



A Tribute to
Most Precious Venerable
Serjey Geshe Acharya Thubten Loden



Most Precious Venerable Serje Geshe Acharya Thubten Loden

*G*eshe Loden lived
a very full and
meaningful life.

His Holiness the
XIVth Dalai Lama of Tibet

At midnight on 24 August 2011 the Most Precious and Venerable Serje Geshe Acharya Thubten Loden, the Great Treasure of the Tibetan Buddhist Society, our peerless teacher, vajra master and guide, ceased breathing. He remained in meditation for 10 days until 3 September.

Geshe-la's passing has been felt deeply by thousands of people in Australia, India, Tibet and throughout the world. For all of us whose lives have been enriched by attending his peerless Dharma teachings, visiting his temples, reading his nine renowned Dharma books, his personal advice and guidance and his innumerable forms of generosity, it is difficult to express how much Geshe-la will be missed.

Geshe-la's life has deeply inspired us: he has shown us what it really means in practical terms to practise the Dharma. To receive the precious teachings on bodhichitta, and on the perfections of generosity, ethics, patience, energetic perseverance, concentration and wisdom is one thing; but to see Geshe-la continuously putting these into practice in his daily activities was something else altogether.

One of this era's most highly qualified and respected masters of Tibetan Buddhism, Geshe-la's activities as Dharma teacher, author and leader of the Tibetan Buddhist Society meant that his life was always full of energy, purpose and activity. Nonetheless, Geshe-la always found time to share his friendliness and good humour with all whose paths he crossed – whether they were students seeking advice, politicians or community leaders visiting the centre, the teller at the local bank or one of the numerous children who would receive gifts of \$50 or \$100.

Geshe-la's repeated message to his students over many years has been, above all, to care for others, support others, love others, avoid harming others, and to care for others more than oneself. Geshe-la recently said, "*Merely looking after oneself is not fundamentally a human quality - even birds, dogs and other animals are capable of doing that! Life is very precious and also quite short. If we spend our time on this earth in developing the special human qualities of kindness, compassion and in looking after others then our life will be useful and meaningful.*" By this, and any, measure Geshe-la's life has been supremely useful and meaningful.

We pray that he will return to us very quickly, quickly and continue to give us teachings and inspire our Dharma practice and continue his activities for the benefit of others.



Prayers and pujas

On hearing of Geshe Loden's passing many Tibetan, Vietnamese, Thai and Sri Lankan monks and nuns came to pay their respects.

Evening prayers were held for 49 days after Geshe Loden's passing at his centres in Australia, attended by many hundreds of students. The Tibetan Buddhist Society, Melbourne, also held a special prayer session on the Saturday afternoon immediately following his passing.

Geshe Loden's college, Denma Khangsten at Sera Je Monastery in India, held pujas each week for seven weeks after his passing. Traditional prayers included Lama Chopa on the first night, the Guhyasamaja root tantra the next day and the following night the prayer of Chanting the Name of Manjushri. Special pujas were held on 8 and 15 September at the monastery, sponsored by the Tibetan Buddhist Society's Melbourne centre. During this time the monks recited the Abdhidharma root text. Other people in Australia also sponsored pujas.

Sera Je Monastery in India, with its 4000 monks, held pujas in the first and seventh weeks after Geshe Loden's passing.

Kagyu Evam Institute in North Carlton conducted a special Sunday afternoon puja, attended by their students and representatives of the Society.

Jamchen Buddhist Centre in Melbourne held prayers for Venerable Geshe Loden on 17 September chanting Avalokiteshvara's mantra, Tara's verses and Samantabhadra's prayers.

In the United States Gelek Rimpoche began his annual Jewel Heart retreat with a guru puja (Lama Chopa) and dedicated it to the fulfilment of the wishes of the great teacher Geshe Loden in Australia and for the continued flourishing of the sangha that has developed around him.

We rejoice in his life of teaching and practice of Dharma for all sentient beings. He has studied and maintained ways to benefit sentient beings and used his life with dedication in the beginning, middle and end. His virtuous activity is boundless.

Venerable Geshe Doga
Tara Institute, Melbourne

Funeral Service

The funeral service for Geshe-la was held in the traditional Tibetan temple at the Peaceful Land of Joy on 8 September 2011.

About 400 students, supporters and friends of the Tibetan Buddhist Society attended. It was a beautiful, peaceful occasion. During the service, the specific prayers Geshe-la had nominated were chanted in Tibetan and English and special dedications and requests were made for Geshe-la's quick rebirth.

Eulogy

This is a transcript of the eulogy that was delivered during the funeral service for the Most Precious Venerable Geshe Acharya Thubten Loden on Thursday 8 September.

At midnight on 24 August 2011 our precious spiritual master the Most Venerable Geshe Acharya Thubten Loden's breathing ceased. He remained in meditation for 10 days until 3 September.

This is a time of great sadness for us all, as we have lost our spiritual father, our guide and mentor and our best of friends. But nonetheless it is also an opportunity for great rejoicing, for in his long life of 88 years Geshe-la accomplished much.

