

2015



ÖSEL {luminous}

THRANGU MONASTERY CANADA'S ANNUAL MAGAZINE





AN ASPIRATION FOR THE WORLD

COMPOSED BY HIS HOLINESS OGYEN DRODUL TRINLEY DORJE,
THE SEVENTEENTH GYALWANG KARMAPA,
HEAD OF THE KARMA KAGYU LINEAGE

World, we live and die on your lap.
On you we experience all our woes and joys.
You are our ancestral home of old.
Forever we cherish and adore you.

We wish to transform you into the pure realm of our dreams.
We wish to transform you into a land for all creatures,
Equal for all and free of prejudice.
We wish to transform you into a loving, warm, and gentle goddess.

Our hope in you is so ever resolute.
So please be the ground on which we all may live
So all these wishes may come true,
So all these wishes may come true.

Do not show us the dark side of your character,
Where nature's calamities reign.

In every section of our world's land
May there thrive a fertile field of peace and joy,
Rich with the leaves and fruits of happiness,
Filled with the many sweet scents of freedom.
May we fulfill our countless and boundless wishes.

Translated from Tibetan into English by Tyler Dewar



THE CLEAR-SOUNDING DRUM OF JOYFUL IMMORTALITY

A LONGEVITY SUPPLICATION FOR
THE V.V. NINTH KHENCHEN THRANGU RINPOCHE,
KARMA LODRO LUNGRIG MAWEY SENGE

SVASTI VIJANTU

Ever-excellent great bliss, peaceful might of dharmadhatu
Deities, splendid and supreme, of all-encompassing purity,
Bring forth the delightfully abundant siddhi of prosperous longevity
To secure this peerless master's life forever.

Within the sphere of wisdom vision, the equality of existence and peace,
You are awakened as effortless luminous awareness;
Yet, may your endless magical displays, filling all of space,
Remain alive and well as the essence of Lokeshvara.

Serene expanse, all-pervasive and utterly free,
Your wisdom experience has been pure from the beginning;
Yet, may your joyful dance, uniting emptiness and bliss within basic space,
Remain alive and well as the essence of the bold Manjushri.
The ground expanse, from the beginning unbroken by mental constructs,
Is the unending kaya, the ease of delighting in the supreme secret;
Yet, may you, unmoved in great actionless nondoing,
Remain alive and well as the essence of Vajrapani.

May the life of this noble master be everlasting;
May the eminent parasol of your Dharma renown billow over the world;
May the darkness, decline and fears of beings completely subside;
And may your auspicious light spread forever.

Anointed with the dewdrops of the title Perfect Buddha glorious Karmapa, I, Ogyen Trinley
Kunkhyab Wangi Dorje, pray that this supplication, offered with pure aspirations on the second
Joyful Day in the waxing phase of the Victorious Month, may be fulfilled accordingly.

March 2, 2001



Ösel is Thrangu Monastery Canada's annual magazine. We would like to share with you the year's activities and events. Thrangu Monastery Canada, located in Richmond, British Columbia, is the V.V. Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche's seat in North America. Rinpoche is one of the most renowned and learned scholars within the Karma Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, and the lineage itself is led by H.H. the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje. Dungse Lama Pema Tsewang (pictured top-right), Rinpoche's devoted student, directs the Monastery's activities and designs its yearly schedule. With the teachers' wisdom and compassion for all beings,

practitioners are given direction, hope, and inspiration.

The Monastery is a place that promotes peace and harmony. Built on a city road lined with churches and temples (nicknamed "the Highway to Heaven"), the Monastery is part of the area's multicultural and multireligious fabric where respect for one's neighbours is valued and honoured. People who are interested in Buddhism can learn about Buddhist philosophy, prayers, and rituals at the Monastery, but Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike are always welcome. Thrangu Monastery Canada stands as a testament to the power of peacefulness and care for others.



Thrangu Monastery Canada was the first traditional Tibetan Buddhist monastery built in the Pacific Northwest. It belongs within a global network of centres under the guidance of the V.V. Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, who transmits teachings and blessings from the Karma/Kamtsang Kagyu lineage. This lineage, which can be traced from Dorje Chang and the Buddha through to H.H. the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa, contains both “practice” and Mahamudra instructions. The Monastery upholds the lineage’s precious traditions, and members are grateful for the V.V. 9th Thrangu Rinpoche, Dungse Lama Pema, Khenpo Sonam, and all the resident monks’ continuing care and leadership.

With regards to this magazine’s purpose, Dungse Lama Pema said, “This magazine is published for people to learn about the Monastery’s activities. When people see these activities, they may want to learn more about the Monastery or study the Dharma. People can engage in the Dharma in many different ways such as by reading Dharma or seeing pictures of the Monastery’s activities. When we see the activities, our impure minds can become pure, faith and a desire to participate in the Monastery’s activities can develop. Through seeing this magazine and being connected to the Monastery, one can accumulate great merit.”



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LIVING THE DHARMA

A TALK BY H.H. THE 17TH GYALWANG KARMAPA



If you go to any Buddhist centre or listen to any Buddhist teaching, the word “dharma” will inevitably be said. This Sanskrit word can mean “the correct way of living”, and in the Buddhist context it can also refer to the teachings of the Buddha and realized masters. Yet as H.H. explains, the meaning of “dharma” is much deeper; it means transforming our minds. Therefore, as practitioners, it is important to develop our understanding of what Dharma is and apply it to our daily lives. Here is an excerpt from a teaching given at Tergar Monastery in Bodh Gaya, India, in January of 2009. The entire teaching can be read on His Holiness’ website: <http://kagyuoffice.org/>

To begin with, what is Dharma? Generally, when most people try to practice Dharma, or say that they practice Dharma, they sometimes understand it as a ritual, something that you do with your body, your speech, or through special actions or activities. And if that is the case, then you need to devote special time for that activity. This type of Dharma practice usually happens in your shrine room or in your meditation room. You need to reserve special time for this manner of practice.

However, if you look deeply, the Dharma is not only that. Dharma is not a ritual; it is not something you do only with your body and speech. Dharma is actually something that transforms your mind. For example, if we are aggressive or

angry, then we may look inside and try to find reasons why we should not feel that way. We instruct ourselves, we try to change it, and then slowly, we become less angry. Or, if we are somebody with a lot of attachment or clinging, we may try to do something about it. We look inside, correct ourselves, transform ourselves from within, and then start to lessen that emotion. That is what we actually mean by Dharma practice.

You do not need to find special time for this kind of Dharma practice. You can do this form of practice even while you engage in your profession, your work. It can be done in concert with your daily livelihood. It involves reflecting on your aspirations, your way of thinking, and how you act and react. When you can change that, along with how you relate to other people – through your reactions and connections – you become aware of what you are doing. Examining that and then working in this way is, I think, a very important kind of Dharma practice.

In my life, I feel that I am becoming increasingly busy. I feel that the time I have for sadhana practices and meditation is steadily decreasing. These days, I meet many people and I try to help them. My practice generally revolves around my way of thinking and how I actually live my life. I try to live my life with the intention of benefiting other beings. I look at my mind and my intentions, and see whether or not



“When you do not understand the true meaning of Chenrezig, which is loving kindness and compassion, then you do not understand the relationship between the yidam and yourself.”

my priority is the happiness of others. At this time, that is essentially my main practice.

If, in our minds, we can bring to being the happiness and suffering of many people, that will then help us to transform ourselves. Otherwise, if we just have concern for ourselves alone, there is no need to change. If one is alone and free, then there is no need to do anything. We may even feel that if we change, then we will disappear, or something bad will happen to us. However, if we think about many people, think about their happiness and their problems, and if we maintain a certain feeling of responsibility or concern about their welfare, then there arises a strong inclination, a strong desire to change ourselves.

As there are many people, there are many different kinds of problems. Both happiness and unhappiness abound. When my concern is drawn to them, that image comes to my mind, the acknowledgment of the importance of other people. When concern for my own welfare and self-interest begins to diminish, my way of seeing, of being, becomes transformed. Therefore, an essential part of the practice is to keep in mind other people and to experience them either face to face or simply within the mind. With that, we can lessen self-cherishing, our habit of merely looking out for our own self-interest.

This kind of loving kindness and compassion toward all sentient beings is like a wish fulfilling gem. When we have one thing that is most important, then we do not have doubt; we do not have to decide what the most important thing is. When we keep that focus, it becomes easier to give up what needs to be given up, and also to apply the antidote to our mind's poisons.

Generally, it is very difficult to work with our mind's poisons. We are reluctant to give up the control of our negative emotions. We may roughly understand the problems and

the disadvantages of kleshas, but we do not deeply see that it is something we need to be rid of completely. We have to see it as something completely negative. That is difficult.

First, we must have a very clear understanding. Our purpose, our objective, our view, our stand – we need to understand these unambiguously. Then our Dharma practice can become clear and easy. Otherwise our practice, mired in thoughts, becomes not Dharma practice at all, but rather a religion. It becomes a system. And when this happens, many things come with it: gods, ghosts, good, bad, different kinds of dogma, and other various occurrences. With this, the real practice is lost. In the application of Dharma, there are also views and concepts to a degree, but when we really apply the Dharma in our lives, it is unnecessary to understand much of the philosophy and such. It is certainly good if we understand them, but if we don't, that is also fine. The main thing is to work for the benefit of beings. And when that happens, we are applying the Dharma to our lives.

Many people who come to me ask, “How should I practice? Which diety or yidam should I practice?” I usually respond that they should probably practice Chenrezig – Avalokiteshvara – or Tara. However, it is difficult to understand Cherenzig and Tara and so they get confused. “Which kind of Cherenzig? The one with 2 arms, 4 arms or a thousand arms?” You know, a thousand arms – shaking all of those hands can be a bit difficult.

When you do not understand the true meaning of Chenrezig, which is loving kindness and compassion, then you do not understand the relationship between the yidam and yourself. Therefore, because the yidams or the deities are not like lamas who you can visit and talk with, you may feel they are things that come out of the sky. When there is no basis for the understanding of practices like bodhicitta and emptiness and so forth, the practice becomes more or less like blind faith. It does not constitute “living the Dharma”.

SONGS TO INSPIRE PRACTICE

A COMMENTARY ON KHENPO GANGSHAR'S DOHAS



In 2014, Rinpoche's health improved significantly and he kindly granted our request for a teaching. He provided his commentary on Khenpo Gangshar's "Songs to Inspire Practice". As the name implies, "Songs" motivates and guides us to act beneficially and tame our minds. Hundreds of people came to listen to these highly relevant and inspirational teachings.

When we are practicing then what is it we need to do? As it says in the song:

*The instructions of the practice lineage
Are a challenge to tame your being continually.*

When we are practicing and accomplishing the dharma, we need to tame our own mind. The Buddha said the summary of the meaning of all the sutras is "Do not do any wrong at all. Act upon excellent virtue. Completely tame your own mind." So we need to give up all wrongs and all misdeeds and perform perfect virtue. Misdeeds or wrongs are those things that harm other sentient beings. We need to eliminate those and give them up. Virtues are those things that we do with our body, speech, and mind to benefit ourselves and other sentient beings. We need to accomplish these things.

What is the root of all this? It comes down to taming our own mind. Generally we need to bring our mind onto the

right path. In order to do that we need to make sure that we do not have any of the afflictions of desire, hatred, delusion, envy, or any of the different bad thoughts that occur in our mind. When there are many such bad thoughts and occurrences in our mind, we are unable to give up misdeeds, we are unable to practice virtue, and we are unable to benefit sentient beings. So we need to tame our own minds. We need to make sure our minds are not overcome by the afflictions.

In order to not be overcome by the afflictions, what do we need to do? We need to exercise the mindfulness, awareness, and carefulness within our minds. We need to look at our minds and see what is happening there. Are we having various thoughts of hatred, desire, delusion, envy or other bad thoughts? We need to look and see if we are having them and we need to try to stop them. Then, we need to look and see if we are having beneficial thoughts, that is thoughts of love, compassion, and bodhicitta, and we need to try to increase them.

