

# Winter in Manjushri is cold ...

but the community is warm. **Adele Hulse** continues the story of the life and times of **Lama Thubten Yeshe**.

**D**uring the winter of 1977, the Manjushri Institute community spent seventy hours a week repairing the run-down buildings, earning for themselves a Job Creation Grant from the British Government. Two public appeals to bolster restoration funds were launched by the center's management committee, and endorsed by the trustees, Lama Yeshe, Harvey Horrocks, Peter Kedge and Roy Tyson. The trustees were supported by patrons, Sir John Summerton Kt., Sir George Trevelyan Bt. and Jack Cohen, Audrey's husband. The dry rot was gradually exposed and injected with fungicide, the roof repaired, most structural timbers replaced and the house rewired.

The residents were roughly divided into two categories: the creative types who dreamt of a self-supporting community growing its own food and the intellectuals who just wanted to study forever. Nonetheless, through their extraordinarily hard work they had become a warm, close-knit community.

All were very excited at the prospect of meeting the illustrious Zong Rinpoche who, much to the tour organizers' relief, had finally begun to smile. While everyone sat down to lam-rim teachings in the newly roofed and refurbished gompa upstairs, down in the kitchens Ronnie King cooked for three hundred people every day. Jacie Keeley joined the tour as Peter Kedge's secretary.

The erstwhile Australian meat trader, Max Redlich, was waiting for Lama Yeshe to arrive: "Lama Zopa was doing an excellent job translating Zong Rinpoche's teachings. His English was fast and brilliant and he didn't cough or repeat himself. But everyone's mind was focused on Lama's imminent arrival. We had a *pipi* break and got up to stretch our legs, when all of a sudden there was this noise. A body took off at the door, flew the length of the gompa and landed in prostration right at the base of Zong Rinpoche's throne. It was Lama."

Lama Yeshe loved the huge gardens at Manjushri. There were sunken gardens, terraces, rose gardens and woods. Lama's favorite place was the big, walled kitchen garden. Mary Tighe and Jim Belither were in charge of the greenhouses and grew all the vegetables for the large household. "Why don't you grow Chinese leaves?" Lama suggested. He loved Chinese leaves.

"Lama enjoyed coming out and getting his hands dirty, but every time he went on at me about the Chinese leaves," said Mary. "You'd go out into the garden and he'd be there. He liked to know the names of everything and remembered when they were planted. He sent us some bulbs from somewhere and had us send dahlias to him at Kopan. Jim got moved into education and I ended up running the garden on my own for six years. I got to be one of the people Lama knew and he'd say, 'Hello, Mary.' That was great."

## THE FIRST CPMT MEETING

**M**ost of Lama's Sangha and many center directors from around the world gathered at Manjushri Institute to attend the teachings and discuss the organization's development. This was the very first of what became known as the Council for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (CPMT) meetings. Jacie Keeley was in attendance. Almost everyone except Mummy Max Mathews was there – she was still slogging it out in Delhi making evening clothes for the Sister Max label.

During those meetings at Manjushri a new center was established in Ireland. Several monks and nuns from Manjushri visited and a core group of students gathered, though neither Lama Yeshe nor Lama Zopa ever went there.

Paula de Wys came over from Holland, where Marcel had given several courses. She asked Lama if it was time to create a Dutch center. Lama agreed and named it Maitreya Instituut.

Lama Yeshe believed that committees should be accountable to the communities they served. "Communicate dear, communicate," he constantly urged committee members. His most effective advice was often a sweet: "Whatever you think best, dear!" That usually got people thinking a little harder.

## PUBLICATIONS FOR WISDOM CULTURE

One of the issues he wanted settled was the future home of Publications for Wisdom Culture. At Lama's request, Nick Ribush and Robina Courtin had been researching possibilities in Delhi when Lama suddenly announced: "Change of plan. We're going to put Wisdom here, at Manjushri Institute." Ngawang Chotak was summoned



Students gather at the end of Zong Rinpoche's teaching.



Zong Rinpoche



Lama with Zong Rinpoche

from America to be its managing director and Jon Landaw appointed managing editor. When Robina's name came up Lama said: "Fantastic! Robina be secretary!" A further four were appointed contributing editors.

Ngawang Chotak knew nothing of this until he received a letter from Lama saying: "What have you done for sentient beings this year? You are still a hippie, you don't work for sentient beings!" Chotak promptly packed up his family, Lise and their two boys, and arrived in England. The first book published by Wisdom at Manjushri Institute was called *Silent Mind, Holy Mind*, a compilation of Lama Yeshe's many Christmas talks at Kopan.

### THE GESHE STUDIES PROGRAM AT MANJUSHRI INSTITUTE

The International Mahayana Institute (IMI), the body set up to manage Lama Yeshe's monks and nuns, had already informed its members about the establishment of a twelve-year study program they were expected to follow. This Geshe Studies Program was to be conducted at Manjushri Institute. Most of the Sangha who came for Zong Rinpoche's teachings planned to stay on for it.

Lama Yeshe appointed American nun, Thubten Yeshe, as *gegö*. "He told me I was not to be a disciplinarian but rather 'mummy and daddy to the Sangha,' said T.Y. "But the Sangha were twenty totally ungovernable monks and nuns. Moreover, the day after we had carefully constructed new

guidelines, Lama Yeshe broke them completely by giving permission for several new ordinations, quite outside the parameters we had just set. I held that job for a year and it was probably my greatest challenge."