Understand the role to be one of great reverence and significance to the community and have no doubt that he leaves behind a great legacy of wisdom and teaching that will remain an important benchmark for the community. The Tibetan Buddhist Society as well as the community at large shared a great affection for Geshe-la. To them and to thousands across Australia and the world, I extend my heartfelt condolences.

Maria Vamvakinou MP
Federal Member for Calwell





Tibet

Geshe-la was born in 1924 in a small village in East Tibet. At the age of seven, against the wishes of his father, Geshe-la ran away from home to join the local monastery. Thus began his monastic education. At the age of 14 he departed Drombu Monastery to join the much larger monastery at Sershu, where he would receive a more extensive education. Then, at the age of 17, he embarked on a two-month journey on foot to travel to Lhasa in central Tibet to enter the great Sera Monastic University, which had a population of 5500 monks. From then until 1959 Geshe-la undertook the rigorous study for the advanced Geshe degree.

India

Geshe-la's monastic training in Tibet was interrupted by the Communist Chinese Cultural Revolution. Along with 100,000 other refugees he escaped over the Himalayas to India. He soon resumed his studies. In 1968 His Holiness the Dalai Lama selected his most advanced Buddhist scholars to enrol for the Master's degree at the Varanasi Sanskrit College. Two years later Geshe-la graduated with an Acharya Master's degree with honours. Shortly after, he entered into the course of examinations for the Geshe degree, from which he graduated equal first of the top students.

Amongst Tibetans, Geshe-la had a reputation as a formidable scholar, undefeatable in debate. He was also a great tantric practitioner, and a close disciple of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Tutor, His Holiness Trijang Rinpoche, from whom he received extensive tantric teachings.



His death is not only a great loss to you but to the Tibetan Buddhist community. He was one of the few spiritual masters who brought Tibetan Buddhism to the western world. He will always be remembered for his teachings of Buddha Dharma and contributions in the preservation of the environment and charitable work.

Sonam N. Dagpo
Representative of His
Holiness the Dalai Lama
Tibet Information Office,
Canberra



Australia

In 1976, at the invitation of Lama Yeshe, the founder of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition, Geshe-la came to Australia to teach for three years at Chenrezig Institute in Eudlo, Queensland. During those three years, under Geshe-la's tutelage and with the able assistance of his translator Venerable Zasep Tulku Rinpoche, thousands of Australians were introduced to Buddhist meditation practice and philosophy. For many the encounter with Geshe-la was transformational.

Before departing to India in 1979 Geshe-la founded the Tibetan Buddhist Society. His students established centres in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Perth. He returned to Australia in 1980, became fluent in English, and was soon teaching without a translator. Geshe-la travelled between his centres in Australia, teaching widely from the sutra and tantra texts.

Developing Tibetan Buddhism

In his later years Geshe-la spent the majority of his time in Melbourne, where annually he bestowed highest yoga tantra initiations and led retreats, drawing students from around the world. Geshe-la's centres have flourished, with Melbourne and Perth each having a traditional Tibetan style temple.

Geshe-la touched the lives of tens of thousands of Australians. Every week people came to see him for advice on study, on relationships, on work or on health. Whenever young children visited the centre, Geshe-la would reach for his wallet to make gifts of \$50 or \$100.

Generosity

Over 30 years Geshe-la led a fundraising program that has raised more than \$1.24 million for charities and humanitarian causes, including \$100,000 for scholarships for higher education for Tibetan refugees in

Our thoughts are with you all as you mourn the passing and remember the work of a pure monk and renowned Buddhist teacher, scholar and author whose kindness, wisdom and generosity have changed the lives of thousands.

The work he did not only for his immediate community but also those in the local area, in wider Australia and throughout the world is remembered with great admiration and appreciation. It is wonderful to hear that he was recently honoured as the Hume City Council Citizen of the Year in 2011 for the Society's work with homeless people in Broadmeadows.

We honour the broad scope of Venerable Geshe Loden's direct teaching and the contribution to Buddhist teaching of his nine books.

Ekai Korematsu Osho
Abbott and Resident Teacher
of Jikishoan Zen Buddhist
Community





India, \$22,000 for the Indian Ocean Tsunami Appeal, \$40,000 for the Victorian Bushfire Appeal and \$32,000 for the Program to Provide Food to Local Homeless and Disadvantaged People. Geshe-la gave more than \$40,000 of his own money to charitable causes in Australia and overseas, more than \$500,000 to Tibetan refugees and monasteries in India and Tibet, \$75,000 for the construction and decoration of temples in Melbourne and Perth and \$100,000 to his family.

In recognition of his charitable activities Geshe-la was named Hume Citizen of the Year in 2011.

Publishing Dharma texts

Geshe-la published nine books. Recognised as some of the finest English language Dharma texts, these books sell in countries around the world.

Many have had the opportunity to meet with Geshe-la. We remember his profound Buddhist knowledge, his sharp wit, his deep compassion, his concern for others, his generosity and his cheeky smile.