We need to tame our mind and in order to that we need to continually look and see whether or not we have a good motivation. But we should not just leave it at looking. If our motivation is bad then we should apply our mindfulness and awareness. Understand that it is a bad motivation, recognize it, and do what we can to stop it. If it is a good mo-



**We need to completely tame our own minds.
We need to try to take ownership of our minds
so that we can increase our love, compassion,
bodhicitta, faith, and devotion.**

tivation we need to do what we can to increase and support it. In this way we need to completely tame our own minds. We need to try to take ownership of our minds so that we can increase our love, compassion, bodhicitta, faith, and devotion. It is for that purpose we need to tame our minds.

Generally when we are practicing the dharma we need to tame our own beings. For this reason the text says:

*If you do not tame your own being internally
Later it will be hard to benefit others externally.*

If we're not diligent about trying to tame our mind, we won't be able to practice. How is it we should tame our mind? We need to look at our mind and eliminate any of the faulty aspects of our minds. We need to increase the qualities of our minds. If you don't do this, if you don't tame your being internally, it will be hard to benefit others externally.

Therefore, repeatedly examine yourself.

We need to tame our own minds and examine ourselves over and over again to see if we have any faulty aspects in our minds. If we do, how can we eliminate them? We need to examine ourselves. Are we able to develop the love, compassion, bodhicitta, faith, and devotion in our minds? Examine yourself repeatedly. This means when you get up in the morning, when you go to bed, when you're eating lunch, when you're having conversations with other people, you need to look at your mind over and over again. Ask yourself, "Is my mind under the control of the afflictions? Am I able to develop the qualities?" Look at yourself like this over and over again.

The reason for this is that the primary thing we need to do in order to practice is to tame our own minds and our beings. If we do not tame our beings, we won't be able to develop our dharma practice. Also, we won't be able to devel-

op all the necessary qualities and so it will be hard to help ourselves and even harder to bring benefit to other sentient beings. So we need to tame our own minds. The way to do this is to examine ourselves repeatedly.

Often people come and tell me that they have difficulty with anger. They understand that anger is bad but still they lose their temper. They ask what they should do about this. The instruction I give them is the same one that is given here: "Therefore, repeatedly examine yourself." When you wake up in the morning you say to yourself "I'm not going to let myself lose my temper today. I'm not going to get angry and, even if I do get angry, I am not going to lose it and allow myself to be overcome by anger." Then throughout the day you maintain your mindfulness and awareness. Then that evening when you go to bed you think, "This morning I made the commitment that I was not going to get angry. How did I do?" Then you look at yourself. If you see that you didn't get angry that day or, if you got angry but didn't let it take control of yourself, you should say to yourself "I did really well today. I didn't get angry. This is great." You should rejoice and be happy about this. But if you were overcome by anger and lost your temper there is really no fault there because we're all sentient beings who have had strong imprints from beginningless samsara. But we need to understand the reasons for this and look at it carefully. We need to think "That was not good. I made a commitment this morning and I wasn't able to keep it. From now on I will make sure not to let myself lose my temper and be overwhelmed by my anger. If you do this everyday, gradually this will help you recognize the faults within yourself. You will gradually be able to develop your mindfulness, awareness, and carefulness. This is not something that works in just a single time. But if you do it over and over again then it is a way you can change yourself. So here it is said, "Therefore repeatedly examine yourself." You need to examine yourself thoroughly.

SONGS TO INSPIRE PRACTICE



Hundreds of students from all over the world came to Thrangu Monastery Canada in September to listen to the teachings.



When he was younger, Rinpoche received an introduction to the Absolute Nature from “Songs” author Khenpo Gangshar.

VAJRAYANA MEDITATION

FROM THE V.V. KHENCHEN THRANGU RINPOCHE



Deity visualization is used extensively in Tibetan Buddhist and Vajrayana practices, and newcomers may find the vast array of deities overwhelming. However, Thrangu Rinpoche explains deity visualization is a method that enables us to recognize our innate potential.

The practice of tranquility and insight is the general path which is common to both the paths of *sutra* and *tantra*. In the specific context which is particular to the Vajrayana, the main techniques are called the generation stage and the completion stage. These two techniques are extremely powerful and effective.

Generation stage refers to the visualization of, for example, the form of a lineage guru, the form of a deity or *yidam*, or the form of a dharma protector (Skt. *dharmapala*). Now, initially when first encountering this technique it's not uncommon for beginners to think, what is the point of this? Well, the point of this is that we support and confirm our ignorance and suffering and our *kleshas* (negative mental states) through the constant generation of impure projections or impure appearances, which make up our experience of samsara. In order to transcend this process we need to transcend these impure projections together with the suffering that they bring about. A very effective way to do this is to replace these gradually, replace these projections of impurity with pure projections based on

the iconography of the *yidam*, the *dharmapala* and so on. By starting to experience the world as the mandala of the deity and all beings as the presence of the deity, then you gradually train yourself to let go of mental afflictions, let go of impure projections, and you create the environment for the natural manifestation of your own innate wisdom.

Now all of this occurs gradually through this practice of the generation stage. The actual deities who are used can vary in appearance. Some of them are peaceful and some of them are wrathful. In general, the iconography of the wrathful deities points out the innate power of wisdom and that of the peaceful deities the qualities of loving-kindness and compassion. Also there are male deities and female deities. The male deities embody the method or compassion and the female deities embody intelligence or wisdom.

Any of the many deities used in Vajrayana meditation are used primarily to promote or bring out, through identification with them, qualities that are innate in us already. We merely use the technique of working with a deity to bring out or promote these qualities. For that reason, while we do sometimes visualize deities as separate from ourselves — for example, when visualizing deities in front of us for the accumulation of merit and so on — our principal mode of visualizing deities is to visualize ourselves as these deities. From an ordinary point of view, we might regard visual-



Any of the many deities used in Vajrayana meditation are used primarily to promote or bring out, through identification with them, qualities that are innate in us already.

izing ourselves as deities as useless. We would think, “Well, I am not a deity. What use is there in my pretending to be a deity?” But in fact, the root of samsara is the habit of impure perception. By regarding oneself as a deity one gradually purifies, weakens, and removes that habit and replaces it with the positive habit of pure perception. It is for this reason that the meditation upon oneself as a deity is considered so important.

In most religious traditions, when the deities are related to or imagined, they are imagined in front of oneself. Then, visualizing the deity or deities as being present in front of oneself, one prays to them, and by doing so hopefully one receives their blessing, which benefits in some way. In the Vajrayana tradition, however, we regard the blessing and the power and the qualities of the deities as being innate, as being within one’s own mind. This innate presence of the wisdom and blessings of the deities in our own minds is called the unity of the expanse and wisdom, or the unity of space and wisdom. Of course, it is true that when we look at our minds, we have mental afflictions, we have thoughts, we have all kinds of suffering and problems. But at the same time we always have the innate potential to transcend these.

The reason why we have this innate potential is that the nature of the mind and the nature of everything that arises in the mind is emptiness. Regardless of what is passing through your mind, it is always a boundless space of emptiness. The innate potential of our minds lies in the very fact that our minds are empty. Because our minds are empty, all of the problems and sufferings and defects that arise in our minds can be removed or purified, because they too are empty. This emptiness of the mind is not absolute nothingness; it is not a static or dead or neutral emptiness, because, while emptiness is indeed the nature of the mind, the nature of that emptiness is wisdom — it is the innate potential for the arising of all qualities. In Buddhist scriptures this

innate potential is called Buddha Nature.

Now, the process of working with our life situation through practice in tantric Buddhism consists first of acknowledging that one’s own basic nature is that potential, that Buddha Nature, and then of meditating upon its presence within us by regarding oneself as a deity. The form of the deity is the embodiment or expression of that potential, that unity of emptiness and wisdom, within us. It is through regarding oneself as the deity that defects are gradually eradicated and qualities are gradually revealed. The process of getting ourselves out of samsara consists of gradually weakening the bad habits and strengthening the good habits. The primary technique of visualization is to visualize ourselves as the deity, because the potential to transcend our problems is innate rather than external to us. Therefore, our main practice in meditation upon deities is the self-generation of the deity, visualizing oneself as the deity.

In addition to the technique of the generation stage where one visualizes oneself as the deity, there is the second technique which is called the completion stage. It consists of a variety of related techniques of which perhaps the most important and the best known are Mahamudra and Dzogchen or “the Great Perfection.” Now sometimes it seems to be presented that Dzogchen is more important, and at other times it seems to be presented that Mahamudra is more important. As a result people become a little bit confused about this and are unsure which tradition or which practice they should pursue. Ultimately, the essence and result of the practices are the same. In fact, each of them has a variety of techniques within it. But, ultimately, Mahamudra practice is always presented as guidance on, or an introduction to your mind, and Dzogchen practice is always presented as a guidance on or introduction to your mind. The two traditions are concerned entirely with the recognition of the same nature.



MEDICINE BUDDHA

WITH KHENPO SONAM

The Medicine Buddha, also known in Tibetan as Sangye Menla or just Menla, protects beings from physical and mental illnesses. It is believed that prior to becoming a buddha, he aspired to remove the suffering of beings, particularly the sufferings of their bodies and minds. Through this aspiration, as well as the accumulation of merit and wisdom, he became an enlightened being whose primary activity is pacifying sickness. Pictured left, the Medicine Buddha is blue in colour and holds healing medicine. The myrobylan plant that he holds in his right hand is said to cure the three afflictions of greed, hatred, and ignorance, which in turn are the causes for the sicknesses that we experience and for the harm we inflict on others.

The Medicine Buddha is of particular importance to the Monastery; the shrine room's inner walls are adorned with 1000 Medicine Buddha statues and the Medicine Buddha puja (a ritual of prayers and meditation) is practiced regularly. In addition to weekly and monthly practices, a Medicine Buddha retreat is held every year. One is asked to practice with the aim of benefiting oneself, the environment, and all others in all future lifetimes. Through this practice, one can gradually remove fixation on the self and thus the sicknesses that arise from self-clinging. Benefits to our immediate health are also possible — our root guru, Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche has said the blessing he received through the Medicine Buddha practice saved his life. His story along with a detailed teaching on the Medicine Buddha practice can be found in his book *Medicine Buddha Teachings*.

Khenpo Sonam gave the following teaching when instructing on the visualization done in the Medicine Buddha practice.

Generally, when visualizing the Medicine Buddha we see ourselves as separate from the Medicine Buddha. We think, “He is front of me and I am here.” But now we need to see ourselves as indivisible from the Medicine Buddha.

It is due to our own delusion that we see ourselves and the Medicine Buddha as two separate objects. The sense of separateness is also caused by thoughts such as hope or doubt. We hope the visu-



HŪM

Your body is like a mount, the colour of lapis lazuli.
You dispel the suffering of illness in sentient beings.
Surrounded by a retinue of eight bodhisattvas,
Holder of Medicine,
precious deity,
I praise and prostrate to you.

From the sadhana A Stream of Lapis Lazuli



alization will benefit us but doubt that it will, or think that that what we are visualizing does not exist or is not there. Among the three thoughts (grasping, hope, and doubt) that are obstacles on the path, grasping to things as permanent and truly existing is the main obstacle.

What is the cause of grasping to things as permanent? When we met someone a month or a week ago, and then again today, there have been many changes to that person. However, we think it's the same person and that there have not been any changes in phenomena. This is caused by the belief in permanence. Likewise, if we go to a newly built

monastery or centre and after a year we go back to it again, we see it as the same place even though it has changed very much. We think it's the same because we believe in the true existence of an object. In appearance, it looks like things are the same but there have been many changes.

How can we overcome believing in the true existence of objects? There are two ways. The Buddha said the first way is to believe in the impermanence of all phenomena. There are two types of impermanence: subtle and gross. Gross impermanence means changes that are observable, obvious. For example, a tree — we can see when it



flowers and when it loses its leaves. Another example would be ourselves growing from a baby into an adult. Understanding gross impermanence, however, does not quite fully cut through our belief in permanence.

