

Geshe Thupten Phelgye will talk about Buddhist perspectives on the ethical treatment of other religions and non-human species.

The title of his talk: “We are Interconnected: A Discussion of Buddhist Ethics Regarding other Religions and Species.”

The conversation is “free” and open to the public. We are highly recommending donations for the Geshe’s work. As a Buddhist monk he relies on the charity of others.

Here are some of the questions we will put to the Geshe:

- 1) What do you think is the best attitude towards religious views not one’s own, and do you think the religions are all aiming at the same goal?
- 2) The Dalai Lama has said Buddhists shouldn’t try to convert others, rather encourage others to follow deeply their own religious principles knowing that through a series of lifetimes people will eventually come to have Buddhist thoughts. Do you agree with this view?
- 3) Do animals have spirituality and previous lives? Can they become human through a series of lifetimes?
- 4) Why should we take good care of animals?
- 5) How can we be vegetarian when there is a Burger King, Wendy’s, or McDonalds on each corner?
- 6) On one hand, Buddhists think everything that comes to be is dependent on something else, and this interconnectedness is the foundation of Buddhist ethics whether to animals or humans. On the other hand, Christians think God, as permanent and not dependent on anything else, specially chose to bring everything into existence, and this special selection provides the foundation of ethics. Which foundation of ethics has the better chance of improving the world and being right?

Below is a short biography of the Geshe. You can find more information on other free events with the Geshe in Austin including **a story from the Austin American-Statesman** at the following address: <http://www.drdauidzuniga.com/geshe-la-in-austin.html>

TIME: Thursday September 18, 10-11:30 am

PLACE: AL Auditorium.

Hope to see you there,

Dr. James Kraft, Associate Professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies

Venerable Geshe Thupten Phelgye

Venerable Geshe Thupten Phelgye was born in 1956. At the age of 17, after graduating from high school, he joined the renowned Sera Jey Monastic University in South India and became a Tibetan Buddhist monk. In 1991, after 18 years of studying and living in the Gelugpa tradition (the largest lineage of Tibetan Buddhism), he obtained the Geshe degree from Sera Jey.

In 1979 he was appointed head teacher of the monastic school and brought the school into a new era. In 1984 he began to campaign for vegetarianism and the ethical treatment of animals. On October 6, 1986, His Holiness the Dalai Lama appointed him as guardian-tutor to Canadian Tulku Tenzin Sherab (Elijah Ary, the inspiration for the film “Little Buddha,” starring Keanu Reeves).

In 1993, with blessings from His Holiness, Geshe Phelgye went to a hermitage retreat in the mountains of Dharamsala, India, where he stayed for 5 years until December 1997. In 1998, after receiving support and blessings from His Holiness, he founded the Universal Compassion Foundation and campaigned for vegetarianism and universal compassion around the world. He also worked closely with Ms. Maneka Gandhi and vegetarian groups in India and the United States for many years.

In 1999, elected as the founding president of the International Gelug Society (IGS) in Dharamsala, Geshe Phelgye published the journal, Kadam News, and sponsored resolutions promoting a vegetarian diet in Gelugpa monasteries, among other important resolutions. In 2001 he was elected to the Tibetan Parliament in Exile and served for 10 years.

Geshe Phelgye worked with Sulha Peace Project in the Middle East from 2004 to 2007 seeking reconciliation among Judaism, Islam and Christianity. In 2005, after five years of service, he wanted to resign from Parliament but was encouraged by His Holiness to continue for another term and was re-elected to the Parliament in 2006. Apart from his parliamentary work, he has been travelling around the world, giving talks and teachings promoting peace and compassion. Promotion of vegetarianism, human values, diversity and interfaith dialogue are the mission of the Universal Compassion Foundation.

He has spoken at over one hundred colleges and universities across North America and Asia. He has taught in all lineages of Buddhist Centers and Christian churches of various denominations. In 2011, the Jesuit-founded Gonzaga University invited him to be their first Global Scholar-in-Residence. In 2012, Eastern Washington University invited him to their campus as a special Faculty-in-Residence, where he currently teaches. You can learn more about Geshe-la at his website (<http://www.universalcompassion.org>).