

[Home](#)[New Kadampa Tradition](#)[Geshe Kelsang Gyatso](#)[Behind the Lies](#)[Spread the Truth](#)[English](#) | [Español](#) | [Français](#)

Smear: Geshe Kelsang stole Manjushri Institute from the FPMT



Truth: Geshe Kelsang was the first Resident Teacher at Manjushri Institute. He later accepted Lama Yeshe's request for him to step down and had made plans to return to India and then to live at Madhyamaka Centre in York. However, the community at Manjushri all

petitioned him to stay.

The community of Manjushri Institute wished to save their building, Conishead Priory, from being sold to make funds available for suspect business dealings in Hong Kong. This meant they needed to separate from the FPMT. On the other hand, they wished Lama Yeshe to stay as their Spiritual Director. After continual discussions on how to solve the problem, also involving two representatives from the Dalai Lama, the Institute's managers - then called the 'Priory Group' - decided to take steps to separate Manjushri Institute from FPMT.

There were three main reasons for doing this:

- 1) FPMT managers had committed serious illegal actions, which was public knowledge among many people at Dharma centres;
- 2) FPMT managers wanted to sell Manjushri Institute's building; and
- 3) Although, according to its constitution, legally everything at the centre belonged only to four people, in reality all the work of developing the centre was being done by the community, and not these four.

Eventually, a legally binding agreement was made, which was signed by the

Taking Down the Smears

[New Smear: Geshe Kelsang Gyatso stole Manjushri Institute from the FPMT](#)

[New Smear: The New Kadampa Tradition monks and nuns are not authentic](#)

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[Smear: The New Kadampa Tradition is sectarian](#)

[Smear: The New Kadampa Tradition worships a spirit](#)

[Taking down other New Kadampa Tradition smears](#)

[Taking down Geshe Kelsang Gyatso smears](#)

What is a Kadampa?

A **Kadampa** is someone who integrates their knowledge of all Buddha's teachings into their everyday lives. Find out more in the booklet

FPMT's representatives, Geshe Kelsang, the Priory Group and the community representatives. One part of the agreement was to confirm that Lama Yeshe was the Spiritual Director of Manjushri Centre.

The whole detailed history of Manjushri Institute over these years has been chronicled by three reliable witnesses who were part of the proceedings: Charles 'Chip' Rodarmor (Director of Manjushri Institute 1981-1983, appointed by Lama Yeshe), Roy Tyson (Secretary of Manjushri Institute 1976-1983, Director of Manjushri Institute 1983-1992), and Jim Belither (Education Programme Co-ordinator of Manjushri Institute 1980-1987).

The History of Manjushri Institute

The following information is provided by Charles 'Chip' Rodarmor (Director of Manjushri Institute 1981-1983, appointed by Lama Yeshe), Roy Tyson (Secretary of Manjushri Institute 1976-1983, Director of Manjushri Institute 1983-1992), and Jim Belither (Education Programme Co-ordinator of Manjushri Institute 1980-1987).

The purpose of giving this information is to prevent misunderstanding and to stop false information.

In late 1974 Peter Kedge and Harvey Horrocks, students of Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche who were based at Kopan Monastery in Nepal, returned from Nepal with the intention of developing a Dharma centre in the UK to be called 'Manjushri Institute'. They contacted a number of people around the country, including those who had been to Kopan, and in 1975 a small group of people interested in Buddhism, especially Tibetan Buddhism, began to develop in the London area. This group included Dennis Heslop, Roy Tyson, James Belither, Peter Baker, Monique Berghok, Lawrence Williamson and Anton McKeown.

Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa were invited to give a short course at Royal Holloway College outside London in September 1975, and the following year Geshe Rabten was invited to give teachings at Pangbourne College in Berkshire.

In 1976 Harvey Horrocks and others found the building Conishead Priory, near Ulverston in Cumbria and, after receiving local government permission for change of use, contracted to buy the building for £70,000 in total to be paid in three instalments over four years.

Some members of the group moved from the London area to Conishead

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Priory in August 1976. The building was large but in very poor condition, with leaking roofs and dry rot, no heating, and a very limited gas and electricity supply.

