This is why religions dissolve and become degenerate: lack of application to the problems of everyday life.

Q. You have said that when the Christmas season approaches, it often brings unhappiness rather than joy. In your words, children go berserk as a direct result of their parents' influence. Can you elaborate on this?

Lama Yeshe. Parents have to be very aware of their children. They should try to comprehend how their minds work and what influences them. This is their responsibility. They should understand that the way they set up the home environment and behave between themselves has a definite effect on the children.

Parents generally agree that it is important for their children to receive a good education, but they often think this is solely a matter of schooling, of learning words and concepts. But education is not always through words; in fact, most of what children learn comes from watching the way their parents act. The parents set up a certain situation and the children copy what they see, rather than what they are told.

Therefore, if parents are truly interested in educating their children, they should take responsibility for the way they themselves behave, especially when the children are around. For instance, if all they do when Christmas approaches is think about buying this and arranging that—if the children hear them argue, complain

and fight over such things all the time—what kind of effect does this have? It is completely ridiculous, of course, but this is often what happens. So parents should be aware of this tendency and try to be less involved in that side of Christmas. Instead, they should be more concerned with the deeper spirit of Christmas: the fulfilment of our unique human qualities, our inner potential. This should be their highest concern, not shopping and making mundane arrangements.

Q. You have said that true change results not so much from our outward activity, but from what we do internally, within our mind. *Lama Yeshe.* Yes, and knowledge gained internally should not remain hidden within one's own mind; it should be shared with others. To do this properly we have to explore other people's minds and understand how they work. In other words, we have to explain whatever inner knowledge we might gain in a way that will be helpful to others. This type of education in inner reality is a true service. For example, if I want to help you, the best thing I can do is try to aid you in developing your own wisdom. True help would be to introduce you to your own reality, to let you become more aware and knowledgeable of yourself.

Q. In addition to developing our own mind and helping others develop theirs, aren't there other things we can do to help, to bring about positive change? For instance, in the West we think that charitable actions, such as aiding the poor and sick, providing food and clothing, etc., are very important.

Lama Yeshe. That's good, very good. It is important to do these things. We should be aware of others' suffering and help in whatever way we can. The question is how best to offer this help. Only by organizing ourselves first is it possible to be of meaningful service to others. If we are completely disorganized, what kind of help can we give?

However, if we are too organized in a material sense, this also raises problems. Sometimes a charitable organization becomes so strictly ordered that its original purpose is lost. Therefore, the best type of organization is the internal one; how we order our mind is of the most importance. If what is happening internally is suitable—if our mind is well trained in compassion and wisdom—the proper external organization always follows. Yet even though such internal training is essential, we should not disregard outward activity, thinking it unimportant. It is important, but there must be a balance between inner and outer development if we really want to benefit others.

Q. You have suggested that the best way to prepare for Christmas is to meditate, to look closely at the kind of life we have led during the past year, instead of partying the way we normally do. But in terms of a Christmas celebration, isn't there some value in partying, in having a good time?

Lama Yeshe. Definitely. This is a very important part of any celebration, especially Christmas. At this special time of year we should remind ourselves that by having our uniquely human qualities—those higher, more distinguished aspects of being human—

we have the precious opportunity to be reborn spiritually. We can make new discoveries, go on new adventures. As we remember Jesus's actions, his deeds of loving kindness and divine compassion, we recognize how extremely fortunate we are. In the comprehensive awareness of what he did, we are inspired to think, "So too will I!" It is with this joyous and enthusiastic spirit that we should come together for a Christmas party.

If we meditate in this way, the elevated or divine qualities within, which before were perhaps hidden and unconscious, are brought into conscious functioning. This process of awakening can be continuously developed if each year we perform such a meaningful celebration. It can become a celebration in which we rejoice for the opportunities we now have. For example, if I were a fish, I couldn't think about how to develop my mind. But because I am human I have some kind of profound and unique quality that lets me communicate with the divine deeds of Jesus. I can take him as my example and develop myself in that direction. This is a true cause for rejoicing.

Q. The normal Christmas party has loud music and a lot of dancing. Can these also have a place in a Christmas celebration?⁵

Lama Yeshe. Yes, these things can definitely have great value. For instance, if when boys and girls are dancing together it is done as an offering to other people, to God or to Jesus, it can be of very high quality. If we think, "In remembrance of Jesus's divine deeds I

⁵ See note 7, below.

offer this dance,” it can be very beautiful, very joyful. It all depends on our attitude. It is only because we have a poor attitude that our partying becomes too extreme, and this type of extreme behavior is what ruins the quality of our celebration.

For example, if we are dancing in the memory of Jesus’s deeds, all our actions and even our objects of attachment can become offerings, and the resulting experience is transcendental. Everything is joyful, an expression of what Buddhism calls “divine pride.” I have seen parties like this. There was a lot of music and the dancing was unbelievable, yet the vibration was pure and joyous. Everyone was having a great time. The ordinary party, however, is not like this. It is very neurotic. Girls are trying very hard to become objects of attraction for the boys, and the boys are doing the same. The most this can lead to is worldly sense stimulation wherein there is no higher transformation of energy. But if we have wisdom we can make our lives an unimaginably blissful experience.

Thank you very much.

FROM THE time Lama Tsongkhapa was born until he passed away, his life was one of continual meditation and teaching, bringing benefit to countless mother sentient beings. He did nothing out of selfishness. This is too much for us to believe, isn't it? Why is that? Simply because from the time we were born until now, what have we been doing? How does our life story compare with his biography? As we check up we come to see that during our entire life we have always been thinking of "I," always putting it first. We have been preoccupied with our reputation, our material comfort and the like. Our concerns, dear friends, have been those of the supermarket.

Therefore, when we compare what we have done with the incredible things Lama Tsongkhapa did, we must conclude that either he was completely crazy or that we are. We have to decide. Who is right and who is wrong? I am not telling you which one to choose. I am just asking you to check up on your own instinctive attitudes.

Teachings are not always given with extensive philosophical explanations. As you remember, on Christmas Day we read what



Jesus did during his life, the story of his compassionate deeds. His entire way of life is in itself a teaching. The same is true for Lama Tsongkhapa's life. The amazing energy he had gives us an idea of how to put our own lives together. This is the teaching of divine and profound wisdom-action, the action that benefits numberless beings and leads to the highest goal: realization of the enlightened attitude and the fruit of full awakening. Thus it is very useful to listen to such biographies.

As mentioned earlier, Je Tsongkhapa—or Je Rinpoche, as he is commonly known—was born in Amdo, that part of eastern Tibet near the Chinese border. It is a very special place, a living Dharma experience. Lama Tsongkhapa's parents had such unusual dreams while he was still in the womb that they knew someone special was going to be born. Through the science of dreams, by putting together clues from the various visions they received, they could tell that the child would be an incarnation of Manjushri, the embodiment of enlightened wisdom. Other signs indicated that he would also possess the qualities of Avalokiteshvara and Vajrapani: enlightened compassion and the power of skillful means.

