

# The 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso: A Profile



**6 July 1935:** Lhamo Dhondup born to a farming family in a small hamlet in Taktser in the northeast Tibetan region of Amdo (Ch: Qinghai), one of seven siblings to survive childhood.

**1937:** Formally recognized as the reincarnation of the 13th Dalai Lama (died in 1933) and renamed Jetsun Jamphel Ngawang Lobsang Yeshe Tenzin Gyatso.

**1939 – 1940:** Arrives in Lhasa in October 1939 after a three-month journey from Amdo. Formally enthroned as 14th Dalai Lama on 22 February 1940.

**1940 – 1942:** Begins monastic education which consists of five major subjects (logic, Tibetan art and culture, Sanskrit, medicine, and Buddhist philosophy) and five minor subjects (poetry, music and drama, astrology, metre and phrasing, and synonyms). In 1942 receives vows of novice monk.

**1950:** Assumes full political power one year following China's invasion of Tibet. Flees Lhasa for Dromo in southern Tibet.

**1951:** 17-Point Agreement signed by Tibetan delegation in Beijing on 23 May. Meets in Dromo with a Chinese delegation led by newly-appointed Commissioner and Administrator of Civil and Military Affairs of Tibet, General Chiang Chin-wu. Returns to Lhasa in August.

**1954:** Attends peace talks in Beijing with Mao Zedong and other Chinese leaders including Chou En-lai, Chu The and Deng Xiaoping.

**1956:** First visit to India to participate in the 2,500th Buddha Jayanti celebrations.

**1959:** In February takes final examination in the Jokhang Temple, Lhasa during the annual Monlam (prayer) Festival. Passes with honours and is awarded the Geshe Lharampa Degree, the highest-level degree equivalent to a doctorate of Buddhist philosophy. In March, following a large popular uprising, brutally crushed by Chinese forces, he and a small entourage depart for India. Tibetan government formally re-establishes at Lhudup Dzong and repudiates the 17-Point Agreement. Stays briefly in Mussoorie, India, before taking up residence at Swarg Ashram in Dharamsala on 30 April. Granted asylum by Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, extended to Tibetans who accompanied him into exile.

**1963:** Unveils a draft democratic constitution for Tibet, "The Charter of Tibetans in Exile" which enshrines freedom of speech, belief, assembly, and movement, and provides detailed guidelines on the functioning of the Tibetan government for those living in exile. First Tibetan Parliament in exile established in Dharamsala.

**1967:** First visits abroad since coming into exile, to Japan and Thailand.

**1970:** Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, which today houses more than 80,000 manuscripts and other resources on Tibetan history, politics and culture, opens in Dharamsala.

**1973:** Embarks on first visit to Europe including Italy, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Belgium, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Great Britain, West Germany and Austria.

**1979:** Establishes contact with government of the People's Republic of China for the first time since coming into exile in 1959.

**1987:** Delivers Five Point Peace Plan for Tibet, proposing Tibet as a non-armed enclave and an environmental sanctuary, with China responsible for defense and foreign policy. 1988: Delivers ‘Strasbourg Proposal for Tibet’ to Members of the European Parliament, including an elaboration of the final point of the Five Point Peace Plan.

**1989:** Awarded Nobel Prize for Peace. The Nobel Committee notes that *“in his struggle for the liberation of Tibet (he) consistently has opposed the use of violence. He has instead advocated peaceful solutions based upon tolerance and mutual respect in order to preserve the historical and cultural heritage of his people.”* With the Prize award, establishes the New Delhi-based Foundation for Universal Responsibility, whose mission is encouraging the practice of nonviolence, improving communications between religion and science, securing human rights and democratic freedoms, and conserving and restoring the Earth.

**1992:** Initiates a number of additional major democratic steps, including the direct elections of Kalons (Ministers) by the Assembly of Tibetan People’s Deputies and the establishment of a judiciary branch. Previously Kalons appointed directly by His Holiness.

**2001:** First direct democratic elections held by the Tibetan people for the post of Kalon Tripa (Senior Minister) in the history of Tibet.

**2007:** Awarded the United States Congressional Gold Medal in October recognizing his role as one of the world’s foremost moral and religious leaders advocating for peace. Named Presidential Distinguished Professor at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, his first university appointment.

**2009:** Contributes \$150,000 to the Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education at Stanford University, the largest personal donation he has ever given to a scientific venture. *Leader’s Way: Business, Buddhism and Happiness in an Interconnected World* published.

**2011:** On 10 March announces intention to relinquish political responsibility and proposes changes to the constitution of the Tibetan government in exile to remove the Dalai Lama’s role as head of state, to be replaced with an elected leader. Signs the amendment of the Charter of Tibetans on 29 May, vesting the Central Tibetan Administration and its democratic leadership with all political powers and responsibilities formerly held by the Dalai Lama, who remains the spiritual leader of Tibet. This ends the tradition (since the 5th Dalai Lama in 1642) of the Dalai Lamas holding dual responsibility of spiritual and temporal powers. Draws up guidelines to recognize the next Dalai Lama.

**2012:** Receives the Templeton Prize for his *“long-standing engagement with multiple dimensions of science and with people far beyond his own religious traditions has made him an incomparable global voice for universal ethics, nonviolence, and harmony among world religions.”* Donates the prize money to charity.

**2015:** Attends Prayer Breakfast in US Congress and publicly greeted by US President Barack Obama. Will turn 80 on 6 July. In Amdo, the region of Tibet where the 14th Dalai Lama was born, 80 is a very auspicious age.

(With thanks to the TEMPLETON PRIZE)