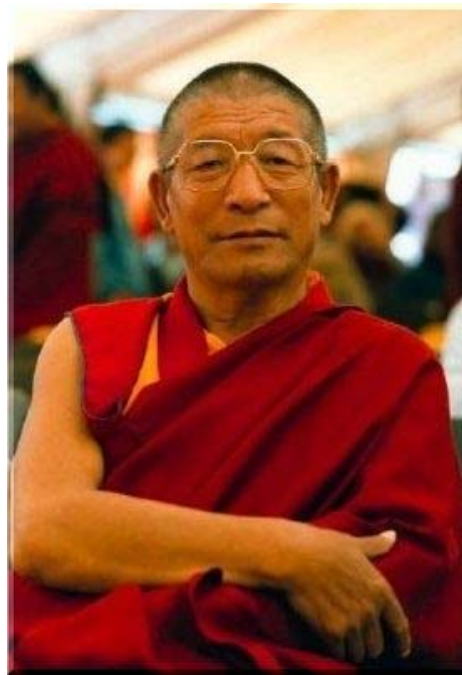


GESHE RABTEN RINPOCHE



“This manifestation of the Buddha has no equal. If you are really determined to tame your mind, he will even give you his heart.”
Geshe Rabten about Gyalchen Dorje Shugden

The Venerable Geshe Rabten Rinpoche was one of the most outstanding Tibetan masters of our time, who was both a Pandit (scholar) and a Siddha (realized meditator) at the same time. His person was an embodiment of compassion and wisdom, an unsurpassable refuge and guide of this and future lives for countless beings.

He was born in Dargye, eastern Tibet, in 1921. Until the age of nineteen he fulfilled his family duties and then, out of his own will, chose the renounced life of a monk. Then he entered Tibet's most reputed monastic university, Sera Tekchenling, and began his studies in the Je college. Under the guidance of his teachers such as the most Venerable Geshe Jampa Khedrup, he mastered through learning, contemplation and meditation the entire teachings of Dharma, collected in the three vehicles and the four classes of Tantra. He was renowned as a zealous student, unchallengeable debater, pious practitioner and unsurpassable teacher in and out of the monastery.

Through integrating all of his intellectual knowledge with the practice of meditation, he attained the deep insight into the nature of the phenomena and the ability to fulfill the purpose of oneself and others. Due to these qualities countless seekers of Dharma have become his disciples in Tibet, in exile in India and later in the west. From these disciples outstanding masters with great qualities have come forth. Among those who are known in the west are Lama Thubten Yeshe, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, Thontok Rinpoche, Geshe Pemba, Geshe Thubten Trinley, Geshe Tenzin Gonpo and Geshe Thubten Ngawang, just to name a few. There are many more in India and Tibet.

His outstanding qualities were recognized and cherished not only by his disciples, but also by the great masters of our time such as H. H. the Dalai Lama and his two eminent tutors. Kyabje Trijang Dorje Chang, the junior tutor of H.H. the 14th Dalai Lama, in particular regarded him as one of his closest spiritual sons, and Geshe Rinpoche also regarded this particular master as his principal master or spiritual father who represented the embodiment of all Buddhas.

In 1964, H. H. the Dalai Lama selected Geshe Rinpoche and the Venerable Lati Rinpoche out of hundreds of Geshes to become his new Tsenshaps, that is his philosophical assistants. In 1969, in accordance with the wish of H. H. the Dalai Lama, Geshe Rinpoche started to give teachings to the Westerners in Dharamsala. In 1974, at the invitation of Mme Anne Ansermet as well as many other disciples, he came to Europe for the first time and gave teachings of Dharma in many countries, thus opening the great gate of the Dharma in this part of the world. In the following year he was again sent back to Europe by H. H. the Dalai Lama as the abbot of the Tibetan Monastic Institute in Rikon, Switzerland, in order to fulfill the spiritual needs of westerners as well as Tibetans living in Europe. Eventually, due to the growing number of people seriously interested in the thorough study and practice of Buddhism, he founded Tharpa Choeling, the Center for Higher Tibetan Studies in Mont-Pèlerin, Switzerland (which was later renamed into Rabten Choeling in memory of Geshe Rinpoche); Tashi Rabten in Feldkirch, Austria; the Tibetan Center Jangchub Choeling in Hamburg, Germany;

the Phuntsok Rabten Association in Munich, Germany and Ghe Phel Ling in Milan, Italy. These monasteries and centers have become centers of attraction for those, who are seeking authentic and serious studies of Dharma. That, too, is the result of his uninterrupted, tireless turning of the wheel of Dharma up to the end of his life, with the sole intention to serve the teachings of Buddha and the sentient beings. Because of these reasons it is certainly appropriate to say that Geshe Rinpoche was the chief founder of the pure and complete Buddha-Dharma in Europe.