His parents were not the only ones who received predictions about the child. There was a famous ascetic lama living nearby doing retreat on Yamantaka, the high tantric aspect of Manjushri. During this retreat Yamantaka himself appeared and announced, "Next year I am going to come to a certain village in the land of Tsongkha." In his search to understand the meaning of this vision, the lama arrived in the indicated village at the very time

Tsongkhapa was born. He approached the parents and told them that he, too, had reason to believe the child was a very special being indeed.

There were many signs and events during his childhood pointing to the uniqueness of the boy. Even when he was very young he would practice a yogic method of Manjushri, reciting the appropriate mantra over and over again. One day, on a stone near his house, this mantra appeared by itself! It might not be there anymore, but up until 1959 it was still possible to visit Amdo and see that stone. There are many other stories like this to tell, but perhaps this is not the time to dwell on them.

Je Rinpoche spent much of his youth—and indeed the rest of his life—studying with the great lamas of the various Buddhist traditions: the Nyingma, Kadam, Kagyü and Sakya. If I were to refer to these traditions as “sects,” you might receive the false impression that they are totally different and even opposed to one another. In fact, many textbooks in the West foster such ideas, leading people to think that these traditions or schools have always been at war with each other. But it is not like this at all. That is a complete misconception.

For example, Lama Tsongkhapa himself received teachings from the great pandits and meditation masters of all these various traditions. He studied with them, debated in their classes, mastered their meditation techniques and had his understanding and proficiency examined thoroughly by all of them. Rather than being a source of conflict, this entire experience was of immense benefit to everyone.

But still the thought of sectarianism remains. Books in Western languages give people the idea that one tradition has a good practice, another a bad practice, that one concentrates solely on study while another does no studying at all, and so forth. I think many of you must have read such books claiming that one tradition is somehow better than the rest, so you all know what I am talking about. Yes, such statements are very interesting to read, but they are all views born from ignorance.

If you check up carefully you will find—as all the meditators and teachers of the past have found—that the Nyingma, Kagyü, Sakya and Gelug traditions all teach the Buddhadharma. They are all based on the fundamental teachings of the four noble truths, and they all study and follow the graded path that leads to full enlightenment. Each tradition has these same lamrim teachings, and each explains exactly the same subjects we have studied here at Kopan. If you check you will find that what is covered in Je Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo*, the most extensive version of these graded path teachings, is covered in the texts of all the other traditions as well. Many of these have already been published in English, so you can prove this for yourself. And when you remember that Tsongkhapa received his lineages from the great masters of the other schools, how could their teachings be anything but the same?

I think it is very important to refute all sectarian views. There are some people and some books that claim, for example, that Tsongkhapa's Gelug tradition specializes in philosophical debate but has no tantric meditational practices to pass on to its followers. You can hear this view, and others like it, expressed very often,

but in fact this is nothing but a misconception we would be better without. To dispel it, merely look through the vast literature Lama Tsongkhapa himself has written. You will discover that his works on advanced tantra far outnumber those on the more fundamental sutra teachings. His commentaries cover the entire range of tantric yoga and, although complete with scriptural references, grew out of his own meditational experiences.

Yet there is one thing about Lama Tsongkhapa's approach that might lead some people to believe that his followers do not practice tantra. He stressed very much that when someone is practicing advanced yogic methods, he or she must present a subdued appearance to others. Tantric practices are too esoteric for a great outward show. For example, if there is a beautiful woman who tries too hard to advertise her charms, even exaggerating them, she can actually appear ugly. Do you think this ever happens or not? It is exactly the same with the practice of tantra. It is something very personal and therefore much better if practiced in a personal, inward way.

The advanced meditational techniques of tantra have been designed to remove the subtlest delusions and defilements obscuring the mind. Therefore, if you use these profound methods as part of another petty ego game—wishing to inspire awe or envy in others—you are going completely against their main purpose and will therefore reap nothing but distractions and interferences to your practice. This is similar to what happens to the woman who exaggerates her good looks. It becomes difficult for her to walk down a New York City street without protection. To call attention

to yourself by announcing “I am a great tantric yogi” will make it impossible for you to succeed with your practices. Therefore, Je Rinpoche advised that, as much as possible, a person following the tantric path should appear natural and simple.

But you definitely *do* practice! You do incredible things inwardly, but nothing shows on the outside. That must be why some people feel that the Gelug tradition teaches nothing but the Vinaya rules of discipline, nothing but strict morality. “Look how pious those monks are! They don’t even eat dinner. They must never have heard of the tantric techniques for transforming worldly poisons into powerful Dharma medicine. Otherwise, why do they keep such strict control over themselves? Are they afraid they are going to lose their heads?”

In fact, this controlled behavior is based on the example of Lama Tsongkhapa’s own life. Even when practicing the most profound tantric methods for achieving the highest enlightenment, he felt it wiser not to emit too powerful a vibration to others. It was much better to appear to be a nobody; fewer distractions arose this way. This accounts for the peaceful, almost ascetic, arhat-like appearance of many meditators, even while inwardly actualizing the most profound and dynamic yogic methods.

Before Lama Tsongkhapa appeared, many Tibetans had serious misunderstandings about the practice of Dharma. Some thought, “Since I am practicing tantric yoga, I can do anything. I can drink as much alcohol as I like because I have the supreme method of transformation. The same with sex or anything else I desire.” Others felt, “Because I am following the sutra path and the strict

Vinaya discipline, I must avoid such things as drink at all costs. I must be as ascetic as possible.” Such extreme attitudes showed a complete lack of understanding of how the sutra and tantra teachings could fit together into one unified practice. Instead, they were seen to be two completely different, and opposite, paths to enlightenment. But Lama Tsongkhapa explained how one person can actualize the entire sutra and tantra paths, observing Vinaya and practicing the most advanced yogic methods in turn without any contradiction. He demonstrated the accomplishment of this joint practice very clearly in his life, and explained this experience in many texts, some of which have been partially translated into English.

When I travelled to the West I saw many books on Buddhism. Some were very good, but others were full of garbage. Certain art books, for example, give the impression that Tibetan Mahayana paintings illustrate some sort of erotic practice, something solely concerned with mundane sensuality. Authors of such works do nothing but demonstrate their complete ignorance of the subject matter, yet these are the very people often cited as “experts” in their field!

The grandmother of one of my students once sent me a small book published by a large foundation in Los Angeles. It contained brief descriptions of all the world’s religions. The section on Tibetan Buddhism was about two or three pages long and explained how degenerate the teachings were, nothing more than “dirty sexual practices.” This is the kind of thing that feeds people’s misconceptions and is therefore very damaging, not primar-

ily to Tibetan Buddhism but to those who read and write such things. That is why I think it is very important for people to have a right understanding about these matters.