In July 1976 Manjushri Institute was legally established as a charitable trust with four Trustees - Lama Yeshe, Peter Kedge, Harvey Horrocks and Roy Tyson - and Lama Yeshe as Spiritual Director. Legally these four trustees had complete ownership of and control over Manjushri Institute. However, in reality everything came to be controlled practically by the managers of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT), which Lama Yeshe established at Kopan Monastery (but which was not formally incorporated until much later). This was because within the four Trustees, Lama Yeshe had the most authority and Peter Kedge, having returned to Kopan in late-1975, was helping him. However, the burden of paying for the building, as well as for renovating and repairing the building, was shouldered by those living at Manjushri Institute.

In late-1976 Lama Yeshe requested Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche to ask Geshe Kelsang Gyatso to go to Manjushri Institute to teach. Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche suggested that Geshe Kelsang should teach Lamrim, Chandrakirti's *Guide to the Middle Way* and Shantideva's *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* and then check whether it was suitable to remain. Geshe Kelsang arrived at Manjushri Institute in late-August 1977, and became the first Resident Teacher at Manjushri Institute.

In 1978 Geshe Kelsang established Madhyamaka Centre in York, England. Because he did this without Lama Yeshe's 'permission', Lama Yeshe wrote to Geshe Kelsang asking him to resign as Resident Teacher of Manjushri Institute. Geshe Kelsang received this letter through Harvey Horrocks, then Director of Manjushri Institute.

Not wishing to cause problems, Geshe Kelsang accepted this. His plan privately was to go to India temporarily and then return to Madhyamaka Centre. On hearing that Geshe Kelsang was leaving Manjushri Institute, Geshe Rabten - a highly respected Buddhist teacher at Tharpa Choeling Buddhist Centre in Switzerland - telephoned him and asked him to go first to Tharpa Choeling for three months and teach Dharmakirti's *Commentary to Valid Cognition*, and Geshe Kelsang accepted this invitation.

Shortly before he was to leave for India, Harvey Horrocks, Director of Manjushri Institute, organized a community meeting one evening and explained that Geshe Kelsang had been ask to step down because of

opening Madhyamaka Centre and would be returning shortly to India. The community was shocked, and told Harvey to tell Lama Yeshe that they felt there was nothing wrong in Geshe Kelsang establishing Madhyamaka Centre, that they rejoiced in the opening of another Dharma centre, and that they would like Geshe Kelsang to remain continually.

The following day, the community itself organized a meeting and everyone signed a card petitioning Geshe Kelsang to remain, and said that they would take responsibility for preventing any problems between Manjushri Institute and FPMT. Representatives of the community, including Jonathan Landaw, visited Geshe Kelsang and gave him the letter from the community, and requested him to stay.

Before the community meetings, Geshe Kelsang had decided to leave quietly by going to India on holiday and then not returning to Manjushri Institute. But after receiving so many requests to stay, he reconsidered and decided to stay at least temporarily. He felt there was no reason to resign as he had not done anything wrong, and the community was sincere in wanting him to stay. Although this decision was against Lama Yeshe's wishes, it was clear that the Manjushri Institute community was purely motivated in wanting Geshe Kelsang to stay.

Shortly after these events, FPMT (at first mainly Peter Kedge, the principal officer of FPMT) made plans to sell Conishead Priory to raise funds for FPMT's business projects in Hong Kong. Later it became clear that Lama Yeshe was in agreement with these plans.

In January 1981 Harvey Horrocks left Manjushri Institute initially to do a retreat in Nepal, and Lama Yeshe appointed Chip Rodarmor as acting Director. At first Chip made efforts to sell the building, but Geshe Kelsang gradually encouraged him not to. In this way, the selling of the building was delayed despite Lama Yeshe and Peter Kedge putting continual pressure on Chip. One day Lama Yeshe phoned Chip from Hong Kong and told him to do his job in selling the building, otherwise he had no other function. Chip, however, closely followed Geshe Kelsang - yet, finding his position increasingly difficult, offered Lama Yeshe his resignation in January 1983 and suggested that Roy Tyson become Director. Chip's resignation was not accepted but, while Chip was reconsidering his position, in May 1983 Peter Kedge arrived unannounced to take over as Director.

Peter Kedge began to take over the Office, changed the bank accounts and

planned to remove the Institute's managers. He told Geshe Kelsang that he and his students may have to move out within six months because he was going to sell the building. The Institute's managers - then called the 'Priory Group' - requested Geshe Kelsang for help and he accepted. Geshe Kelsang and the Priory Group wrote to Peter Kedge refusing to accept him as Director and stating their wish that Manjushri Institute formally separate from FPMT. A meeting was called and the community was asked to vote on two proposals: (1) that Manjushri Institute separate completely from FPMT, and (2) that Roy Tyson remain as Manjushri Institute Director. Of those who signed: forty-four people voted 'yes' to both proposals (this number excluded the Priory Group of eight members); eleven abstained; and two voted 'no'.