To cut through our belief in permanence, we need to understand subtle impermanence. Subtle impermanence means in the time that it takes me to snap my fingers, many changes have already occurred within that moment itself. If we understand all phenomena are changing moment to moment, this helps us understand subtle impermanence. By understanding subtle impermanence, our desire, pride,

and ignorance decrease, and positive qualities for benefiting others can develop. By not understanding subtle impermanence, we fall under the influence of the five poisons and create suffering.

Likewise, we think the Medicine Buddha and the self are two separate persons. This is because we believe in things truly existing, though it is not like this. Medicine Buddha is filled with love and compassion for sentient beings, and always wanting to benefit them. But we don't feel so close to him because of our hope, desire, confusion, etc... and thus we can't become one.

CHOD RETREAT



Machik Labdron, a dakini, deity, and teacher of Chöd



Dorje Naljorma, the Mother of All Buddhas



Chöd practice is done every month at the Monastery. A weekend retreat was also held from November 21-23, 2014.



Chöd is an especially powerful practice for eliminating ego-clinging and developing compassion.

TILOPA

NAROPA

DORJE CHANG



DORJE CHANG

The actual truth body of the Buddha is “dharmakaya” or “formless truth body.” Its essence is compassion or the Buddha’s mind. An ordinary being cannot perceive this dharmakaya of the Buddha. Out of great compassion, the Buddha manifests in other form bodies known as “sambhogakaya” and “nirmanakaya”. Sambhogakaya can only be seen by beings of pure mind (example, Siddha Tilopa who received teachings directly from the sambhogakaya Dorje Chang (Skt. Vajradhara) or beings in higher realms. As for the ordinary beings like us, the Buddha revealed the nirmanakaya form. Basically, the 3 form bodies are the same as their essence, which is compassion. We could also address the forms of the Buddha as 1) dharmakaya Dorje Chang, 2) sambhogakaya Dorje Chang, and 3) nirmanakaya Shakyamuni. Since the formless dharmakaya cannot be perceived or seen by all ordinary sentient beings, it is impossible for Buddha in formless dharmakaya to liberate them. Therefore, in order to liberate them, Buddha manifests in sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya form bodies. Seen on the Refuge Tree thangka just below the Buddha in bluish colour is Shakyamuni Buddha in nirmanakaya form. We can therefore say that there is basically no difference between Dorje Chang and Shakyamuni. Ever since the parinirvana of Shakyamuni Buddha (a nirmanakaya form) 2,500 years ago, the great bodhisattvas and mahasiddhas still are able to perceive him and receive teachings directly from him.

There was this great mahasiddha by the name of Tilopa who acquired numerous teachings from other mahasiddhas throughout India. Through diligent practice, he attained the bhumis (realization levels of bodhisattvas) which allowed him to perceive the sambhogakaya form of Buddha Shakyamuni. From the Buddha himself Tilopa received profound Mahamudra teachings and this is where the Kagyu tradition and transmission starts. This Karma Kagyu Lineage can be described as the Near Lineage which is more powerful due to the continuous stream of blessings from lineage masters starting from the sambhogakaya form of Dorje Chang.

This is from *The Kagyu Lineage Masters* by Thrangu Rinpoche.



My mothers—all beings throughout space—
supplicate the guru, the precious buddha;
My mothers—all beings throughout space—
supplicate the guru, the all-pervasive dharmakaya;
My mothers—all beings throughout space—
supplicate the guru, the sambhogakaya
of great bliss;
My mothers—all beings throughout space—
supplicate the guru,
the compassionate nirmanakaya.



THE DEEDS OF BUDDHA SHAKYAMUNI

FROM “THE AUSPICIOUSNESS OF THE TWELVE DEEDS”
BY ACHARYA ARYA NAGARJUNA

You joyously fled that great city at midnight
and went into the forest of austerities,
accompanied by Brahma and a host of devas.
The auspiciousness that arose then:
May that auspiciousness bring peace to all beings.

With a body like brilliant gold you sat in unwavering vajrasana
upon a mat of grass as green as vaidurya.
The auspiciousness that arose then:
May that auspiciousness bring peace to all beings.

On the riverbank, surrounded by jaybirds,
you thoroughly dispelled all craving
and were prostrated to by the king of nagas.
The auspiciousness that arose then:
May that auspiciousness bring peace to all beings.

You approached the king of trees
and subdued the great forces of Mara with the power of love,
becoming the bhagavan of the earth and the sky.
The diverse auspiciousness that arose then:
May that auspiciousness bring peace to all beings.

Tathagata, in order to end all suffering, you dwelled at Vajrasana
and at dawn utterly conquered the four maras.
The auspiciousness that arose then:
May that auspiciousness bring peace to all beings.

At the supreme park of the Sages in Varanasi,
you turned the great dharmachakra.
Wondrous auspiciousness arose here and in the deva realms.
May that auspiciousness bring peace to all beings.

Bhagavan Shakyamuni, like a lion you taught the genuine Dharma,
which benefits, purifies, refines merit, and is praised by the aryas.
The auspiciousness that arose then:
May that auspiciousness bring peace to all beings.

The remaining verses can be found in the *Kagyü Monlam Book*
compiled by H.H. the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa

THE HEART SUTRA

WITH KHENPO TASHI



Khenpo Tashi is currently the head teacher of Thrangu Rinpoche's shedra (Buddhist college) in Nepal and India. As our Monastery's former resident Khenpo for nearly four years, members warmly received Khenpo Tashi during his return visit. Members listened to his teaching on The Heart Sutra, perhaps the most widely known Mahayana sutra in many different Buddhist cultures around the world. The Heart Sutra is an incredibly profound teaching on the ultimate nature of phenomena, given through the bodhisattva Chenrezig (Skt Avalokiteshvara) to Buddha's disciple, Shariputra. Its principle point is establishing that all phenomena lack inherent existence, or in other words, are empty in nature.

To engage in the essence of the Heart Sutra, Shariputra asked the compassionate Buddha (Tib. *Chenrezig*, Skt. *Avalokiteshvara*) how noble beings, those with a very pure faith and intention to practice and who have the aspiration to be free from the suffering of samsara, can train in and practice the perfection of wisdom with their bodies, speeches, and minds.

Replying to Shariputra's question, Chenrezig said that the son or daughter of noble family who wishes to en-

gage in the practice of the profound perfection of wisdom should "clearly see in this way." "Clearly see this way" means one has to understand that all of the appearances seen are empty in nature. The appearances are deluded and illusory, just like our dreams.

Why does one need to see that all appearances, that is all relative truths, are illusory, like a dream, or empty in essence? Because not knowing that the relative truths are illusory causes us to experience a lot of suffering and unhappiness in our lives. The root cause of suffering and unhappiness is one's defilements or negative thoughts. Due to those negative thoughts one has a lot of attachment, desire, and clinging which cause one to engage in unvirtuous activities and have more negative thoughts. These in turn create negative karma that ripens as suffering in the future.

By looking at our body, speech, and mind, we can see why seeing all appearances as empty is beneficial. In terms of our body, we experience a lot of suffering, depression, pain, and other difficulties. When it comes to our speech, we often speak very harshly and use our speech for many other bad things. As for our mind, we have different negative thoughts which cause us to engage in various negative



Our feelings do not stay for long but instead come and go like water bubbles. They change from suffering to happiness, happiness to suffering, and so forth.

activities. Because of these problems we need to clearly see that all appearances or relative truths are illusory, dream-like, or empty in essence.

In order for ordinary beings to overcome suffering and negative thoughts, the Buddha taught two antidotes. The first antidote to suffering and negative thoughts is understanding the selflessness of the person. Due to not knowing emptiness, we always cling to “I,” “mine” and so forth. Because of the strong feeling of “I” and “mine” that results in clinging, we engage in many negative activities through which we accumulate many karmic obscurations. Because of the suffering that results from clinging, we need to understand that “I” and “mine” don’t inherently exist; they are empty in nature. Through examining the selflessness of the person we can understand that all five aggregates (form, feeling, conception, formation, and consciousness) are empty in essence.

The second antidote the Buddha gave to suffering and negative thoughts is the selflessness of phenomena. When we talk about relative truth, we believe that all the appearances we see with our eyes, whether it be a person, house, wealth or anything else that gives us happiness, are the ultimate source of happiness. Because of this thinking, we always have so much grasping to these appearances. Because, ultimately, these appearances are empty in essence, we need to think that they are like a dream or an illusion. If one can understand the selflessness of the person and phenomena this helps overcome our obstacles, obscurations, and so forth.

In Tibet, how do people train in or practice the Buddha’s teachings on the selflessness of person and selflessness of phenomena? There are two ways. One way comes from sutras and the other from the tantras. In the sutra approach,

one engages in practice through listening and using his or her logic to investigate and understand that all phenomena are empty in essence. In the tantrayana or vajrayana, one engages in the practice by taking instructions on how to look at the nature of mind. By looking directly at the essence of the mind, one sees the mind itself is empty in essence.

In the Heart Sutra, all phenomena, including “I” or the self, are summarized by the five aggregates (form, feeling, perception, mental formation and consciousness). The Sutra says each of the five aggregates is empty. First, it is written “form is emptiness; emptiness also is form. Emptiness is no other than form; form is no other than emptiness.” For example, our bodies are just collections of atoms or different substances. Similarly, the other four aggregates are said to be empty. One can use any of the other four aggregates in place of the word “form” in this statement.

We can also think about emptiness with respect to the aggregate of form by comparing it to a round ball. When you investigate the ball there is no north, south, top, or bottom to the ball that can be pointed to. Because the ball is round, logically, there is no starting or ending point to it. In that way, one can relate form to a ball.

The second aggregate, feeling, is just like a water bubble; feelings do not stay for a long time. In other words, feelings are impermanent. From moment to moment, second to second, minute to minute, feelings change. They do not stay for long but instead come and go like water bubbles. They change from suffering to happiness, happiness to suffering, and so forth.

The third aggregate, perception, is compared to a mirage



seen in a hot desert. Due to the heat and movement of the air, our minds are deluded and we think there is a river or something in the distance. When one gets nearer to what they think they see, they find nothing there. Similarly, our minds are deluded about perceptions. We believe our perceptions are inherently existent but when examined, they are not.

Mental formations, the fourth aggregate, are compared to a banana tree. When the layers of the straight, green tree are cut away the inside is empty. There is no essence to it. Similarly, our mental formations are empty or without essence.

The fifth aggregate, consciousness, is said to be just like a dream. We strongly grasp to all appearances or relative truths we see, and think they are the ultimate source of happiness. Due to this grasping, we have very strong desire and engage in many negative activities. This in turn creates lot of obstacles. Using these five examples, we can know that all of these five aggregates are in essence emptiness.

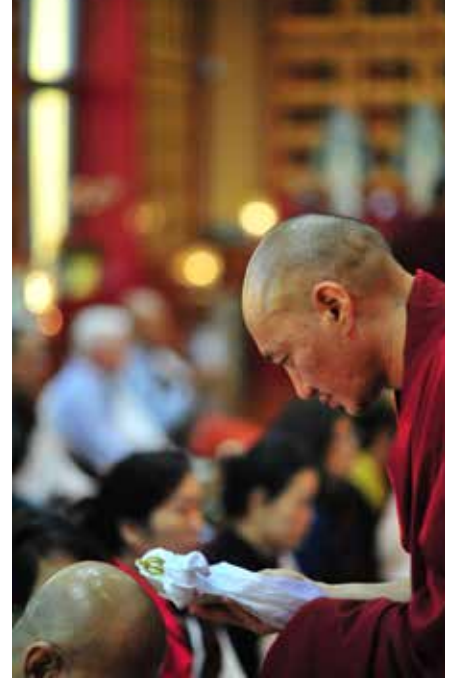
The five aggregates can be understood through using different examples. Sometimes they are understood as being like dreams, illusions, echoes, or a moon's reflection on the water.