As far as the actual practice of tantra is concerned, it does not necessarily involve drinking alcohol, smoking and the like. It does not mean that the yogi meditator can do whatever he or she pleases. To understand this point, consider the following example from the illustrious Kagyü tradition, noted even in the West for its advanced tantric practitioners. One time the famous poet-meditator Milarepa paid a visit to one of his former teachers, the man who had taught him the alphabet. This teacher asked him to describe what his famous guru, Marpa the Translator, was like, how he lived and so forth. So Milarepa explained, “Marpa has a house, many fields, a wife, this and that...” When he finished his description, he was told, “Very good. You should have all these things, too. You can live in your mother’s house, turn her fields into a big farm, marry, raise a big family and so forth. You can do everything Marpa does.”

But Milarepa answered, “Excuse me. Marpa’s having a wife is for the benefit of all mother sentient beings. But I am not ready to copy him; I haven’t attained his level of realization. First, I must lead a very simple life. All I want to do is study the teachings my precious guru has given to me and put them into practice as much as possible. If I ever reach Marpa’s exalted state, perhaps I shall do what you suggest.” Of course, we all know that Milarepa is famous for the strength of his tantric practices, those supreme methods that brought him full enlightenment within one short lifetime.

Thus his example explains clearly how wrong it is to think that a yogi practicing advanced tantra can do anything at any time at all.

Someone like Marpa can drink and have a wife and there will be no question of hindrances interfering with the practice of Dharma. So can a great being like Guru Rinpoche, Padmasambhava, transmitter of Buddhism from India to Tibet and founder of the Nyingma tradition. But whether you can do such things or not is for you to decide. I am not suggesting, however, that any of you should give up such things. I am only pointing out that it can be very misleading to judge things by their external appearance.

Related to this, you should avoid passing judgements that one school or tradition is better than another. Such opinions are not based on any understanding at all, so please do not let them influence you. Because of widespread misinformation in the West, Tibetan Buddhism is already becoming as mixed up and watered down as soup. Therefore, you who have had some personal contact with the teachings should try to preserve and transmit as pure an understanding as possible, and at the very least avoid adding to the confusion.

Another misconception some people have is that certain schools of Tibetan Buddhism only practice meditation and do not believe in studying or in attending discourses. I am sure that many of you have heard or read such statements. But without first receiving some sort of information, how do you meditate? What do you do, meditate on your old bad habits? In business, if you want to make a profit you first have to invest in some material, in some capital. Isn't that true? If you want to have something extra to take

home as profit, you have to start with something. If you start with nothing, you get nothing. The same is true with Dharma practice. Before you can follow an effective meditation method, you must be sure to have clean, clear information and instructions. You have to study this material very carefully and become completely familiar with it, removing all doubts. Only then can your meditations ever prove successful.

Concerning this point there is a famous saying of Sakya Pandita. He is to the Sakya tradition what Guru Rinpoche, Marpa and Tsongkhapa are to theirs. This great lama said, “He who meditates without first listening [to instructions] is like an armless rock climber.”

If we think that preparation or study is unnecessary for successful practice, then even animals can meditate. Whenever they concentrated on eating or drinking they would be engaged in such single-minded meditation. But of course, our practice should somehow be more than this. Khedrub Rinpoche, one of Tsongkhapa’s foremost disciples, pointed out the error of having a dull, uncritical approach to advanced Dharma practice by saying, “It is a great mistake to think that practitioners of tantric yoga do not need the wisdom of analytical reasoning.” Faith and concentration by themselves are not enough.

To summarize, you cannot reach the goal of everlastingly peaceful realization if your approach to the highest tantric practice is taking you in the opposite direction. For example, if you want to go from Kathmandu to Kopan, which is to the east, it is a mistake to travel westward. It will be impossible to get to where you want to

go this way. I say this even though I know that some of you sharp-minded debaters will argue with me, saying, “Since the Earth is round, you can reach Kopan by travelling west from Kathmandu.”

Returning to Lama Tsongkhapa’s biography, we can compare this example of one man’s achievement with what we have done so far. Where did he get the energy to accomplish everything he did while our lives seem taken up with trivialities? It is important to realize that there is no essential difference between Lama Tsongkhapa and ourselves. Do not think that he—or any of the other great Indian or Tibetan teachers—inhabited some sort of unreachable realm while we are stuck down here, trapped in sin and negativity. That is not right. The whole process of mental purification is to rid ourselves of such dualistic thoughts as, “He is holy, while I am nothing.” The practice of guru yoga absorption, in which you visualize yourself as inseparable from the guru-buddha, should wake you up to the realization of your own unlimited capabilities. To think that you are hopeless and incapable is a dangerous underestimation of your qualities and potentialities. Therefore, please study the lives of such great teachers as Lama Tsongkhapa and Milarepa and be inspired by them to use your own abilities to the greatest advantage.

Now it should be clearer why the emphasis on purity is one of the most important features of Lama Tsongkhapa’s teachings. If our body, speech and mind are not kept in a fundamentally healthy condition, it will be impossible to live up to our potential and attain advanced states of meditative concentration (*samadhi*) and penetrative insight (*vipashyana*), both of which are necessary

for receiving profound realizations. Now that you have attended this meditation course, you can see the sense behind this. From your own experience you realize that the body, speech and mind must be tamed by the proper discipline if any progress is to be made. However, I am sure that if I were to talk about the need for such purity and discipline to a group of Los Angeles people caught up in the Los Angeles mentality, they would think I was crazy. But after spending some time observing the mad elephant nature of the untamed mind, you can understand what I am saying. You do not think I am completely crazy.

It is helpful to realize how much your thinking has changed over even as short a period as one month regarding such matters as the need for discipline. Now that you have had the chance to digest a few teachings, you can see how your understanding has grown. Without making such an attempt to put what you hear into practice—experimenting to see if they are valuable or not—it is easy to disregard what someone might tell you. You might think, “Oh, just some more words. Who wants to listen to all that? It has nothing to do with Western traditions, so what possible value could it have for me?” But now that you have put these teachings to the test, trying them out in your own experience, you can see what value they have. To check in this way is very important.

Furthermore, if you do decide to practice the teachings of the graded path, you should do so without arrogance. Do not think, “What fantastic teachings I have received! Now I can forget about right and wrong and put things together in whatever way I like.” In at least one important way this would be a very serious mistake.

An arrogant attitude like this could turn you into a bad influence on your friends. Remember that whatever a person does has an effect on others. It leaves an impression on them and creates in their mind a certain visualization. Thus the influence of friends is a very powerful thing and can easily cause delusions to arise. Therefore, if we truly have compassion for others, we should try to act as naturally as possible while in their company, rather than bragging or showing off whatever powers we may have gained through our practices. This is simple advice and has meaning for us all.