Geshe-la came to Australia as a refugee. He said, *“For many years I have eaten Australian food, drunk Australian water, had shelter and conditions provided by the Australian people. My activities are to repay the kindness of the Australian people”*.

Upon hearing of Geshe-la’s passing, His Holiness the Dalai Lama remarked, *“Geshe-la led a very full and meaningful life.”* We have received messages from individuals, Tibetan monasteries and Dharma centres throughout the world, recalling Geshe-la’s teachings, achievements and manifold acts of kindness, and praying that he quickly return to continue his activities.

Return to Australia

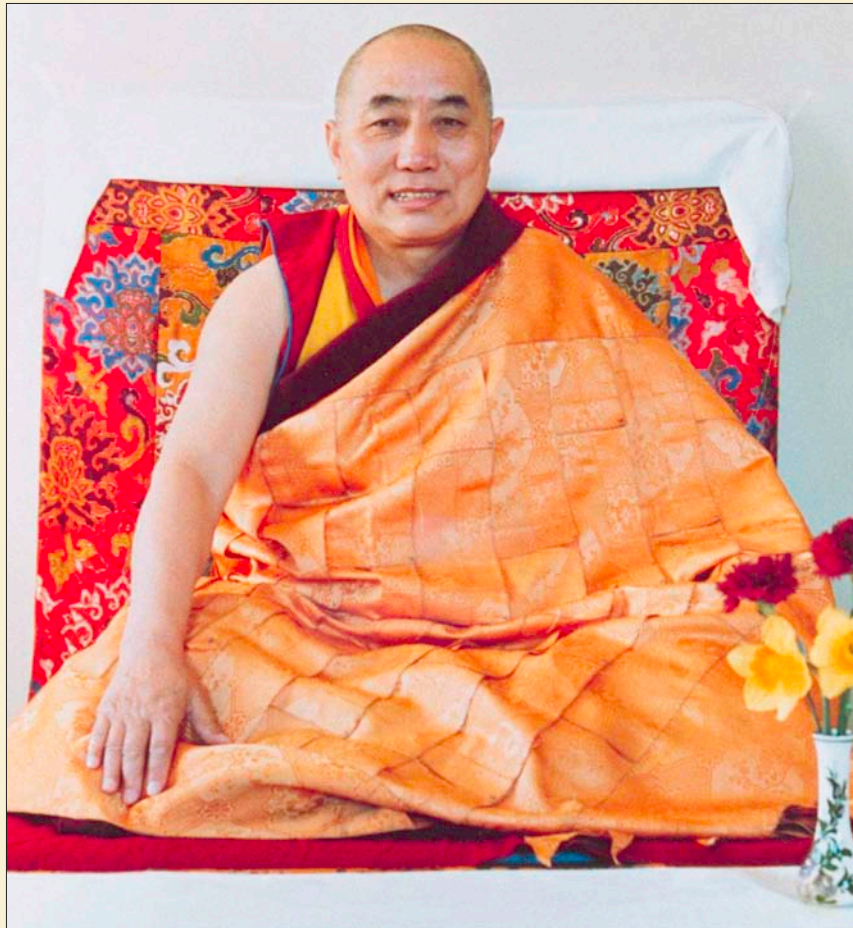
Now the Tibetan Buddhist Society has lost its leader and its teacher. However, Geshe-la has indicated that in his next life he may well return to Australia to continue his activities with the Tibetan Buddhist Society. We now eagerly await our first meeting with the young Loden Rinpoche.

We are very grateful for the important role that Geshe Loden played in the historical development of Buddhism in Australia and Victoria from the 1970s onwards.

In more recent years, through the Tibetan Buddhist Society’s New Year and Spring Festivals, he set a wonderful example by actively welcoming and involving not only sangha and lay people of all Buddhist traditions, but also people of other faiths and community leaders more generally.

The Society’s many charitable activities have also reflected Geshe Loden’s belief in the importance of Buddhists contributing to the general wellbeing of our society, and in particular reaching out to those who are disadvantaged, regardless of their background.

Alex Butler
Chair, Buddhist Council of
Victoria



“When I was a young boy growing up in a small village in eastern Tibet, I never would have believed that I would have to leave my country as a refugee, or that one day I would live in such a beautiful, fortunate country as Australia.

Life is very, very uncertain! But whichever places I have lived or visited, human beings’ essential wishes are the same. Everyone, without exception, whether rich or poor, old or young, interested in religion or not, wants happiness. No one ever wants even a moment’s suffering. Therefore the most important thing is to develop a good heart, and, through compassion, help others as much as possible and avoid harming them. Australians have a good habit, when wishing someone farewell of saying, ‘Goodbye, look after yourself!’ I think this is very good advice.

The best way of looking after ourselves is to develop more peaceful, compassionate and generous minds. This makes us happy and also brings happiness to others. Merely looking after oneself is not fundamentally a human quality - even birds, dogs and other animals are capable of doing that!

Life is very precious and also quite short. If we spend our time on this earth in developing the special human qualities of kindness, compassion and in looking after others then our life will be useful and meaningful.”

Venerable Geshe Acharya Thubten Loden from *Who’s Who in Victoria*, 2008