Sometimes we have very auspicious or happy dreams. Within those dreams we rejoice and feel very glad. In truth there is nothing substantial in which to rejoice. Similarly, there is an example of a reflection of the moon on the water. It is just a reflection but it appears as if there is a moon in the water. We should understand all appearances or relative truths are empty in nature — they are just illusions. Because our minds are deluded by ignorance, we cling to and grasp the illusions. The appearances do not exist but we think they have true, lasting existence. Instead, we need to understand that all appearances are empty by nature.

So one should see all relative or conventional truths as being empty in essence. If you use your logic to investigate if they have any inherent existence, you will have the realization that they do not have any such existence. Using this approach one needs to understand that all appearances are empty by nature. Due to our deluded minds and thinking that those appearances have an inherent existence, we think that they are stable and will remain for a long period of time. Because of this we have different thoughts and give different names to these appearances and, as a result, we engage in a lot of negative activities.

CHAKRASAMVARA RETREAT



From December 12th to 14th, the Monastery held a Chakrasamvara weekend practice. As part of the practice a Chakrasamvara sand mandala (pictured top-middle) was created



Chakrasamvara, considered an emanation of Dorje Chang, is one of the main yidams meditated upon in the Kagyu tradition. Many of the famous 84 mahasiddhas attained enlightenment through relying on this yidam.

MANJUSHRI



HIS HOLINESS SAKYA TRIZIN RINPOCHE

His Holiness the Sakya Trizin kindly honoured the community with his second visit to Thrangu Monastery Canada on May 13th, 2014. The Sakya tradition is one of four major traditions within Tibetan Buddhism, and it has remained unbroken for over 1,000 years. His Holiness is the present throne holder and head of the Sakya lineage. Through him, precious Sakya teachings and practices are preserved and passed on to others.

This year at the Monastery, His Holiness spoke on the stages of the Buddhist path and emphasized the importance of developing wisdom. He then bestowed the Manjushri empowerment. As His Holiness is himself regarded as an emanation of Manjushri (whose activity is wisdom, pictured left), members felt very fortunate to have the opportunity to receive the blessings of the teachings and the empowerment from His Holiness. The following is an excerpt from the teaching he gave on his visit.

Some people who practice dharma fear the suffering of the lower realms and wish to continuously be born in the higher realms of humans, devas, or gods so they can enjoy worldly pleasures. Attaining this result, which is the small person's motivation, requires a cause. That cause is to keep good moral conduct, which in turn requires wisdom.

While there is an unimaginable amount of suffering in the lower realms, in the higher realm, when we don't carefully examine, there appears to be a mixture of pain and pleasure or joy and suffering. If we examine carefully, however, there is no real joy or pleasure. Even the pleasure only appears as such when you compare it with suffering. But when you look closely, it's also another form of suffering. So all of samsara, from the highest heavenly realm to the lowest hell realm, is actually full of suffering. It doesn't have a single spot worthy of attachment. When one sees all of samsara as suffering, one wishes to totally renounce it and seeks the liberation of nirvana. To attain liberation you need to cut self-clinging, the root of samsara. All the faults and misery are due to a lack of wisdom that causes us to, without logical reason, cling to the self. If we try to find the self we can't find it anywhere, but we have a very strong habitual tendency of clinging to the



Lord of Speech,
magical emanation of the noble Khon family,
You bring happiness to all beings through the sutra
and tantra paths of the great vehicle,
Your enlightened activity
brings tremendous benefit and happiness,
Wish-granting king of power,
may your life be secure and long!

A long life prayer for His Holiness Sakya Trizin



self that is built up from beginningless time. To cut self-clinging, we need the wisdom that realizes the selflessness of the person. That is the direct antidote for self-clinging. Therefore, without wisdom it is also not possible to attain nirvana for oneself, the result of the mediocre person's path.

On the greater person's path or bodhisattva path, one sees all of samsara is full of suffering and not worthy of any attachment. This person seeks liberation for all other sentient beings as well as oneself. When we suffer physically or mentally, the suffering is unbearable and we long to be free from it. Similarly, all sentient beings, from invisible germs to

gods, have the same feeling. We have had innumerable lives from beginningless time until now. All of the time we are changing our body, family, place of birth, etc. Wherever the wind of karma blows one has to go without choice. Because of this, at some point, every sentient being has been our very dear mother, father, and so forth. But we do not recognize these mothers. Instead, we see some as our relatives and friends, some as our enemies, and others we feel indifferent towards. In reality, however, every sentient being, even our enemies, those who hate and create obstacles for us, are our very dear mothers and fathers. They have benefited and given so much to us. Therefore, it not right to



ignore them just to seek liberation for oneself alone. Even in the worldly realm, if you are a good person who is in a safe and happy place, and whoever you love most is in the midst of great suffering, you would try to somehow share or relieve their suffering. Likewise, if we imagine that all sentient beings are our mother, ignoring them just to seek nirvana for oneself is not right. So we must do something for them. But at the moment what can we do? We are ordinary people and don't have the necessary abilities. The only way to help sentient beings effectively is to attain full enlightenment. When you attain enlightenment, even in a single moment you can save countless sentient beings through

them seeing, hearing, remembering, or being touched by you. You can help them directly or indirectly. Therefore the goal is to attain full enlightenment. To do that we need to follow the bodhisattva's way of life. The main practice of the bodhisattva is training in the six perfections of generosity, moral conduct, patience, diligence, meditative concentration, and wisdom. The first five perfections are the method and the last is wisdom. Wisdom is very important. It is like a person with eyes who can lead many blind people. Generosity becomes the perfection of generosity, and not ordinary generosity, only when linked with wisdom. This is very, very important.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF OFFERINGS

FROM THE V.V. KHENCHEN THRANGU RINPOCHE



Thrangu Rinpoche with the Ven. 3rd Bardor Tulku Rinpoche (right), and Dungse Lama Pema (left).

At Thrangu Monastery Canada, you will see a variety of objects being offered. They may include tormas, water, flowers, incense, candles, and food. Even our chants, prostrations, and general Dharma practice can become offerings that we make to the Three Roots (one's Root Teacher, the Yidams, and the Dharma Protectors) and the Three Jewels (the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha). Making offerings is integral to our Buddhist practice.

As with any dharma practice, making offerings wholeheartedly is very important. Rinpoche has said that if we do a prostration, for instance, our mind should also be filled with faith, devotion, and confidence to make that prostration meaningful. But if we just prostrate with the body and the mind is not involved with it, then it is more like theater with us just going through the movements, but the power is not there. It is the same when we recite mantras. If we recite a mantra and at the same time our mind is visualizing, we are filled with certainty, confidence, and faith; then all the power of the mind will be there and it will be a very good practice. But if we just recite the mantras and our mind is elsewhere, then it is just a show and the power is not there. It is not necessarily a bad thing to just do a prostration or a mantra mouthing the words. It just means the power is not there; just as it is not necessarily a bad thing that people pretend to be kings and ministers in the theater. So, if we really want to get everything

possible out of practice, we need to do it very sincerely and wholeheartedly with our body, speech, and mind.

With this wholehearted approach the bodhisattva's practice is the practice of the six paramitas. The first is generosity which means giving. There is giving to those who are worse off than oneself such as the poor, needy, and hungry. Then there is giving to those who are better off than oneself which means offering them to the Three Jewels. These are the two main areas of generosity of the bodhisattva. When giving to those who are worse off, what is important is compassion and when giving to those who are better off what is important is faith, devotion, and confidence. So when one gives to the poor, one relieves their poverty and hunger temporarily because of compassion.

When one makes offerings to the Three Jewels, one makes an expression of devotion. If one never gives to those worse off, then compassion isn't there and it is not complete. In the same way, if one doesn't make offerings to the Three Jewels, then one's faith, confidence and appreciation in the meaning of the three jewels isn't quite right either. So offerings are a very important sign of what is going on in terms of compassion and devotion. Besides cultivating love, compassion, and devotion, the bodhisattva also has to actually practice the paramita of generosity.



OFFERINGS



Both mental and material offerings are made during the course of our practices. They help us generate positive attitudes and habits, and created the conditions needed for full awakening.



Offerings may include food, precious items, candles/lights, a practice itself, or even our own physical bodies (either mentally or through a physical act such as prostrations).



CALLING THE LAMA FROM AFAR

A SUPPLICATION TO PIERCE YOUR HEART WITH DEVOTION
BY JAMGON KONGTRUL LODRO THAYE THE GREAT

Within, I conceal my nemesis - the demon of ego-clinging.
All my thoughts only cause disturbing emotions to increase.
All my actions result in nonvirtue.
As I have not so much as turned towards the path of liberation,
Guru think of me, regard me with compassion.
Bless me that self-grasping be severed at the root.

With a little praise or blame comes that much joy or sorrow.
With a few harsh words I let down my armor of patience.
Although I see the afflicted, I feel no compassion.
When I have the chance to be generous I am bound by the knot of greed.
Guru think of me, regard me with compassion.
Bless me to mingle my mind with the Dharma.

Though insubstantial, I ascribe substance to samsara.
For the sake of food and clothing I abandon what has lasting value.
Although I have all that is needed, I crave for more and more.
I deceive myself with unreal, illusory phenomena.
Guru think of me, regard me with compassion.
Bless me to abandon any interest in such a life as this.

Unable to bear the slightest physical or mental pain,
With jaded heart, I don't hesitate to take inferior rebirths.
Even though I directly perceive that cause and effect are unfailing,
Instead of doing what is right, I only perpetuate harm.
Guru think of me, regard me with compassion.
Bless me that I gain conviction in the law of karma.

I hate my enemies and cling to my friends.
Groping in dark delusion as to what to accept and reject,
When practicing the Dharma, I fall prey to dullness and sleep.
When involved in non-Dharma, my senses are clear and sharp.
Guru think of me, regard me with compassion.
Bless me that I destroy my enemy — disturbing emotions.

Excerpted from the full version of Jamgon Kongtrul's "Calling the Lama from Afar."
Translated by Rangjung Yeshe Translations

LONG LIFE PRAYERS FOR RINPOCHE



Long Life Prayers for the V.V. 9th Thrangu Rinpoche are done annually at Thrangu Monastery Canada. In 2014, they were held from July 13-19th.



Lama Yeshe Losal Rinpoche (right) from Samye Ling centre, Scotland, with Dungse Lama Pema



Through chanting the “Union of Upaya and Prajna” longevity sadhana for the entire week, students prayed for Rinpoche to remain and guide us.

GURU RINPOCHE



GURU RINPOCHE

Dungse Lama Pema Tsewang held a weekly class on the Kunchok Chidu sadhana, which is the ritual Guru Rinpoche practice. The 40 students who regularly attended the class learned about the different stages of the practice, received the empowerment (*wang*) and oral transmission (*lung*) for Kunchok Chidu, and helped make tormas offerings for the ritual, held monthly on Guru Rinpoche day at the Monastery.

Guru Rinpoche (Skt. Padmasambhava = “Lotus Born”) is an extremely important figure in Tibetan Buddhism. In fact, he is so revered that he is regarded by many Tibetans as a second Buddha. There are several stories about his birth, but a popular telling states he emerged out of a lotus flower that sat at the center of a lake called Lake Danakosha, located in Oddiyana (which is in modern-day Pakistan). Legend states Guru Rinpoche emerged out of the lotus flower on the 10th day of the month, and promised to emanate in order to help sentient beings every 10th day thereafter. This is why the 10th day of every month in the Tibetan lunar calendar is considered Guru Rinpoche day.

During his life, it is said that Guru Rinpoche exhibited supreme qualities and performed amazing acts of body, speech, and mind. A 9th-century Tibetan king, Trisong Deutsen, invited Guru Rinpoche to Tibet to teach the Dharma. It is believed that Guru Rinpoche tamed local demons so that the Dharma could flourish. He then hid special teachings (*termas*) to be revealed at appropriate times in the future. His Holiness the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa has said, “The Lord Dezhin Zhekpa (the 2nd Karmapa) and others have foretold that in general, supplications to Guru Rinpoche are the essential and single means to benefit Tibet, the teachings, and living beings. These supplications are particularly important during these degenerate times.”