I cannot tell, but perhaps some of you here are as advanced as Guru Rinpoche, Vajradhara or some other great embodiment of the tantric practices. Maybe your control over inner and outer forces is so great that you can do fantastic things, even conduct high voltage electricity through your body. But what is the value of this if, by demonstrating such powers, you fail to benefit others? Perhaps you will only disturb their mind, causing them to become confused or jealous or go berserk. You have to take into account the effect your actions will have on others, because the only reason to practice such advanced methods as tantra is to benefit others as quickly as possible.

To use spiritual teachings or powers in a boastful, inconsiderate way is really very selfish. That is why I say that even a very high practitioner should never be arrogant. It is much better to practice in a subdued manner. When the Buddhist teachings of tantra flourished in India, the practitioner was not even allowed to show others the tantric implements he or she carried. Even the string

of beads used to count mantras had to be hidden in a small bag whenever the practitioner went out among the people.

There were many followers of Lama Tsongkhapa who achieved enlightenment by following his tantric yoga methods; Gyaltsab-je, Khedrub-je and Gyalwa Ensapa are just a few of the most famous. In exactly the same way, if you follow the graded path of sutra and tantra just as Lama Tsongkhapa and the other great gurus of the various traditions have explained it, there is no reason why you yourself cannot achieve full enlightenment in this very lifetime. There is no distinction between men and women concerning this; it is a possibility open to everyone.

Therefore, please put whatever teachings you have received into practice as much as possible. This would be very beneficial for all concerned.

Sometimes, even after studying Dharma for a long time, you may feel that you still do not know how to act properly. At such a time it is useful to read the life stories of the great teachers of the past. This is a good way to check up and see how the teachings can be put into practice in everyday life. This is a very helpful way of learning. Therefore, I am glad we all had the chance to listen to the biographies of Buddha, Jesus and Je Tsongkhapa presented these past few days.

Thank you very much and please enjoy the holiday.

*The Eight Verses of Thought Transformation*⁶

1. Determined to obtain the greatest possible benefit
From all sentient beings,
Who are more precious than a wish-fulfilling jewel,
I hold them most dear at all times.

2. Wherever I am and whoever I am with,
I always consider myself the lowest of all
And, from the depths of my heart,
Hold others dear and supreme.

3. In all actions, I examine my mental continuum
And the minute a delusion arises,
Since it endangers myself and others,
I forcefully confront and avert it.

⁶ Root text by Kadampa Geshe Langri Tangpa, first translated by Lama Zopa Rinpoche in 1975 in *Everflowing Nectar of Bodhichitta: Annihilating the Demon of the Self-Cherishing Mind* and dictated to Nicholas Ribush. Several versions have been published since then, this one edited for FPMT Education Services by Ven. Joan Nicell and Ven. Ailsa Cameron, May 2020. Rinpoche's teachings on these verses may be found in his books *Bodhichitta* (Wisdom, 2019) and *Patience* (Wisdom, 2020) and on the LYWA website, LamaYeshe.com.

4. Whenever I see sentient beings who are wicked in nature
And overwhelmed by negative actions and heavy
suffering,
I hold such rare ones dear,
As if I had found a precious treasure.
5. When, out of envy, others mistreat me
With abuse, insults or the like,
I accept defeat
And offer the victory to them.
6. When someone whom I have benefited
And in whom I have great hopes
Gives me terrible harm,
I regard them as my virtuous friend.
7. In short, both directly and indirectly,
I offer every happiness and benefit to all my mothers.
I secretly take upon myself
All their harms and sufferings.
8. Also, I do not defile all these practices with the stains
Of the superstitions of the eight worldly concerns,
And by knowing all phenomena to be illusory,
Without trusting in them, I am freed from bondage.

Part 2

An Additional Discourse

SOMEHOW, we're still alive and aware enough to remember how long it is since Jesus was born. It was one thousand, nine hundred and eighty-two years ago, right? And I myself am fortunate enough to have been born in the Shangri-la of Tibet, to have come into contact with the world of Western *dakas* and *dakinis*, and to have this chance to acknowledge the history of the holy guru, Jesus.

I've found that having a little understanding of Jesus's life helps me develop my own path, but it's not easy to fully understand the profound events in Jesus's life. It's quite difficult. Of course, the superficial events of his life are fairly easy to understand, but there's not enough room in our mind to comprehend his high bodhisattva actions. Even when Lord Jesus and Lord Buddha were here on earth it was very difficult for ordinary people to understand who they really were. At that time, very few people understood.

⁷ This teaching is available on the LYWA YouTube channel, "Lama Yeshe teaches during Christmas in 1982." It was given on Christmas Day at Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa, Italy, and first published in Lama's *Knowledge-Wisdom* (LYWA, 2023). Part 2 of this video, the afterparty, shows just the sort of loud music and dancing that Lama said was OK, above!

Today I was looking at the Bible, at the Gospel of John in particular, and he was talking about the miracles Jesus performed and how few people understood the profundity of his liberated mind that allowed him to perform those miracles.

Anyway, whenever I'm at a meditation course such as this at Christmas time, I like to talk about this kind of thing. But you need to understand that when I do, I'm not trying to be diplomatic. I don't need to negotiate my relationship with you in that way. It's just that from the bottom of my heart, I sincerely feel and believe that simply to remember Jesus's life is an incredible opportunity.

In a way, of course, it doesn't matter where people come from—East or West—or what color they are, those who eliminate their self-cherishing thought and give their life for others are exceptional human beings. For that reason, I'm happy just to bring Jesus to mind and reflect on what he did.

Also, to some extent I'm responsible for my Western students' psychological wellbeing, so if we're going to bring Buddhism to the West, we need to do it in a healthy way rather than introduce it as some exotic new trip. We don't need new trips—we need to do something constructive, something worthwhile. Anything truly worthwhile does not diminish any light; it only enhances it.

And with respect to psychological health, we're part of the environment and the environment is part of us. Therefore, those of us who were born in the West should not reject the Christian environment into which we were born. We should consider ourselves lucky to have been born into a Christian society and to have the wisdom to understand what that means for our mind. Such under-

standing is very useful if we're to remain healthy. Especially these days, when there's dangerous revolutionary technology everywhere and the world is overwhelmed with fighting and war, we really need to actively remember the lives of our unselfish historical predecessors.

So, John was explaining how God sent Jesus to us as a witness to the truth, but most unfortunately, some ignorant people failed to recognize who he was or understand what he was teaching and killed him.

In my opinion, the Buddhist point of view is that Jesus was a bodhisattva, not only in the sense that he had realized bodhicitta and overcome selfishness, but in the sense that, as a performer of miracles, he was a saint, like Tilopa and Naropa or, to name a living example, His Holiness Zong Rinpoche—somebody completely free of superstition who sometimes instinctively does strange things that the rest of us don't understand.