(from www.rabten.com)

Geshe Rabten Rinpoche in July 1985 "From the time I was a small child, I met monks in their maroon robes returning from the great monastic universities near Lhasa. I admired them very much. I also occasionally visited the large monastery in our region; and when I watched the monks debating, I was again filled with admiration. When I was about fifteen years old I began to notice how simple, pure and efficient their lives were. I also saw how my own home life, in comparison, was so complicated and demanding of tasks that were never finished. In order to be counted as a qualified monk in the nearby Dhargye Monastery, one had to spend at least three to four years studying and training one's mind in the Buddha Dharma in one of the three monastic universities near Lhasa. With the thought of becoming such a monk in Dhargye Monastery, I decided at the age of seventeen to go to one of these monastic universities, although at that time I had no desire to become greatly learned in the Dharma".

Extract from Geshe Rabten's Biography, "Life of a Tibetan Monk", Edition Rabten, 2000

When he was eighteen Geshe Rabten went on a three month journey from his birthplace in Kham in the Eastern province of Tibet to Lhasa in central Tibet where he became a monk in the monastic university of Sera. Very soon teachers and fellow students became aware of his magnificent character traits. While studying and meditating he went through unbelievable hardship. Hence teachers and fellow students gave him the name 'Milarepa'. Due to his clear and precise way of logical debate, people compared him to Dharmakirti, the great Buddhist logical thinker. After having studied for about twenty years, he passed the Geshe exam in front of monks from the three great monasteries. He was given the title of the highest rank, 'Geshe Lharampa'. This is the greatest honor, which is given by the examiners and by His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

In 1964 Geshe Rabten was chosen to be the philosophical assistant of the H.H. Dalai Lama. In 1969 the Dalai Lama first of all sent Western students to Geshe and then later, due to the amount of Western students that had accumulated he asked Geshe to move to the Tibetan monastery in Rikon, Switzerland to become the Abbot of that monastery. At that time Geshe had many students in the big monastic universities in India and as his master Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche was getting old and because Geshe did profess to have any interest in the comfort

and money of the West, he would have preferred to have stayed in India. Only when his master pointed out that his teachings would be a great blessing to the people of the West did Geshe agree to go.

Geshe was the first Buddhist master to introduce the complete Vinaya-tradition and the original study of Buddhism to the West. Hence Geshe became the 'path breaker' of the complete and complex teachings of Buddhism in the West. Many masters, who are famous in the West today, were Geshe's students, namely: Gonsar Rinpoche, Khamlung Rinpoche, Sherpa Rinpoche, Tomthog Rinpoche, Zopa Rinpoche, Lama Yeshe, Geshe Penpa, Geshe Tenzin Genpo, Geshe Thupten Ngwang, Geshe Thubten Trinley etc.

Almost unlike any other, Geshe Rinpoche was able to bring the essence of the thoughts of Buddha close to the listeners. No matter if the listener was from the West or the East, whoever followed his words felt all the unclearness disappear and in its place a clearness and calmness started to spread in one's mind. His examples encouraged people to adopt a sincere way of acting. Whatever he explained, gave the pupil a feeling of hearing a description of the past, the future or of hearing deepest secrets as if all these things were in Geshe's hand.

Geshe founded the center for higher Tibetan studies, Rabten Choeling at the lake of Geneva (originally Tharpa Choeling), the Tibetan center in Hamburg, Tashi Rabten at the Letzehof, Puntsog Rabten in Munich and Gephel Ling in Milan.

(from Rabten Choeling website)

Rabten Tulku Rinpoche

When Geshe passed away in 1986, his pupils were able to experience the extraordinary signs of a complete master passing away. During the months after his death, many students had the feeling that during their meditation Geshe was unusually close to them. Three years later, Gonsar Rinpoche, Geshe's dearest and closest pupil discovered Geshe's incarnation, who, through various unconnected sources, amongst whom was the Dalai Lama, was confirmed to be the righteous incarnation.

In the spring of 1998 the ten year old Rabten Rinpoche gave his first teaching in front of a group of two hundred people in the monastery Rabten Choeling at the lake of Geneva. Unexpectedly and unprepared the young Rinpoche gave people advice on taking refuge. He spoke in the clear manner and way of impressing people, which had been Geshe Rabten's own special way. The listeners were deeply moved and many of Geshe Rabten's former students had tears in their eyes.



The memory of Geshe through his incarnation, who even in his young years already showed clear traits of a great master makes one believe that there is nothing more precious that could be given to one in this life even if one were to meet the enlightened Buddha in person.

(from Rabten Choeling website)