Thrangu Rinpoche’s connection to Guru Rinpoche is close; the 7th Karmapa recognized the 1st Thrangu tulku as an incarnation of Shubu Palgyi Senge, one of Guru Rinpoche’s 25 principle disciples. In addition, His Holiness the Gyalwang Karmapa is considered an emanation of Guru Rinpoche. In 2014, both Thrangu Rinpoche and Dungse Lama Pema bestowed Guru Rinpoche empowerments for the Kunchok Chidu practice.



HŪM

In the northwest of Uddiyana
Upon the anthers of a lotus
You achieved the wondrous supreme siddhi
And are renowned as the Lotus Born
Encircled by many dākinis
We practice following your example
We ask you come and grant your blessings

GURU PADMA SIDDHI HŪM

GURU RINPOCHE EMPOWERMENT



The Long Life Prayers done for our kind root guru, Thrangu Rinpoche, were concluded with him giving an empowerment for the Guru Rinpoche Kunchok Chidu practice. The function of empowerment, the formal ceremony or ritual of empowerment, is to introduce you to the practice and to the process of visualization and so forth, which will make up the practice.

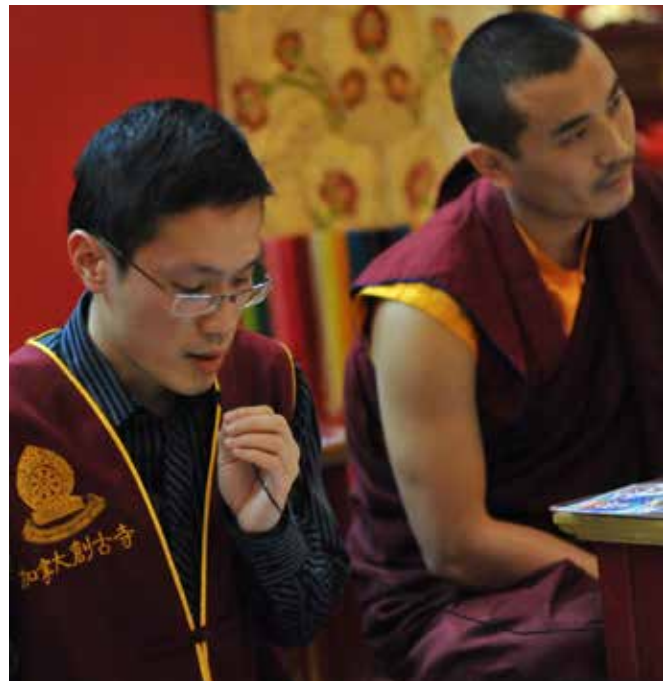


For Vajrayana practices, it is necessary to receive an empowerment from a holder of an unbroken lineage and to have made a commitment to the teacher and the practice itself. The oral transmission of and meditation instructions for the practice text are also needed. The instructions give you complete access to the practice by means of telling you literally how to do it.

LONG LIFE EMPOWERMENT



For the Chinese New Year, Dungse Lama Pema gave a long life empowerment needed for the Guru Rinpoche Kunchok Chidu practice.



BUDDHISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT

A TALK BY H.H. THE 17TH GYALWANG KARMAPA



His Holiness planting a tree at the Kamalashila Institute in Langenfeld, Germany during his first European teaching tour.

H.H. the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa has been pro-active in encouraging an attitude of respect and care for our environment. In a talk given at a Mind and Life Conference, he reminded us that people, animals, and our environment are all interdependent. Ecological well-being is therefore necessary for the health and welfare of sentient beings, as we all rely on the environment in which we live to sustain us. Protecting the environment, he describes, is necessary for all beings.”

If there were such a role as a Buddhist saint of ecology, I would nominate the great Indian scholar Shantideva, who in the 8th century wrote in his *Bodhicharyavatara* (*Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*):

*May all beings everywhere
Plagued by sufferings of body and mind,
Obtain an ocean of happiness and joy
By virtue of my merits.*

In this verse, Shantideva chooses to dedicate his life to alleviate the suffering of others because of his insight into the interdependent nature of life. If we accept that we are not isolated individuals but instead one whole made up of all life on Earth, we cannot remain indifferent to the suffering and ills that occur here. With this understanding, generating compassion for all living beings and turning that motivation

into action is the most ecologically aware thing we can do.

During the last 100 years, over 95% of the world's wild tigers (*Panthera tigris*) have vanished. As human needs have continued to expand, we have taken more and more from nature and left less and less for other animals. However, the magnificent tiger has almost completely disappeared due to consumer demand for its skin and body parts. We are driving a species to extinction simply because we believe wearing its skin makes us look wealthy or that consuming tiger parts will make us healthier. Doing such a thing is essentially non-Buddhist and uncompassionate—not only for the tiger, but also for ourselves, because this act is bound to have negative karmic consequences for us.

Compassion for the “other,” whether people, animal species, trees, or other plants, and for Earth itself, is the only thing that will ultimately save us human beings. Most people are primarily concerned about their work, wealth, health, or family. On a daily basis, they probably feel they have more urgent things to worry about than their environmental footprint. Of course, paying attention to this issue would mean having to make inconvenient choices and changes in their lives. I am not so different. Although I had considered giving up eating meat for many years, I became a complete vegetarian only a few years ago. Somebody presented a short documentary that showed how animals suf-



Compassion for the “other,” whether people, animal species, trees, or other plants, and for Earth itself, is the only thing that will ultimately save us human beings.

fer before and during the act of killing. Watching it, I could feel the fear felt by the animals. Like a thunderclap, I became aware that these living beings were suffering so greatly simply to satisfy my habitual preferences. Eating meat became intolerable for me at that moment, and so I stopped.

The question that remains is when will the intolerable moment occur for all of us? Will we allow the sea to rise and cover the Pacific islands and the Himalayas to be reduced to bare rock? Will we let amazing wildlife species become extinct and simply fade to a story that is told in future generations? Should thriving forests be turned into farmlands to meet our unending demands? Should we live with ever-growing mountains of garbage because we are unable to manage the effects of consumerism?

For society to successfully address the environmental challenges of the 21st century, we have to connect these challenges to the individual choices people face on a daily basis. We cannot simply address the political and scientific aspects of problems such as climate change, intensive extraction of natural resources, deforestation, and wildlife trade. We must also address the social and cultural aspects of these problems by awakening human values and creating a movement for compassion, so that our very motivation in becoming environmentalists is to benefit other living beings.

To do this, the first and most important task is to empower everybody to protect the environment. I come from a region of Tibet that is considered backward by people who live in Lhasa, let alone in the West. My family lived in conditions that many would think very harsh and undeveloped. And yet my father, who never attended school, knew from his own father that if you want to protect a spring, you should plant trees. I think we will find that indigenous people, who live closest to nature, are often our greatest allies in trying to protect it. If we are to save Earth, each one of us must

play our part. We must break through barriers and build bridges. After all, who are we trying to save Earth for if not for all of us?

Second, it is crucial that we find ways to minimize our energy intake or at the least, find safe alternatives to coal, oil, and gas. One of the easiest things to do would be to make solar energy and other safe alternative energy technology cheaper. My main monastery in Tibet, Tsurphu, is fortunate because it is located near natural geothermal springs that we use for energy. Now that I am in India, we are attempting to make all our Karma Kagyu monasteries here self-sufficient in terms of energy use. It would be wonderful to be able to say with certainty that we Buddhist monks and nuns are not contributing to the world's environmental problems. Maybe, someday, all countries will also measure themselves by this standard.

Third, I invite all scholars and practitioners to help protect the Tibetan Plateau, which provides the water for much of mainland Asia. Because water in this region does not have a price tag yet, we take this most precious resource and its fount for granted. Already, the Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra) is under grave threat from dams and the Sengye Tsangpo (Indus) no longer reaches the sea. As the Third Pole, Tibet is highly vulnerable to climate change and what happens there matters greatly to the rest of mainland Asia.

Fourth, we should collectively reassess what we mean by success, whether it is economic growth, development, or personal affluence. The current model for economic growth is simply unattainable for the vast majority of the world, who struggle to live from day to day. If we were to give equal worth to values such as sharing, compassion, and peace, as we do to wealth and social status, each one of us would strive for a success that naturally includes a community. We must explore wholesome and practical alternatives to



Thrangu Rinpoche in Idyllwild, California, home to Karma Mahasiddha Ling, a dharma centre founded by Rinpoche in 1986.

common understanding of what development and success means, which all of us can equally aspire toward.

Finally, I believe that the very future of life on Earth depends on those of us who are privileged to live more simply. To live simply is to be compassionate to yourself and to the world. A life full of material goods and barren of compassion is quite unsustainable from an ecological and karmic point of view. Of course, advertisements are always telling us that the path to happiness lies in purchasing the goods they sell. How is it that the advertising convinces us even when we are skeptical of its message? Our attachment to our own happiness, possessions, family, and self creates a

lack of perspective that makes us susceptible. However, if we can be mindful of the emptiness of self, we can create a space for choice rather than habitual consumerism. We don't have to live a life that is sold to us — we can make the brave choice to live simply.

At the root of all religions are the same basic principles. Live simply. Act with compassion. Be kind to one another. Nowhere does any religion say that we should destroy the very thing that gives us life. So, I feel quite confident saying that from a religious point of view, we must conserve all life and protect Earth. For my own part, I take inspiration from Lord Buddha's teachings, at the heart of which



is the instruction that we work to benefit all living things and cease to harm them, and His Holiness the Dalai Lama who has said that the key to human survival is universal responsibility.

Shantideva's *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* continues to be closely studied by Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhists today. The *Bodhicharyavatara* lays out the path to Buddhahood through the cultivation of compassion and the insight into emptiness in the form of enlightened verses and gives inspiration to all who wish to renounce their own desires and ambitions in order to benefit all living beings. As the 17th Karmapa, I am confident that such Buddha activity

can be directly translated into environmental protection. With this vision, we now have over 40 Kagyu monasteries and nunneries across the Himalayas implementing environmental projects to address issues such as forest degradation, water shortages, wildlife trade, climate change, and pollution, with guidance provided by nongovernmental organizations, including the World Wildlife Fund. We know that this is but a small drop in the ocean and the challenges we face are more complex and extensive than we can tackle alone. However, if each one of us were to contribute a single drop of clean water toward protecting the environment, imagine how pure this vast ocean could eventually be.

OUR ENVIRONMENT

THRANGU MONASTERY'S ORCHARD AND FARM



Visitors to the Monastery have the opportunity to enjoy the serenity of its fruit orchard and gardens during their stay. With His Holiness' emphasis on protecting the environment and many people's own growing concerns with consuming high quality, nutritious food, the Monastery's garden and orchard is committed to keeping its land as organic and harm-free as possible.

The orchard and garden work is especially important given the Monastery was built on Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). The ALR was an initiative introduced by the BC government in the 1970s to protect agricultural land, ensuring that a minimum amount of land suitable for the cultivation of food crops would be preserved. Because the Monastery's land is part of the ALR, some farming on its grounds is required.

The orchard has over 150 fruit trees along with a bird sanctuary (bottom right picture). Members are beginning to enjoy apples, apple pears, cherries, plums, and figs picked fresh from the trees. Blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, and goji berries are also being grown. Our kind teacher, the

V.V. 9th Thrangu Rinpoche, planted a cherry tree in the orchard on September 14th, 2014 (pictured above). This was a lovely contribution to the orchard and a reminder that he is committed to our local and global environments. Rinpoche and a few monks completed the planting by chanting prayers and tying a white "*katag*" scarf around the trunk.

Some individuals have chosen to sponsor their own trees or berry bushes and care for them over the next few years. These orchard trees require a high level of care and maintenance, but it is hoped that the fruit trees will be enjoyed for many years to come.

In between the two orchard fields, 5 greenhouses are being used to grow various vegetables, flowers, and herbs. Some of these vegetables are sold to members and others are donated to the Monastery. If you are in the Richmond area and are interested in volunteering in the gardens or in purchasing fresh garden produce, please contact the main office. The spring and summer months are especially busy with preparing the ground, planting, weeding and watering, and harvesting, so any help would be welcomed!