For example, John says that one day Jesus was near the water when a woman came by to fill her pot. Jesus said to her, "How can you satisfy your thirst with water? It's water that makes you thirsty in the first place." He told her that since it's water that makes her thirsty, how can water be the solution to her thirst. It's some kind of reverse thinking. Who can understand that? It sounds crazy, doesn't it?

What he meant was that only spiritual water can truly slake your thirst. So you can see, the actual meaning is somehow beyond words. The woman's taking water; he says, "Why are you doing that? It's not going to solve your problem of being thirsty." It's

crazy talk. Nowadays we'd probably hit somebody who spoke to us like that. But luckily, back then Jesus didn't get beaten up for talking in that way.

John also said that since Jesus was born from God, his disciples were also derived from God's energy. That's similar to what the Buddhist teachings say when they explain that all *shravakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* are born from Shakyamuni Buddha. The sense here is that such followers are born from the teacher's wisdom truth speech. Through internalizing that, they discover the truth for themselves and become such realized beings.

Philosophically, of course, we can say that Buddhism doesn't accept that God is the source of all human beings and other things. But from another point of view, we can say that Buddhism doesn't contradict that statement either.

For example, where does the human realm come from? The Buddha said that the human realm is caused by good karma. That's true. If the upper realms do not come from good karma, then where do they come from? Then, from the Buddhist point of view, all good karma comes from the Buddha...or, you can say, God. Therefore, the human realm comes from God, from Buddha. Because of the Buddha's holy speech, sentient beings create good karma. I want you to be clean clear about this.

Still, philosophically you can argue this point one way or the other. It depends on how you interpret it. You can interpret the statement negatively or positively. Actually, you can do anything with philosophy.

Now, concerning God, what is the difference between Buddha and God? Today, I'm going to say that according to Buddhism and Christianity, the qualities of the Buddha and the qualities of God are the same. People always worry about creation. "God is the creator of everything; Buddha is the creator of everything." Does that mean the Buddha created negativity? Well, the Buddha said that ultimately, there's no positive, there's no negative.

Tibetans address this issue with the example of a river. When you're standing on one bank of the river you call the opposite bank "the other side." When you're on that bank you call this one "the other side." There's this side and that side, that side and this side. It's interdependent. Without each other, this side and that side wouldn't exist. In the same way, if positive doesn't exist, negative can't exist either. In other words, negative comes from positive, positive comes from negative.

Then maybe you're going to argue, "Well, if God is the creator, if God is the cause of everything, such as organic things like plants, then how can God be permanent?" People say God is permanent—then how can something that's permanent produce something impermanent, like a plant? The principal cause of an impermanent phenomenon has to also be impermanent.

That sort of argument comes from Buddhists, so I'm going to debate with them: "Then how can you say shravakas and pratyek-buddhas are born from Buddha? Buddha is permanent." The answer to that is that such statements are not meant to be taken literally. In response to that, I'm going to say, "Well, God can be the same as Buddha, in the sense of a personal being. God can be

a person in the same way Shakyamuni Buddha was.” It’s not as if a permanent God is sitting up there somewhere. God can be something organic, a personal being with whom you can personally relate.

I tell you, philosophers always try to make everything very special. “God. Buddha. God is this; Buddha is that.” They put God and Buddha up on some kind of untouchable pedestal, so ordinary people can’t relate to them. They make it impossible to understand the nature of God, the nature of Buddha. That’s stupid. They just create more obstacles for people.

Then human beings, with their limited minds, try to put cream on God, chocolate on God, like with a knife. They put their own garbage on God. That’s all wrong; definitely wrong. I truly believe that sometimes philosophy can become an obstacle to people really understanding the nature of God or Buddha. Maybe I’m a revolutionary, but I reject many of the philosophical positions on these matters.

However, personifying God or Buddha doesn’t contradict their omnipresent nature. We can talk about the personal qualities of Heruka, for example, but at the same time, he is universal and omnipresent. We need to understand that.

One of the problems we find in the Western environment is the low opinion people generally have of human beings. They consider them to be on the same level as fish and chickens: they’re a hassle; they’re too complicated. We have no respect for human dignity. People can have transcendent qualities while at the same

time being human, but we don't understand this. Therefore, people who try to explain the Bible and God have to separate human beings and God: "The humans down here are the worst. They're like hungry ghosts, negative and sinful, while God is up there, perfect and pure." That is wrong. If you want to touch God with the human mind, you have to make a relationship between God and human beings. You cannot say God is perfect, humans are dirty. No way. Also, the Bible uses the term personal God or something like that.

When His Holiness the Dalai Lama visited Spain earlier this year we stayed in a Christian monastery. There were about thirty elderly monks there; some were very old. We were all sitting together having a fantastically good time, communicating really well, sort of totally unified, having a long conversation about religion, and one monk, he must have been about fifty, described God in exactly the same way as I was thinking. I was in shock. I said, "Is the way you're describing God explained in the Bible?" He said it was. Somehow, we were thinking about God in the same way.

Then we had a discussion about emptiness. His Holiness asked the monk, "What do you think emptiness is?" The monk replied, "Nonattachment is emptiness."

For me, that was a completely satisfactory answer. I prostrate to anybody who replies in that way. I have no question for anybody who thinks nonattachment is emptiness. That's super. I was greatly impressed.

Well, what's the difference? If you ask intelligent Buddhists what emptiness is, they're going to say non-self-existence, but for me,

the answer nonattachment is much weightier. I'm talking about my experience. If somebody tells me nonattachment is emptiness, it touches my heart. Philosophically, the answer non-self-existence is perfect, but it's totally dry. It doesn't have any feeling. From the philosophical point of view, saying nonattachment is emptiness may even be wrong. Tibetan philosophers are going to look askance and say, "Wow, what kind of answer is that?"

There's that story of an intellectual geshe asking the great yogi Milarepa, "What is the Vinaya?" Milarepa replied, "I don't know Vinaya from non-Vinaya. All I know is that if my mind is subdued, that is Vinaya." That was an incredible answer, wasn't it? An unbelievable answer. Again, philosophically, Milarepa's answer was wrong, but in truth, it was really the perfect answer. If you look back into the real Vinaya, that was absolutely a Vinaya answer. But if you're just playing with words, it was a disaster!

Then the geshe asked another question, trying to control the situation: "What is dichotomy?" Milarepa said, "Well, I don't know." Here I don't remember exactly how it went. My memory is not so good. Anyway, Milarepa said, "Well, I don't know, my dear friend, but I think if your mind is opposite to Dharma, that is dichotomy." That was a good answer, too, wasn't it? You probably remember that story.