After this meeting the Priory Group wrote to Peter Kedge telling him to leave by a certain deadline or the Police would be called to remove him. Peter Kedge then left. Unfortunately this was a disappointment to Lama Yeshe.

After Peter Kedge left, the Priory Group made two requests to Lama Yeshe: (1) to change the constitution of Manjushri Institute so that it belonged to the public and not to four private individuals, and (2) that he remain as Manjushri Institute's Spiritual Director and Spiritual Guide continually throughout his life and for life after life. Letters received from Lama Yeshe indicated that he was unhappy with Manjushri Institute. He mainly expressed his displeasure and did not agree to change the constitution.

Lama Yeshe cancelled his summer visit to Manjushri Institute, so the community sent two representatives - Chip Rodarmor and Geshe Kelsang's translator Tenzin Norbu, who was a friend of Lama Yeshe - to see Lama Yeshe in America, together with extensive offerings. They had one brief meeting with Lama Yeshe, and were asked to return two days later. When they returned they were told that Lama Yeshe was too busy to see them, but that Lama had left them a cassette-taped message. They listened to the taped message and later left a taped response. This clarified that the community was never against Lama Yeshe, requesting him to come to Manjushri Institute that summer to give teachings, and asking him not to listen to the negative things that Peter Kedge had been saying about Manjushri Institute. They effectively returned from America empty-handed.

On the one hand the community at Manjushri Institute was unhappy to be upsetting Lama Yeshe, but on the other hand it wanted to save the centre

and separate from FPMT. There were continual discussions on how to solve the problem, and finally the Priory Group decided to take steps to separate Manjushri Institute from FPMT. There were three main reasons for doing this:

- 1) FPMT managers had committed serious illegal actions, which was public knowledge among many people at Dharma centres;
- 2) FPMT managers wanted to sell Manjushri Institute's building; and
- 3) Although, according to its constitution, legally everything at the centre belonged only to four people, in reality all the work of developing the centre was being done by the community, and not these four.

The Priory Group wrote many letters to the FPMT managers, especially to Peter Kedge; but the request to separate from FPMT and create a new constitution were continually rejected. The Priory Group then began to prepare legal proceedings against the FPMT managers. When the FPMT managers realized that this legal action was being prepared, they requested the Dalai Lama's Office to send mediators to help solve the problem.

In early-1984 the Dalai Lama's Office sent two representatives, and meetings were held first at Manjushri Institute. Their first proposal was that Lama Yeshe should step down immediately and that Geshe Kelsang would step down after three years. This was rejected by Manjushri Institute who didn't want to abandon Lama Yeshe or Geshe Kelsang. Various proposals were discussed, but no conclusions were reached.

Then at London Manjushri Centre there were two days of meetings (13th - 14th February 1984) with the Dalai Lama's two representatives, Peter Kedge and Harvey Horrocks as FPMT representatives, Geshe Kelsang, the Priory Group, and two Manjushri community representatives. At the beginning there was no progress, but when the Priory Group explained about the possibility of legal action bringing to light the FPMT's involvement in illegal activities (including drug-smuggling), the FPMT's representatives accepted the separation. With the Dalai Lama's representatives, both sides reached a peaceful agreement to formulate a new constitution such that Manjushri Institute would be owned publicly. A legally binding agreement was made, which was signed by the FPMT's representatives, Geshe Kelsang, the Priory Group and the community representatives.

Another part of the agreement was to confirm that Lama Yeshe was the

Spiritual Director of Manjushri Centre. The community did not want to separate from Lama Yeshe, only to separate from FPMT.

Sadly, Lama Yeshe passed away shortly after this agreement was made. After two years of discussion over whether there should be a new Spiritual Director to replace Lama Yeshe, in October 1985 four new Trustees of Manjushri Institute were appointed, two chosen by FPMT and two by Manjushri Institute. A new constitution was formulated, and finally in May 1992 a new charitable company Manjushri Mahayana Buddhist Centre was incorporated, which was completely independent of FPMT. Manjushri Institute then passed all its assets to the new charity and dissolved.

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