Lama Yeshe sent an outline of the Geshe Studies Program to the Gelugpa Society in India. It was deemed to be in accordance with the standards the Society had upheld for many years in Tibet and received their stamp of approval. The program offered three years of lam-rim and thought transformation (*lo jong*), three months of mind and cognition (*lo rig*), two years of *Abhidharma*, five months of Shantideva's *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, two years studying Maitreya's *Abhisamayalamkara* text, one year of Chandrakirti's *Entering the Middle Way*, one year of Nagarjuna's *Fundamentals of the Middle Way*, six months of the second chapter of Dharmakirti's *Commentary on the Compendium of Valid Cognition*, one year of vinaya study (monastic rule), and one year of tantric subjects.

One month after Lama Yeshe left Manjushri Institute, the IMI published its first *Geshe Studies Bulletin*:

"Examinations for full or partial geshe degrees will be conducted by a committee including Lama Yeshe and an impartial geshe who is not one of the Geshe Training Project teachers, the IMI Council and those who have previously received their degrees. The criterion for obtaining a geshe degree is full understanding of the subjects under study; therefore it may take more than

the proposed twelve years to complete the full program. The program is available for interested lay students as well as Sangha and the first term will begin on 1st January 1979 at Manjushri Institute. The basic study tool will be debate in English using accurate terminology.”

A second course, the General Diploma in Applied Buddhist Studies, was also offered. Lama Yeshe said it didn't matter if people had big mental blocks about tackling philosophical study, because they could choose to become expert in just one field. “He can meditate, make retreat, then he becomes expert so then he has a job,” said Lama.

**T**upten Pende was about to begin studying at Tharpa Choeling, in Switzerland, when Lama Yeshe put him in charge of the Geshe Studies Program. “I had no idea that such a huge center had been established in England,” said Pende.

As the end of Zong Rinpoche's visit to Manjushri Institute drew near, a final formal meeting of all the center directors was called on 24 August 1978. On that day Lama Yeshe announced that he did not like the name Yeshe Foundation, which had never been formally adopted. Since the directors' group was already known as the Council for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (CPMT), he suggested they call the organization the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition. But many of those present didn't like that name, saying it was too long. There were a number of suggestions of short, one or two syllable words, supposedly conveying phonetic meaning. Lama dismissed them out of hand and banged his fist on the table. “We are the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition. That is what we are, who we are,” was Lama's unbending conclusion. The very next day people began using the acronym, FPMT.

At another meeting with Harvey Horrocks, Peter Kedge, Nicole Couture and Yeshe Khadro in his small cottage, Lama Yeshe began talking about his vision for a statue of Manjushri to be built at the Institute. It was to be several storeys high and would “speak” recorded teachings. Lama had been impressed with the speaking statue of Abraham Lincoln he had seen at Disneyland in 1977; so much so that he took Zong Rinpoche to see it too.

Peter Kedge went with them: “There are all these characters from Disney stories walking around in costume

and I remember a little boy pointing to us in our robes and asking his mother, ‘Who are they supposed to be?’

“This was the first time I recall Lama talking about building a giant statue. Here we all were completely overwhelmed with what we had taken on at Manjushri Institute, and Lama was prising our horizons open and planting yet another extraordinary vision before us. That statue was never built, but four years later Lama began talking about building a giant statue of Maitreya Buddha.”

During this visit Geshe Kelsang gave teachings on the Six Session Guru Yoga, the requisite daily practice for anyone receiving a Highest Yoga Tantra initiation. There is a long version, a medium and a very short one.

At the end of the course Zong Rinpoche gave the Twenty-one Taras initiation to seventy people, describing each one in such a manner that it seemed he saw them individually in space before him. Forty students also received refuge and lay vows. Lama Yeshe gave the final lecture, instructing students how to integrate the Dharma into their daily lives. “Kyabje Zong Rinpoche gives you these profound and perfect teachings and I come along and make spaghetti out of it,” he joked.

**Z**ong Rinpoche also gave Heruka initiation to seventy people, again with the minimum commitment of the Six Session Guru Yoga practice and the Yoga of the Three Purifications, a standard practice for Heruka initiates. Eighty-five people also took Lama Tsongkhapa initiation from Zong Rinpoche. Lama Yeshe gave commentary over several days on Guru Yoga and the Hundred Deities of the Land of Joy sadhana. He extracted a commitment from his students to complete a retreat on Guru Yoga within one year.

From England, Zong Rinpoche's tour was to travel to Italy, France and Ibiza. Elisabeth Drukier came to England from Paris to make arrangements for the French tour. In London, she learned that the visas would take seven weeks to process. Such a delay would mean canceling the French course. Elisabeth consulted Zong Rinpoche at Manjushri Institute. He did a *mo*, pointed his finger and said: “You have to go in that direction.” Elisabeth found herself at the French Consulate in Liverpool, only to discover the same problem. Things were not looking good. Suddenly, the woman in charge looked more closely at the passports. “Oh, Tibetan lamas,” she said. “I'm a Buddhist, too. Look, I've never done this before but I'll stamp the passports myself, right now.” ☉