The Vinaya is not only for monks and nuns. It's for everybody, to integrate their mind with the Dharma; to subdue it with the Dharma. So when a Christian monk says that nonattachment is emptiness, to me that is an answer that gets to the essence. The mind of attachment holds a conception that is the opposite of the

wisdom of emptiness because attachment overestimates the quality of its object and projects that onto its reality. Attachment exists because we don't understand the nature of the object. If we understand true Christian thinking, that attachment is a human problem but we can go beyond it, we have a profound answer.

From my point of view, those Christian monks were living a more ascetic life than most Tibetan monks do. That's just my opinion. I'm not putting Tibetans down. I'm Tibetan. There's no reason for me to put myself down. I'm not stupid. Or maybe I am....

And the monastery where those monks lived is so isolated. Each monk has his own cell, which has a small opening through which food can be passed. They are totally self-contained. There's a small garden in back, which can't be seen from the outside. It was unbelievable. I was very impressed with and have great respect for Western Christianity. I'm not joking. I'm too old to joke! And I'm not saying "Christianity is great" for some political purpose. I'm too old for politics as well. Those people just touched my heart. I'd never seen this before; I'd never seen such a Western monastery with monks living such pure, ascetic lives in strong practice. That was the first time I'd seen it for myself. I was so happy.

Well, I guess my time has run out. Now I have to finish my performance. But I'm not sure how to finish it. I can't integrate. Nevertheless, my conclusion is I would like you all to try to unify your attitude toward Buddhism and Christianity; to see how Buddhism can somehow help your own country's religion. Help Christians understand Buddhism better and help Buddhists understand

Christianity better so that we respect each other, have devotion toward each other, touch each other. That's the healthiest way to be.

Since I'm outside of Western society I just observe it objectively. You watch it subjectively; you roll with it; you can't really see it that much yourself. But I just sit back and watch. From my perspective, Western people have been greatly influenced by Jesus and the Christian religion. That's so valuable, so valuable. Your goodness, your peacefulness, your loving kindness—all that actually comes from the Christian religion. You don't get any of that from politics, do you? What your country's politics brings is bloodshed.

So from my point of view, I hereby give you permission to become Christians tomorrow. I rejoice. I'll tell you something: I'm not attached to these things. I truly believe this. If you were to come to me tomorrow and say, "Lama, I've discovered that my traditional religion has so much value that I've decided to become a Christian," I'd say, "Thank you so much." It wouldn't hurt my ego. "I rejoice! Great, go to church."

All right. So, at this time we are very fortunate just to be able to remember the profound lives of the Christian saints and the hard work they did. It is so worthwhile to rejoice at what they accomplished. Not only the past saints but the present ones as well, those who are leading ascetic lives, giving their lives to help and work for others in their society. We should pray for their success in their spiritual growth, that they will soon realize and unify with Godhood.

Historically, we can also see other unselfish people who have come to earth, such as Gandhi-ji. While some did not appreciate him, he was a great man who helped the Indian people free themselves from the English nose! And while he was a very skillful politician, his basic philosophy was *ahimsa* and compassion, and with that he freed the Indian people from British oppression. In return, he was assassinated, but he accepted that, too.

You can see how many billions of people there are on earth, and that number keeps increasing, yet how many are prepared to sacrifice themselves for others? It's very rare that anybody does that, like when in one of his previous lives as a prince, Shakyamuni Buddha sacrificed his body to the starving mother tiger and her cubs. Jesus gave of himself and so did Gandhi-ji. Who else was able to do what they did? Publicly offering your life to save that of another is very rare, isn't it? I haven't studied much history, but I don't think there are many like that.

Now, we don't have to give our life or our body, but we can decrease our selfishness, we can develop more concern for others' happiness than our own. So motivate strongly, like this: "Those people were incredible. They had not a selfish bone in their body and totally gave themselves to others. I just can't imagine myself doing that. They were so great. Their bodhicitta must have been so amazingly well-developed; they must have had such enormous loving kindness and compassion for others; they must have transcended all pain.

"So as much as I can, for the rest of my life I will dedicate my

body, speech and mind and whatever wealth I have to benefiting others. From now on, I belong to others and they can use me as they wish. May I and all mother sentient beings never be separated from the bodhisattva teacher in this and all future lives.”

Christmas 1982

Dear Bea:

Human disharmony is not created by the spirits. It is not created by the God. It is created by the human mind.

Buddha says that everyone should live harmoniously by having equal compassion for each other. The lack of compassion results in aggression. This is the root of disharmony.

This year, can you make harmony with the entire world community? Please I beg you, at this moment there is a particular need for your efforts. With God's blessing of universal love I know you will succeed.

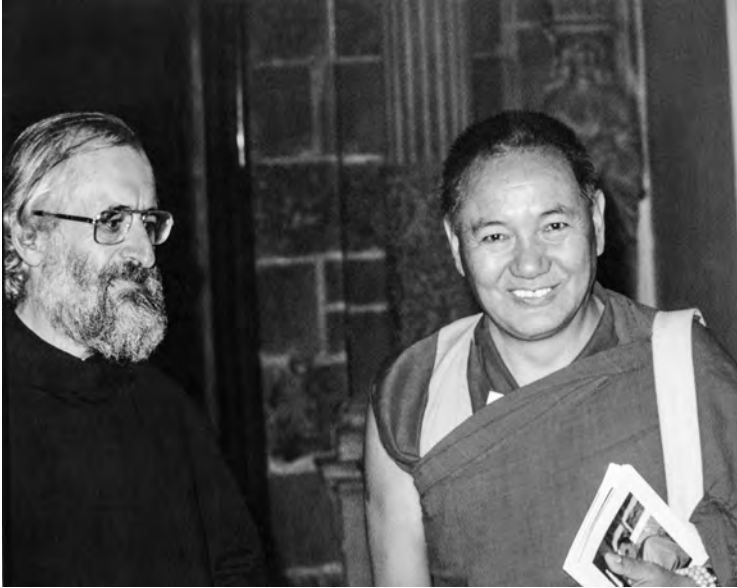
I pray for you.

Merry Christmas

*Big heart
Lama Tshe*

Part 3

Praise for Lama Yeshe



FATHER DE GIVE WITH LAMA YESHE, SPAIN, 1982

A Catholic Priest's Tribute⁸



By Father Bernard de Give

SO, HE has left us, this marvelous being who was all smiles, who simply breathed goodness. I believe that I express the feeling of all those who knew him when I confess that I must hold back tears when I think that never again will I see that radiant face, filled both with a joy for life and awareness of suffering that affects the inner soul of all human beings. Others will tell of his past incarnations, the first stages in his monastic life, his studies in Tibet and the responsibilities that he took upon himself since exile. But please permit this Christian monk to recall a few memories of one who was for many both a master and a friend.

