



## LAMA THUBTEN ZOPA RINPOCHE

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SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR

Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition

November 29, 2007

To all my dear students, those devoted to Geshe-la and those who he nurtured in the Dharma:

I understand your feelings upon the sudden great loss of Geshe-la, not just for the students in Italy but for the FPMT organization as a whole.

As I mention in the quick return prayer, Geshe-la was like the father and mother who babies, every day and even every second, totally rely upon for everything; to whom children express their difficulties and receive help. Not only that but Geshe-la was especially the virtuous friend upon whom you totally relied and who you trusted for guidance on the journey to enlightenment, the path that transforms a totally meaningless life into one of the highest meaning.

So don't worry or feel bad. What you should realize is how fortunate you have been; what a miracle it was to have come under Geshe-la's care, the care of such a perfect teacher—not a perfect school teacher but a perfect teacher and guide on the path to liberation and enlightenment.

Therefore, simply crying and abiding in sorrow doesn't at all help fulfill Geshe-la's purpose. What you need to do is something that would please Geshe-la. Doing what would please Geshe-la and what he would wish for you is the most important thing you can do.

The basis of attainment is protecting the samaya vows, so protect them as much as possible and on that basis continuously study Dharma to the best of your ability. The essential meaning of studying Dharma is practicing the *lam-rim*, which integrates all the extensive philosophy subjects. If you don't develop your mind in the stages of the path you'll get lost in the vast field of philosophy. Problems will arise but despite your extensive knowledge you won't know how to put your studies into practice or integrate them with your life; you won't know how to actualize the teachings in your heart, step by step, while continually purifying the obstacles of negative karmic obscurations, collecting extensive merit, and making requests to the guru with single-pointed devotion.

The external example of this process is a seed. Seeds are the essential element but they need to be nurtured by soil, water, sunlight, air and so forth. Then they grow, step by step: first the stem emerges, then slowly come the leaves, branches, flowers and fruit. Similarly, your studies need to be nurtured by your living in guru devotion and bodhicitta; do everything you do with guru devotion and bodhicitta.





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One thing to discover and realize is that Geshe-la's passing away is a great teaching for us, especially his students. For example, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha showed the entire path to enlightenment in an all-encompassing way, giving teachings on both the profound and extensive paths, liberating numberless beings from the ocean of samsaric suffering and fully enlightening them. But at the end, as a conclusion, he showed the holy deed of passing away into the sorrowless state in order to emphasize the teachings of impermanence to us sentient beings.

Thus Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's passing taught us that if we don't think about impermanence and death all the time, we'll fall under the control of concepts of permanence and think, "I'm going to live for long time." This will allow the eight worldly concerns to constantly arise, preventing our practice of Dharma or at least postponing it. So even if we can recite by heart the entire Kangyur and Tengyur and all the Tibetan lamas' commentaries on the sutras and tantras, realizations won't arise in our mental continuum.

Geshe-la's passing away gives us the same message.

In the *Sutra of Golden Light* the Buddha gave another reason for showing the holy deed of passing away into the sorrowless state. He explained that if he didn't show impermanence by passing away, people would think that he was always there and wouldn't get the feeling of how rare and precious he and his teachings are. They would take the Buddha and his teachings for granted, wouldn't practice, and then their samsaric suffering would be endless; even though they didn't want to suffer at all, they would have to experience suffering without end.

If, for example, a cook were to serve pizza every day, morning, noon and night—pizza for breakfast, pizza for lunch, pizza for dinner—you wouldn't appreciate pizza. In fact you'd get so sick of it that you'd throw it out the window before the table could be cleared. If, however, a cook makes pizza only occasionally, you get very excited when it's served and are delighted to eat it: "Wow! Pizza! We don't get this very often."

Geshe-la's passing teaches us the same thing; that his teachings are rare and precious and so is the teacher who reveals them.

Therefore, take this opportunity to practice Dharma—not only basic Hinayana but especially Mahayana Paramitayana and Vajrayana. This is the most important thing in life.

So this is my message to you all. According to my Mickey Mouse divination it seems that Geshe-la's incarnation might come quickly. You can understand this, because there is a very strong bond between Geshe-la and his students, especially those in Italy.





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The Masters Program will, of course, carry on. Geshe-la put too much of his life into Istituto Lama Tsong Khapa and its many branches—visiting them again and again to give teachings—for it not to.

Therefore, please continue with the activities of the Center, making the most of the great opportunity you have to give peace and happiness to other sentient beings by educating them in what true suffering and true happiness and their causes really are. Because the big mistake they make is to think, even intellectually, that the wrong causes of suffering and happiness are actually the right ones.

So liberate and enlighten suffering sentient beings. One can spout a billion words, but this is the essence. Thank you very much.

*Lama Zopa Rinpoche*

PS: If there's a need, somebody could translate this into Tibetan.

PPS: For Geshe-la's quick return, a stupa should be built. It should be half an arm's length in height, made of copper, and decorated with silver and gold, or silver with gilded ornamentation. The bottom part can be made of copper, the vase silver, and the top plain silver or gilded. The sun can be silver or crystal. This is just a rough idea but basically you, Geshe-la and Rinpoche can decide on materials and decoration. Nevertheless, it would be good to decorate it with many jewels. More details on this will come.