A bird sanctuary at the end of the orchard.

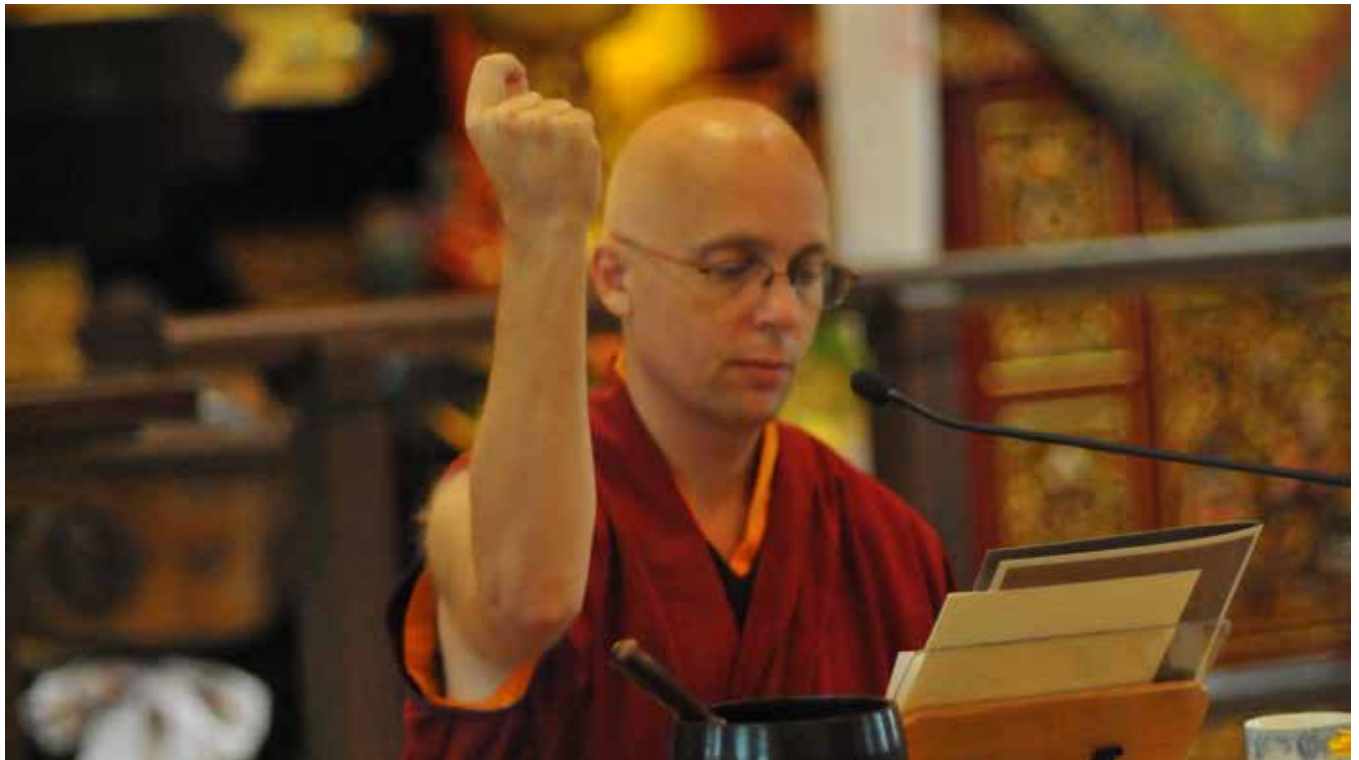
OUR ORCHARD AND FARM





THE THREE VOWS

WITH LOTSAWA KARMA CHOPHEL



Thrangu Monastery Canada was delighted to host Karma Chöphel once again. During the weekend course, Karma Chöphel gave a comprehensive and engaging teaching on three types of Buddhist vows — the vow of individual liberation, the bodhisattva vow, and the tantric vows — and how we keep them in modern life. He explained that as Buddhists, we often take vows but do not know or remember their many aspects. By learning more about them, we refrain from harming others and ourselves with our bodies, speech, and minds. Through restraint, we become freed from wrongdoing and can then help others in meaningful ways. In this excerpt, he introduces the bodhisattva vow. Karma Chöphel is a graduate of Rinpoche's shedra (Buddhist monastic college) and is Rinpoche's principal English translator.

The bodhisattva vow is a vow of wishing to achieve buddhahood in order to bring all other sentient beings to that state. All beings have been our mothers at some point in our infinite past lives. All of them have been experiencing suffering in samsara. They do not have any protection; they do not have anyone who can guide them out of their misery. So the bodhisattva vow is making that commitment that we will do just as the great masters of the past have done — that is to help all of these limitless sentient beings. We take the commitment to become buddhas ourselves and embark

upon the path of training in the paramitas (the perfections).

In talking about the bodhisattva vow, first we have to have bodhicitta. In general, there are two types of bodhicitta: relative and ultimate bodhicitta. Whether we are talking about relative or ultimate bodhicitta, bodhicitta is in general a focus on perfect enlightenment. This can either mean that we are perceiving ultimate enlightenment or it could mean that enlightenment is our aim. Though these two work together in many ways, when we are beginners we first need to train in relative bodhicitta.

Bodhicitta is not something we need to get from somewhere. It is not something that we can buy in the Buddhist store. It's not something someone else can give you, and it's actually not like anyone else needs to give it to you. Bodhicitta isn't anything other than our own true nature. In the texts they talk about three causes of bodhicitta. The first cause is to awaken our potential. All sentient beings have the potential to be kind and compassionate. So what we need to do is awaken this potential and develop it to its fullest extent. But we don't need to do it by looking outside. It is something that we have within ourselves already.

Bodhicitta is like the Buddha Nature that we all have. It's present within every sentient being. But on a relative level,



All happiness in samsara is impermanent by its nature so we need to bring people to lasting happiness.

because of our obscurations, we don't see it. So we have to try to develop it; it's like you are awakening that potential. Then in order to develop it you have to meditate upon love and compassion. You also need a lot of courage because the path of the bodhisattva seems like a really daunting path.

When looking at the difficulties that people undergo to practice, you hear about terrible austerities. In the Jātaka tales, the stories of the Buddha's previous lives, you can read about all of the difficulties that the bodhisattva underwent in order to become the Buddha. There is the famous story of the bodhisattva giving his body to a tigress. There are also many other stories about him cutting off and giving away pieces of his own flesh or gladly giving away his own head. When we read these stories, they might be difficult to understand or accept. Or, even if we accept them, we think "How can I possibly think about doing this myself?"

It says the Buddha had to accumulate merit over three innumerable aeons before attaining buddhahood. An innumerable aeon is like 10 to the 69th power of aeons. So he accumulated merit for three of those aeons. It's a very long time. You may think, "How was he able to undergo that? I can't possibly put myself through that suffering." If you look at it that way it seems daunting, but there is another way you can look at it. You can consider that you are undergoing such suffering for three innumerable aeons anyways so you might as well do it for something good. If you think about it, we are extremely fortunate. We have this one in a billion or one in a trillion chance to be humans and do something with our lives. It could be far worse. If we do not do something now, in our next lives where are we going to be? There are things that we cannot imagine. We could be stuck for aeons undergoing terrible sufferings. So if you have the option of being stuck for aeons of pointless suffering in samsara or experiencing suffering that has a meaning for three innumerable aeons, which are you going to choose? I think I would rather have something a little bit meaningful.

Otherwise, you would just be undergoing suffering because that is the nature of things and would not be doing anything to get yourself out of it. No thanks! I don't want that! Looking at it in that way I feel like there is not a whole lot of choice but to do the bodhisattva activity. But, in order to be able to do it, you need some exposure to it; you need contact with a spiritual friend, a master who can explain the Mahayana to you. We are so bewildered in our ignorance that we don't know what to do. So we need a spiritual friend who can explain to us how to move down the path, and we need to encounter and train in the Mahayana dharma.

Once we've encountered the Mahayana, we need to train it and develop bodhicitta before we take the bodhisattva vow. Bodhicitta comes particularly from meditating on loving-kindness. You meditate on loving-kindness which is the wish that other sentient beings are happy and have the causes of happiness. Then you meditate upon compassion which is the wish that other beings be free of suffering and the causes of suffering.

By meditating on loving-kindness and compassion then you can develop bodhicitta. You see that helping somebody be happy or free of suffering for a short time is wonderful but not good enough. A short time comes to an end. Even if you can help them be happy for a long-time in human terms, in cosmic terms that's pretty short, especially if you think about infinite past and future lives. Thrangu Rinpoche often says "If somebody is happy for a year or ten years or a hundred years or a thousand years or ten thousand years then that's not good enough." Whenever I'm translating and Rinpoche is speaking I am always straight-faced and translate as close as I can to what he says. But I'm thinking "All these people who are expecting to live ninety years at most, what are they thinking when Rinpoche says ten thousand years?" Actually it makes sense, even a hundred lifetimes of happiness will come to an end. All happiness in samsara is impermanent by its nature so we need to bring people to lasting happiness.

Q & A: THE THREE VOWS

WITH LOTSAWA KARMA CHOPHEL



Q: What is a vow? Why do we take them?

A: Taking vows is important. As Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye says, it is the essence of all our Buddhist practices. When we think about it, a lot of the vows, like the five lay precepts of not killing and not stealing, mean refraining from doing things that harm other people. Not causing harm is the essence of the Dharma in general.

Vows can help us accumulate a vast amount of merit. But what is a vow? In English, we think that “vow” means promise. It’s like saying “As long as I live, I shall never kill” and so on. However, Tibetan and Sanskrit words for “vow” mean “to tie” or “to restrain”. What is the nature of this restraint? Some masters say this restraint is primarily in your mind. For example, Shantideva says it is the decision to refrain from every harmful action. Other masters say the vow is form, which is like an action. For example, right now I am sitting here not killing anyone, and I am holding my vow of not killing anyone. Keeping the action of not killing is my form. Either way, thinking about our vows and practicing them is a way to increase our mindfulness and carefulness in everything that we do.

Q: What are the refuge and individual liberation vows?

A: The refuge vow is the basis for all the other vows. By taking the vow, we become a Buddhist. They are the vows of going for refuge to the Buddha as your teacher, to the Dharma as your path, and to the Sangha as your companions on the path.

The vows of individual liberation (pratimoksa) are a method by which we can free ourselves from samsara. There are four levels of this vow. The most basic is the fasting vow that is held for 24 hours. The next level is the five lay precepts. The next two levels are novice and fully-ordained monastic vows.

The five lay precepts are held for the rest of your life, but you can commit to the number of precepts that you’re able to keep. Their focus is on refraining from doing harm with our body and speech. They first four are: not to take life; not to take that which is not given with the intent of making it your own; refraining from sexual misconduct; and not lying. These are called the four root precepts. The next precept is the precept of carefulness. It is giving up alcohol and intoxicants because when you take them, you’re likely to get careless and break one of the other precepts.

Q: Are there consequences to keeping or breaking a vow?

A: Yes. Once you have taken a vow, it is very important you keep it as best as you can. If you don’t have a vow and



Taking vows...is the essence of all our Buddhist practice. It means refraining from doing things that harm other people. This is the essence of the Dharma in general.

you murder someone, it is very bad. But if you have the vow not to kill but then you kill someone, consequences are far worse in terms of karma. You're breaking a promise.

On the other hand, the benefits of keeping your vows is far greater than not having them. Particularly in this degenerate age when our afflictions are strong, maintaining your discipline now is an extremely wonderful and valuable way to gather merit.

Q: What about vegetarianism?

A: Especially in the Chinese tradition when you take the bodhisattva vow vegetarianism is more or less required. But in the Tibetan tradition, it's not. People wonder how this matches with the bodhisattva vow since in order to eat meat a sentient being has to be killed?