The first time we met was at La Sainte-Baume in Provence, where for ten days, from 23 September to 3 October 1978, he gave his inspiration and energy to a Buddhist retreat for around 200 people. He was accompanying Zong Rinpoche whose more traditional style of teaching seemed a little distant. Of Lama Yeshe, however, one could only say that he had his audience in his pocket.

⁸ Father Bernard de Give wrote this reminiscence for *Wisdom Magazine* 2, a special tribute issue published in London by Wisdom Publications in 1984 following Lama Yeshe's passing on 3 March 1984.

He triumphed with his good satire of Western society. He was an incomparable stage artist, one might almost say a clown of frequently comic mimicry. And though he succeeded in laying bare the oddities and foolish ways, the delusions of the masses dominated by their passions, never did he hurt anyone. Rather, one felt touched by his unbelievable compassion and utter confidence in the inevitable victory of good. And when he gave himself up to fits of laughter, everyone would follow him, as though convinced that with this man at their side they were heading toward liberation.

I saw him again the following year during a second retreat at Viviers on the Rhône (17–31 July 1979). Whilst Lama Zopa Rinpoche explained to us with simplicity and conviction the principal aspects of Mahayana philosophy, Lama Yeshe was once again possessed of an undeniable spiritual radiance.

Since then, it has always been a joy and a great blessing to meet him again. Whether on the poetic hill of Kopan beyond Boudhanath in Nepal, or at his favorite refuge, Tushita, in the woods that rise above McLeod Ganj, not far from His Holiness the Dalai Lama, but higher than the lively hubbub of the Tibetan market. Thus he always placed himself close enough to the crowd to be good for him, but loving solitude where chosen disciples could follow him in initiations more secret and more severe. He was so good-natured, yet still he knew how to keep to the demands of an arduous spiritual path. He would not allow such advanced retreats to take place without these conditions.

The fact that he made such an impression on the people he met almost by chance would in itself be sufficient. But behind those

appearances of the benevolent father or sharp-witted child, there was an organizer of first rank. This can be judged simply by citing the large number of centers (more than thirty) that he founded, in most of the Western countries, for the "Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition," from France to the United States, in Holland and in England, Spain, Italy and Australia. Wherever it was, he knew how to establish, to organize and to preserve. His passing away will now be mourned in all these many countries.

We know at what cost Lama Yeshe was able to persevere with his inexhaustible apostleship around the world in those final years. Considering the state of his heart, doctors would have condemned him to rest with no hope of recovery. And in addition to this, he suffered greatly from an ulcer in his stomach. But being such an ardent bodhisattva, he continued to give himself for the welfare of all other beings.

And in addition to all this, may I, a Catholic monk, be permitted to allude to one essential characteristic of his being. He was a true ecumenist, knowing how to go beyond the traditional confines that so often separate the great religions. Need one recall what he did at Kopan for those retreaters who had come to learn the Buddhist techniques of meditation? One week before each Christmas, he delivered a series of discourses, more profound than one can begin to imagine, on the coming of Jesus to this world, the true meaning and the ways of preparation.

And during the retreat at La Sainte-Baume, not only did he accompany a group of lamas to offer puja on top of the hill, in the grotto of Marie-Madeleine, but on another morning, he stole

away with us to visit the church of Saint Maximin, where he professed a true devotion to Mary, Mother of Jesus. Everyone knows, however, how he remained the faithful propagator of Dharma and how he kept to his tradition. He would willingly recall the days at Lawudo, on the side of Mount Everest, where he educated his small monks so well.

Two years ago, when he was finally able to undertake a pilgrimage to Tibet, he returned to his original monastery, the monastic university of Sera, where he had received his education in the college of Sera Je. In its present state of dilapidation, the cell that he had formerly occupied no longer existed. Nevertheless, Lama Thubten Yeshe sat himself down in full lotus and remained there in meditation for many hours beneath the open sky.

I don't know if it is appropriate to offer condolences in Buddhist circles. I think of his companion, so contemplative, so discreet, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, who was his disciple and who today must be feeling very lonely.

LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE

The Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive (LYWA) is the collected works of Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche. Lama Zopa Rinpoche, its spiritual director, founded the Archive in 1996.

Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche began teaching at Kopan Monastery, Nepal, in 1970. Since then, their teachings have been recorded and transcribed. At present we have well over 12,000 hours of digital audio and some 90,000 pages of raw transcript. Many recordings, mostly teachings by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, remain to be transcribed, and as Rinpoche continued to teach, the number of recordings in the Archive increased accordingly. Most of our transcripts have been neither checked nor edited.

Here at the LYWA we are making every effort to organize the transcription of that which has not yet been transcribed, edit that which has not yet been edited, and generally do the many other tasks detailed below.

The work of the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive falls into two categories: archiving and dissemination.

Archiving requires managing the recordings of teachings by Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche that have already been collected and collecting recordings of teachings given but not yet sent to the Archive. Incoming media are then catalogued and stored safely while being kept accessible for further work.

We organize the transcription of audio, add the transcripts to the already existent database of teachings, manage this database, have transcripts checked, and make transcripts available to editors or others doing research on or practicing these teachings.

Other archiving activities include working with video and photographs of the Lamas and digitizing Archive materials. The entire collection—more than 30,000 digital files—has now been migrated to AssetBank, a digital asset management system that ensures the collection will be safely preserved and easily managed for many years into the future.

Dissemination involves keeping up with evolving technology and making the Lamas' teachings available through various avenues including books for free distribution and sale, ebooks on a wide range of readers, lightly edited transcripts, a monthly e-letter (see below), social media, DVDs and online videos, articles in *Mandala* and other magazines and on our website. Irrespective of the medium we choose, the teachings require a significant amount of work to prepare them for distribution.

This is just a summary of what we do. The Archive was established with virtually no seed funding and has developed solely through the kindness of many people, most of whom we mention and thank sincerely on our website. We are indebted to you all.

Our further development similarly depends upon the generosity of those who see the benefit and necessity of this work, and we would be extremely grateful for your help. Thus, we hereby appeal to you for your kind support. If you would like to contribute to help us with any of the above tasks or to sponsor books for free distribution, please contact us:

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LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE MEMBERSHIP

In order to raise the funds needed to employ editors to make available the thousands of hours of teachings mentioned above and to do all the other things we do, we have established a membership plan, which costs US\$1,000, payable at once or in installments. Its main benefit is that you will be helping make the Lamas' incredible teachings more available to a worldwide audience. To see the more direct and tangible benefits to you personally and for more information, please go to LamaYeshe.com/membership.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND MONTHLY E-LETTER

Follow us on Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram and YouTube and every day read gems from our online teachings, view amazing images, and keep up to date with our latest offerings. Also, each month we send out a free e-letter containing our latest news and a previously unpublished teaching by Lama Yeshe or Lama Zopa Rinpoche. See our website for links.

