

Geshe Etiquette

It's a tremendous honor for the Rime Buddhist Center to host Geshe Tsewang Thinley from the Drepung Gomang Monastery. To make you feel more comfortable and to show Geshe la the respect he deserves, a little protocol & guidelines are in order.

- **RESPECT:** Respect is rooted in the central insight of the awakening Buddha. When interacting with any monk, it is appropriate to treat him with great respect. He has gone through many years of training and should be accorded treatment as if they were an emanation of the Buddha.
- **GESHE IS A TITLE:** Geshe Tsewang Thinley has earned a Geshe Lharampa degree from the Drepung Gomang Monastic University. This is a strenuous 23-year program of study and is the equivalent of a Ph.D. in Tibetan Buddhist Philosophy. He should be addressed as **Geshe la** or **Geshe Tsewang Thinley la**. The “la” is an honorific term added at the end of a person’s name or title to show respect.
- It is *never* appropriate to address Geshe la as Rinpoche or Lama. Although these titles have evolved into different meanings in the West, In Tibetan culture, a Lama is a very highly realized tulku (reincarnation) and a rinpoche refers to an incarnate lama or honorific for abbots of monasteries.
- When referring to Geshe la, please show respect by using his title: “**Drepung Gomang Geshe in Residence**” or simply “**Geshe in Residence**”. It is *extremely* disrespectful to refer to him as “The Monk” or “The Rime Center Monk”.
- Geshe la is a fully ordained Tibetan monk. He has taken many vows including that of celibacy.
- With this in mind, **Geshe la’s private rooms** in the upstairs of the Rime Buddhist Center are completely **off limits** at all times.

General Monk Etiquette

Do’s

Do: Greet and bid farewell by placing palms together in front of your heart and bow slightly as a proper gesture of respect to a teacher or a monk.

Do: Bow slightly as you walk by.

Do: If a monk is seated, approach him at the same level, try not to stand above him.

Do: Stand when a monk or teacher enters a room and do not sit until he is seated.

Do: When eating with monks, allow them to fill their plates first. Just remember in all situations-“monks first” and you will be fine.

Do: Offer tea and coffee at any time. Milk and sugar can also be offered.

Don’t’s

Don’t: Wear revealing clothing such as low-cut or strapless shirts or anything that reveals undergarments. Short skirts and short shorts are also inappropriate. Women in particular, should wear appropriate attire.

Don’t: Touch or hug a monk especially if you are female. Monks must refrain from contact with members of the opposite sex.

Don’t: Point with your finger! Instead of pointing, gesture toward the person or object with your open hand, fingers are extended, palms up.