According to His Holiness the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa as taught in Bodh Gaya and later in Varanasi, eating meat in itself is not a direct misdeed. Assuming that someone else has killed the animal and you're eating it, that is not a misdeed. If you *are* killing the animal yourself and then eating it, there is the misdeed of killing. The killing is the misdeed of killing, but eating the meat afterwards is not a misdeed. The animal is by that time finished with its body, and so eating the meat is not directly itself a misdeed. However, it is a sign of lacking compassion.

In Tibet and the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, a lot of people and masters eat meat. So the question becomes "What attitude should you have when you eat meat?" In the Mahayana, we meditate on all sentient beings as being our mothers. So that animal's flesh you are eating has been your mother in a previous life. Therefore, you should think to yourself, "I am eating my mother's flesh." When there is a piece of cow or whatever on your plate, His Holiness says you should meditate upon it for a long time, and

then eat it with the same feeling that this is your mother. If you can do it in this way, then it is fine to eat meat.

Q: I have a friend who hunts. He believes the meat available in our market is unhealthy so he hunts his own meat. He kills many animals and distributes the meat to many people. He is not Buddhist, but I told him that killing is not good. My friend became very angry with me. Is this killing? He is not killing a human, so does this violate the precept of not killing?

A: This is killing because he is killing a sentient being. But your friend does not have the precept against killing, so he has not violated the precept although it is still a bad action. It may be possible to convince him not to go hunting, but maybe not. Hunting is an important part of North American culture, so trying to get him to stop hunting may only cause strife and arguments. Regardless of whether you convince him or not, when you recite aspiration prayers, you can recite them for the benefit of your friend and the animals he has killed. If you do compassion meditation, you can meditate on compassion for both your friend (for his future suffering) and for the animals killed (for their past suffering). You can use it a part of your aspiration and compassion practice. Then, at some point in the future, you may have the opportunity to convince your friend not to kill.

In addition, your friend is being generous — he is giving away the meat. You should rejoice in your friend's generosity. Of course, the way he gets the meat is bad but his generosity is good.

Q: What happens if I see someone killing animals or I think a person is violating his or her vows?

A: The important thing to remember is that you're keeping your *own* vows. You're not keeping someone else's vows, you're keeping your vows.

GRAND OPENING: LUMBINI, NEPAL



The Grand Opening of Canada Thrangu Vajra Vidya Association Monastery in Lumbini, Nepal, took place on November 13th, 2014. As Lumbini is the birthplace of the Buddha, it is an important pilgrimage site with many monasteries and stupas.



The honourable minister Lal Babu Pandit, the minister of General Administration of Nepal, and our root guru Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, inaugurated the Monastery.

THE WAY OF THE BODHISATTVA

WITH KHENPO SONAM TSULTRIM



Khenpo Sonam is Thrangu Monastery Canada's resident scholar. His in-depth knowledge on Buddhist philosophy coupled with his gentle and kind manner brings about our respect. Khenpo taught on Shantideva's famous and treasured treatise, the Way of the Bodhisattva (Bodhicaryavatara) for one weekend in 2013. Several months later, he then continued by giving weekly instructions on this treatise. The following is an excerpt of Way of the Bodhisattva's the third chapter. It focuses on dedication, which we do at the end of each practice.

Whether we listen to teachings or practice, it is very important at the end that we make a dedication. Dedications can be from your body, speech, or mind. Whether the merit is small or huge, it's very important to make a dedication for the sake of all sentient beings. When we make dedications, one must think "may all sentient beings be liberated from samsara and attain the ultimate goal, which is the state of Buddhahood." One needs to have that kind of pure motivation. Having that kind of pure motivation, that dedication becomes a pure dedication. Also, one needs to think "may the suffering of all beings in this world be eliminated and may all those beings attain the ultimate state of Buddhahood." One needs to have that kind of pure motivation. With that vast motivation our dedication becomes a pure thought.

Sometimes when we think about making a dedication of the merit accumulated from our practice to some other beings, we think our merit is being taken by other ordinary beings. We think "Now I don't have any merit. I didn't accumulate any merit." We sometimes have this wrong view. One should not have the mistaken idea that through making a dedication to other beings there is no benefit for oneself. One accumulates a vast amount of merit by making a dedication. Also, those beings you have not seen or talked to, those you have no individual connection with, are helped immensely when you make a dedication with a pure mind. So it is very important to make the dedication. Making dedications also plays a very important role in our practice. Sometimes we cultivate very negative mental factors like anger, strong attachment, harmful thoughts, and so forth. If we do not dedicate the merit accumulated through our practice, whatever merit we have accumulated can decline because of developing these negative mental factors. Therefore, making a dedication is very beneficial and important.

As ordinary people cultivating the bodhicitta mind, whatever virtuous activity we engage in, whether we are developing our compassion, love and care, or engaging in the Buddha's teachings, or even reciting even a single mantra, it is very important that we make dedications to those beings who are blindly suffering in samsara. One needs to make



The only source of healing the sickness of the three poisons is the Buddha's teachings; through understanding the essence of the teachings we can be healed.

pure dedications towards those beings. It becomes helpful to oneself and very beneficial to others.

Now the 8th stanza from chapter three in the Bodhicharyavatara is as follows:.

*For all those ailing in the world,
Until their every sickness has been healed,
May I myself become for them
The doctor, nurse, the medicine itself.*

In this stanza it talks about making a dedication to those beings who have been suffering from sickness. As said earlier, when we make a dedication, it is very important that for the benefit of those beings suffering from different sicknesses and difficulties we dedicate to them whatever large or small amount of merit we have accumulated through our body, speech, or mind. Here, sickness refers to sickness of the body and of the mind. Normally when we talk about sickness we talk about the different kinds of sickness and difficulties experienced by our bodies. But in the Vinaya sutras the Buddha mentioned 84,000 different kinds of sickness and said that sickness can be categorized in two ways: sickness of the body and sickness of the mind. Our bodies have different sicknesses like diabetes, stomach aches, and headaches. Our minds are sick with the three poisons of attachment, anger, and ignorance.

In this stanza the patient referred to are those ordinary beings who since beginningless time have been reborn in samsara again and again, and the sickness refers to the three poisons. There is no being in this world who does not have sickness or any physical difficulties. The only difference is the size of the difficulties or pain. The doctor referred to here is the Buddha's teachings or Dharma. While by going to a doctor or taking various medicines can heal physical pain or difficulties, they cannot heal mental sicknesses or difficulties. The only source of healing the sickness of the

three poisons is the Buddha's teachings; through understanding the essence of the teachings we can be healed. Because of this we must regard these teachings as very important, seeing them as being able to help us eliminate the negative mental factors.

The Buddha's teachings are categorized in two ways, scriptural Dharma and the Dharma of Realization. The scriptural Dharma is the teachings of the Buddha as taught in the sutras, vinaya, and abhidharma. The Dharma of Realization is the three higher trainings in moral conduct, meditative stabilization, and wisdom. These are teachings that can help us overcome mental sickness.

If you cannot overcome the three poisons then throughout this lifetime you will continue to suffer from them. To eliminate them we have to cut them off at their root. For example, if we have a beautiful green field there may be unwanted grass or weeds growing in the field. If we just cut their tops off they will reappear. To get rid of them we have to cut them off at the root. In the same way, if we want the ultimate happiness, if we want to achieve the ultimate state of buddhahood, the mental sickness of the three poisons of attachment, anger, and ignorance have to be cut off at the root.

As already said, when we talk about mental sickness the only source for overcoming it is the Buddha's teachings. One who understands these profound teachings, who has a clear understanding of interdependence, and fully realizes the emptiness of the self of person and the self of phenomena can overcome this sickness. All of the negative emotions are in essence empty, interdependent, and selfless. If you understand this about them then you can overcome the root of all mental sickness.

AKSHOBYA RETREAT



From August 8th to 10th, we recited the sadhana and mantra of Akshobhya Buddha, one of the five wisdom buddhas. It is said that through the Akshobhya practice, practitioners and other beings can be liberated from the fear of an unfortunate rebirth.



The Akshobya & the Akshobya mandala



The practice was concluded by a fire ritual (pictured above) done for the purpose of alleviating great difficulties being experienced by both the deceased and the living.



མིལ་ལཱ་པ།
MILAREPA

A DOHA BY MILAREPA WITH LAMA TSERING TASHI

Lama Tsering Tashi visited Thrangu Monastery Canada from July to November 2014. He completed a traditional three-year closed retreat and was the discipline master of Thrangu Tashi Choling in Boudha for four years. While in Richmond, he introduced one of Milarepa's dohas (songs of realization), the one that contains Marpa's instructions to Milarepa. According to Lama Tsering Tashi, this doha contains the essence of all Dharma. Communicating with warmth, humour, and precision, Lama Tsering's presence at Thrangu Monastery Canada was deeply appreciated.

*The ultimate summary of the tantras' meaning
Is meditation upon the tantra's skillful means and methods.*

In the Vajrayana, we have the two practices of creation and completion. When we do the creation practice, like in the morning when we practice Green Tara, we have the visualizations of emptiness and so forth. When doing the creation visualization, there are three very important points we need to remember. The first one is that when visualizing ourselves as Green Tara we need to have the pride of the deity, the feeling of "I myself am Green Tara" and not have the feeling that we are just an ordinary person. The second point is that the visualization of Green Tara needs to be very vivid or clear. We need to know all of her features, like what she is holding in her right hand or what sitting posture her legs are in. The third point is that we need to be mindful of the meaning of the features or details of Mahakala, Green Tara, or whichever deity (yidam) we are visualizing. For example, Mahakala wears bones, and has fangs and three eyes. What do these three eyes mean? They symbolize being able to see the three times of past, present, and future. Knowing the meaning of the features is very important when doing creation practice.

When choosing a yidam to meditate on we can make our own choice or ask a rinpoche or teacher which one we should practice. Then you can study that yidam in great detail. This is very important. In Tibet it is said that some people try to practice one hundred yidams and so do not accomplish even one yidam. Others, however, practice one yidam and accomplish one hundred



Follow the greats, he said.
Do not give into the distractions of this life, he said.
View your own mind as unborn, he said.
Samsara is not happiness, he said.
Do not view suffering as a fault, he said.
Realizing mind is buddhahood, he said.
You do not need many complications, he said.
There is nothing more profound than this, he said.
Practice those, he said.

From Marpa's Oral Instructions to Milarepa



yidams. There are many yidams we can study and practice but we won't even be able to practice one clearly if we try to do them all.

Therefore, we can do a practice like Akshobhya or Green Tara, which is very simple. You can practice one very seriously and in detail, knowing how to visualize the yidam's body, colour, and mantra, and doing it very clearly. Focusing on one yidam is better. Similarly, if we are doing a guru yoga practice, it is better to focus on one guru yoga practice and know it in detail. Sometimes people practice guru yoga and visualize their lama as Guru Rinpoche, Mi-

larepa, or Gampopa, but if we try to do one hundred guru yogas we won't even accomplish one. If you do one hundred yidams or guru yogas and are asked about the details of just one practice you won't know the answer. So it's better to focus on one yidam or guru yoga.

So in the Vajrayana there is the creation practice where one can visualize different yidams, and the completion practice where one can do guru yoga. If you want to know more about the creation and completion practices there are many texts you can study.



*If you wish gain, respect, and fame,
You are inserting yourself into the maws of Mara he said*

Sometimes as practitioners we want to sit in front of a high lama so that others might think we are very respected, have a very good name, are famous, or so on. There are some individuals who have clinging and attachment to these kinds of things. If you have too much clinging to gain, respect, and fame you are entering inside the mouth of a demon.

*If you don't tame the elephant of the mind,
You will be fooled by the words of instructions, he said.*

These lines are very important. Because our minds are untamed and wild, we think of it as a wild elephant (potentially dangerous and destructive). Sometimes there are people who will receive a lot of instructions, oral transmissions, empowerments, and so on. When they are asked to talk about something dharma related, they are very capable. For one single word they may be able to give 100,000 meanings. But when it comes to practicing or meditating, their minds are similar to wild elephants. So one must be very careful to practice and tame the elephant of the mind when we receive very important instructions and empowerments.