THE FOUNDATION FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE MAHAYANA TRADITION

The Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT) is an international affiliated network of centers, projects and services. This network of city centers, retreat centers, monasteries, nunneries, publishing services, hospices, and other services and projects functions to achieve the FPMT mission to preserve and spread Mahayana Buddhism worldwide.

The FPMT organization was founded in 1975 by Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche and there are now more than 130 centers, projects and services in over 35 countries. The FPMT provides integrated education through which people's minds and hearts can be transformed into their highest potential for the benefit of others, inspired by an attitude of universal responsibility and service.

The organization is based on the Buddhist tradition of the great Tibetan scholar and yogi Lama Tsongkhapa, as taught by Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche. Students in the FPMT organization strive to follow the example and inspiration of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, in his compassionate service to humanity.

Visit the FPMT website to find out more about the organization's programs and activities, and to find links to FPMT centers all over the world.

FPMT

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OTHER TEACHINGS OF LAMA YESHE AND LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE CURRENTLY AVAILABLE

BOOKS FROM WISDOM PUBLICATIONS

Wisdom Energy, by Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Introduction to Tantra, by Lama Yeshe
Transforming Problems into Happiness, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
The Door to Satisfaction, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Becoming Vajrasattva: The Tantric Path of Purification, by Lama Yeshe
The Bliss of Inner Fire, by Lama Yeshe
Becoming the Compassion Buddha, by Lama Yeshe
Ultimate Healing, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Dear Lama Zopa, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
How to Be Happy, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Wholesome Fear, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche with Kathleen McDonald
When the Chocolate Runs Out, by Lama Yeshe
Mahamudra, by Lama Yeshe
The Four Noble Truths, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
How to Face Death Without Fear, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
How to Enjoy Death, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Bodhichitta, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
The Six Perfections, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Patience, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
The Power of Mantra, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Perseverance, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
The Power of Meditation, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (forthcoming)

About Lama Yeshe: *Reincarnation: The Boy Lama*, by Vicki Mackenzie
About Lama Zopa Rinpoche: *The Larwudo Lama*, by Jamyang Wangmo

For more information go to wisdomexperience.org

TRANSCRIPTS, PRACTICES AND OTHER MATERIALS

Go to LamaYeshe.com and fpmt.org

VIDEOS OF LAMA YESHE AND LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

Go to youtube.com/@LamaYesheWisdomArchive
or youtube.com/@fpmt

WHAT TO DO WITH DHARMA TEACHINGS

The Buddhadharma is the true source of happiness for all sentient beings. Books like this show you how to put the teachings into practice and integrate them into your life, whereby you get the happiness you seek. Therefore, anything containing Dharma teachings, the names of your teachers or holy images is more precious than other material objects and should be treated with respect. To avoid creating the karma of not meeting the Dharma again in future lives, please do not put books (or other holy objects) on the floor or underneath other stuff, step over or sit upon them, or use them for mundane purposes such as propping up wobbly chairs or tables. They should be kept in a clean, high place, separate from worldly writings, and wrapped in cloth when being carried around. These are but a few considerations.

Should you need to get rid of Dharma materials, they should not be thrown in the rubbish but burned in a special way. Briefly: do not incinerate such materials with other trash, but alone, and as they burn, recite the mantra OM AH HUM. As the smoke rises, visualize that it pervades all of space, carrying the essence of the Dharma to all sentient beings in the six samsaric realms, purifying their minds, alleviating their suffering, and bringing them all happiness, up to and including enlightenment. Some people might find this practice a bit unusual, but it is given according to tradition. Thank you very much.

DEDICATION

Through the merit created by preparing, reading, thinking about and sharing this book with others, may all teachers of the Dharma live long and healthy lives, may the Dharma spread throughout the infinite reaches of space, and may all sentient beings quickly attain enlightenment.

In whichever realm, country, area or place this book may be, may there be no war, drought, famine, disease, injury, disharmony or unhappiness, may there be only great prosperity, may everything needed be easily obtained, and may all be guided by only perfectly qualified Dharma teachers, enjoy the happiness of Dharma, have love and compassion for all sentient beings, and only benefit and never harm each other.

LAMA THUBTEN YESHE was born in Tibet in 1935. At the age of six, he entered the great Sera Monastic University, Lhasa, where he studied until 1959, when the Chinese invasion of Tibet forced him into exile in India. Lama Yeshe continued to study and meditate in India until 1967, when, with his chief disciple, Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche, he went to Nepal. Two years later he established Kopan Monastery, near Kathmandu, in order to teach Buddhism to Westerners. In 1974, the Lamas began making annual teaching tours to the West, and as a result of these travels a worldwide network of Buddhist teaching and meditation centers—the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT)—began to develop. In 1984, after an intense decade of imparting a wide variety of incredible teachings and establishing one FPMT activity after another, at the age of forty-nine, Lama Yeshe passed away. He was reborn as Ösel Hita Torres in Spain in 1985 and recognized as the incarnation of Lama Yeshe by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 1986. Lama's remarkable story is told in Vicki Mackenzie's book, *Reincarnation: The Boy Lama* (Wisdom Publications, 1996) and Adele Hulse's official biography, *Big Love* (LYWA, 2020).

JONATHAN LANDAW was born in New Jersey in 1944 and attended Dartmouth College. After teaching English with the Peace Corps in Iran (1966-69), he began studying Buddhism in India and Nepal, his main teachers being Lama Thubten Yeshe, Kyabje Zopa Rinpoche, and Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey. While studying in Dharamsala, India, he worked as English editor for the Translation Bureau of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. After moving back to the West in 1977, Jon continued his studies and practices while traveling extensively, giving courses and leading meditation retreats throughout much of North America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand. He is the editor and author of a number of Buddhist books, including *Wisdom Energy*, *Prince Siddhartha*, *Introduction to Tantra* and *Buddhism for Dummies*. He lives with his wife and family in Freedom, California.

DR. NICHOLAS RIBUSH, MB, BS, is a graduate of Melbourne University Medical School (1964) who first encountered Buddhism at Kopan Monastery, Nepal, in 1972. Since then he has been a student of Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche and a full-time worker for their international organization, the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT). He was a monk from 1974 to 1986. He established FPMT archiving and publishing activities at Kopan in 1973 and with Lama Yeshe founded Wisdom Publications in 1975. Between 1981 and 1996 he served variously as Wisdom's director, editorial director and director of development. Over the years he has edited and published many teachings by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Lama Yeshe, Lama Zopa Rinpoche and many other teachers and established and/or directed several other FPMT activities, including the International Mahayana Institute, Tushita Mahayana Meditation Centre, the Enlightened Experience Celebration, Mahayana Publications, Kurukulla Center for Tibetan Buddhist Studies and now the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive. He was a member of the FPMT board of directors from its inception in 1983 until 2002 and currently serves on the boards of LYWA and Maitripa College.