THE UNION OF MAHAMUDRA & DZOGCHEN



Sukhavati, or Dewachen in Tibetan, is the name for Amitabha's Pure Land. A prayer to be reborn in Sukhavati is included at the end of almost every puja (chanting and offering practice) that is done at Thrangu Monastery Canada. Although Dewachen or Sukhavati may seem very far away, and we may feel that our wish to be reborn there is selfish, neither is necessarily so. With faith and merit, we can be reborn in Sukhavati, where it is easier to benefit others. To be enlightened in this world is extremely difficult, but practicing the Dharma is easier in Sukhavati. This in turn allows us to quickly become useful to a great number of sentient beings.

Knowing about Sukhavati can help make the prayers relevant and meaningful. Dungse Lama Pema offered the teachings below in May 2014, when he spoke on Karma Chakme's *Union of Mahamudra and Dzogchen*. These two verses are from the text's sixth song.

*Because being born in Sukhavati is easy
and has a vast benefit,
Recite the prayer and dedication for rebirth in Sukhavati.
Do not doubt, wondering, "Will I be born there or not?"
It was the prayer of that Buddha
that you will definitely be born there.*

When making a dedication, one should recite the prayer

for rebirth in Amitabha's pure realm of Sukhavati. Because of the aspirations of bodhisattvas and the Buddha Amitabha, to take rebirth in Sukhavati is very easy, and once born there it has a vast benefit. At the moment of death one should cast away all those doubts about whether or not one can be born there. Though it is said all sentient beings can be born in Sukhavati due to the aspirations of Buddha Amitabha, being born there totally depends on your own faith, merit, and aspiration to be reborn there.

To be born in Sukhavati one should remember the four causes for being born in the pure realm. The first is recalling the wonderful qualities and details of the pure realm such as its palace and so forth. Thus one needs to be mindful when visualizing the pure realm. By reciting the extended and shorter versions of prayers for rebirth in Sukhavati, one can understand its positive qualities and details, how easy it is to be born there, and how much benefit we will receive if we are born there.

The second cause for being born in Sukhavati is to gather the accumulation of merit. There are many ways to accumulate merit. For instance, it can be accumulated by doing prostrations with your body, by reciting mantras or scriptures with your speech, or by giving away your possessions and wealth to those who need it. It is important that when



One needs to cultivate the pure motivation of benefitting all sentient beings and develop thoughts of compassion for them. By cultivating this altruistic mind one can plant the seed for being reborn in Sukhavati.

giving to those who need our wealth or possessions, one gives with a pure motivation or intention. One can also use one's mind to make mental offerings like in the mandala or the Seven Branch offering. There are many ways to accumulate merit and a vast amount of benefit comes from them.

During the times of the Buddha, according to the Vinaya rules, the monks had to go to each house and ask for food and alms offerings. One time the 500 bhikshus (fully ordained monks) went on their alms round, they were very sad because they didn't receive any offerings. When they told the Buddha what happened, he said that the reason for not receiving food was that there was one person in the group who had not accumulated enough merit. He then divided the 500 bhikshus into two groups of 250 and sent each group to beg for offerings separately. This time one of the groups received offerings and the other group did not. The group who did not receive offerings was again divided into two groups. This process was done until finally it was found which bhikshu had not accumulated enough merit. This shows the importance of accumulating merit and how one person without enough merit can affect many others. There is a vast benefit that comes from accumulating merit and it is important for practitioners to do so.

The third cause for rebirth in Sukhavati is to generate the altruistic mind. After developing pure faith in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, one needs to cultivate the pure motivation of benefitting all sentient beings and develop thoughts of compassion for them. By cultivating this altruistic mind one can plant the seed for being reborn in Sukhavati.

The fourth cause for being reborn in Sukhavati is making a dedication. As was said earlier, it is very important that at the end of one's practice one makes a dedication that one-

self and all others be reborn in Sukhavati.

So these are the four causes for being reborn in Sukhavati. To summarize, the first one is visualizing the pure land. The second is to accumulate merit by doing prostrations with your body, reciting prayers with your speech, and so forth. The third is generating the pure mind of bodhicitta, the altruistic motivation, for the benefit of all sentient beings, and the fourth is making a dedication for all sentient beings to be reborn in Sukhavati. One must contemplate on these four causes and having contemplated on them one should have cast away all doubts about whether one can be reborn there. Buddha Amitabha has made the aspiration that every sentient being can be reborn in Sukhavati but it all depends on your aspiration, faith, and merit.

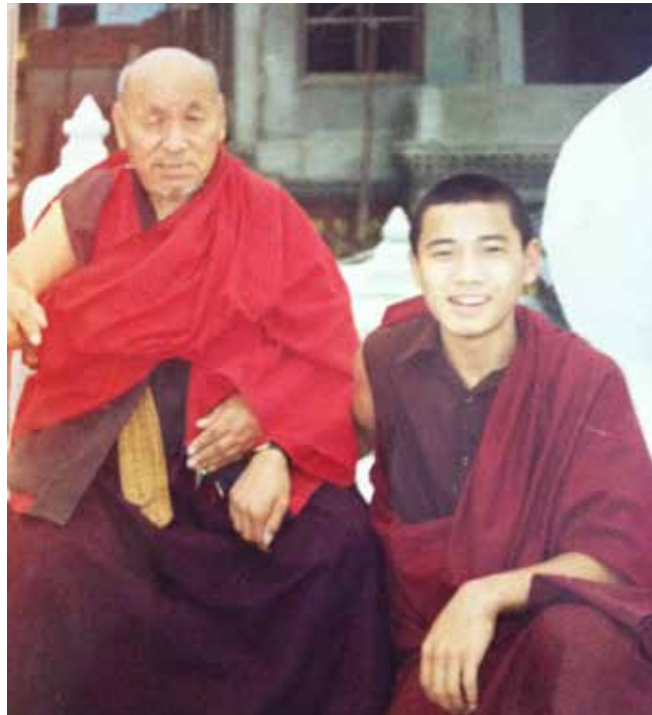
At the time when you realize you are wandering in the bardo, you should be completely determined to go to that pure realm. You should develop that continuously from now onwards. As soon as you remember it in the bardo, you will arrive there.

At some point, when you realize that you are wandering in the bardo (the intermediate state between our death in this life and our birth in the next), you should have the determination to be born in Sukhavati. You should remember the four causes. By developing the determination continuously from this moment onwards, and by remembering the four causes in the bardo, one can arrive in Sukhavati due to Amitabha's aspiration.

We do front or self visualization of Chenrezig, the compassionate buddha, so our minds don't panic or become terrified when we're wandering in the bardo. At the time of death and afterwards while we're in the bardo, it is therefore very important to remember and contemplate the four causes in order to be reborn in Sukhavati.

KHENPO KUNCHOK NGEDON

A BIOGRAPHY & INSTRUCTIONS ON PREPARING FOR DEATH



Khenpo Ngedon with his attendant, Acharya Tenzin Yonten

Khenpo Kunchok Ngedon was born in 1922 in Tibet in the village of Meldo Namgyal Ling. His father's name was Phuntsok and his mother's name was Kelsang Udon. Khenpo had four brothers and he was the eldest son. His father passed away when he was eight years old so he became a monk at Ka Tral Monastery in Tibet where his uncle was his teacher. When he was 16 years old he studied in the Shedra of Drekung Nyima Chang Ra Monastery for five years. During this period he studied Buddhist philosophy, grammar and the other usual topics. He mainly studied philosophy from Khenchen Senga's Thirteen Major Philosophical Texts. He studied with diligence during these five years and then he received the full ordination vows of a monk.

When he was 25 years old Khenpo Kunchok was in retreat at Ka Tsal Retreat Center in Tibet. During his retreat he practiced the Jamphel Shenjay (wrathful manifestation of Manjusri), Tse Da (Lord of Life) and Cho Khor (Dharma Chakra) together, Shi Tro (100 Peaceful and Wrathful Deities), as well as the yoga of bindu, nadi, and channel practices from the lineage of the Indian Mahasiddhi Dza Ha Pir.

In 1959, when he was 37 years old, he escaped to India through the Yarlung Lhodrak area of Tibet which was the seat of Marpa. Upon arriving in exile in India he stayed seven months at Mesa Mani, living in a grass hut with 100,000 other refugees. Then he later moved to Bhag Sa

Dharma Center which had 1,500 monks from all over Tibet. There he studied more philosophy for nine years with monks from all the different lineages in Tibet. He also did administrative staff work and was the Geko or discipline master for one year. During the time he was the discipline master, he met the Very Venerable Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche for the first time. Thrangu Rinpoche had come to the Monastery to take the examinations for the degree of Geshe Rabjam.

Khenpo Kunchok then moved to Bhutan to Tashi Choling Monastery in Kunga Rabten, where he stayed for three years. From there he went to the monastery at Tashi Gang Kalung, also in Bhutan, where he stayed with Thrangu Rinpoche's monks for 13 years.

In 1978, Thrangu Rinpoche asked Khenpo Kunchok to come to the Thrangu Tashi Choling Monastery in Boudha, Nepal. From 1979 to 1985, he served the Monastery as a Khenpo and manager. From 1980 until 1989, Khenpo Kunchok taught reading, writing and preliminary studies to the small monks, and philosophy to the senior monks. In 1990 Thrangu Rinpoche established a new shedra at Namodharmachakra and Khenpo Kunchok became the teacher for the entire shedra. He mostly taught Prajnaparamita and Madhyamika, but because of his advanced years and health problems, he was only able to teach for 3 years at the Shedra. He then



This senior Khenpo was both a great practitioner and teacher who spent his life benefiting beings. Even in his death he left his students a message about impermanence.

moved back to Boudha where he did khorwa at the Great Stupa every morning before breakfast, and continued his personal practices throughout the day. He lived in Boudha until he was 84 years old, passing away due to diabetes. Following his death he stayed in Tukdam for three days.

This senior Khenpo was both a great practitioner and teacher who spent his life benefiting beings. Even in his death he left his students a message about impermanence. In the Preliminary Practices it is said, “It is uncertain when I will die and become a corpse. As it is only the Dharma that can benefit me at that time, I must practice now with diligence.” We say this sentence in our practice everyday, but we don’t feel it in our real life. When a great teacher passes away, they remind us of the reality that comes to everybody one day.

We also realize from their death how the Dharma is of benefit to all of us if we really practice in a good way. Khenpo Kunchok passed away very peacefully and entered into Tukdam. This was due to his Dharma practice; only the Dharma can help us this way at death. In his death, Khenpo demonstrated the real benefit that comes to us from practicing the Dharma. From his example we can see that if we practice the Dharma, we can also die like him, without any fear, with a peaceful mind, and resting in the final meditative state of Tukdam.

The following teaching on how to prepare for the next life, was taken from The One Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa.

A young girl, Nyama Paldarbum, described to Milarepa in a song what her normal life is like: “In the day there is never-ending work. In the night I am fast asleep. Morning and evening I am a slave to food and clothes. I have never had the chance to practice the Dharma.”

Milarepa then sang to her a song on the four aspects of re-

nunciation necessary for true Dharma practice:

“The next life is far away from this life. Have you prepared for this journey with food and clothes? The way to prepare for that journey is to practice generosity.

In order to receive food, clothes, and wealth in future lives, you should give them in this lifetime. There is, however, an obstacle that prevents this generosity to future lives: miserliness. Miserliness or hoarding may seem beneficial in this lifetime in that one accrues food and clothes and other possessions, but in the long run it harms you because miserliness causes poverty in the next lifetime. Therefore you must recognize that miserliness is an enemy and cast it away behind you.

The next lifetime is darker than this lifetime. Therefore you must prepare a torch to illuminate that darkness. This is done by meditation on the fundamental clarity of the mind. Ignorance is the obstacle and the enemy of clarity. Ignorance may seem pleasant and beneficial superficially, but it is actually harmful and you must recognize it as an enemy and cast it away behind you.

The next lifetime is more frightening than this lifetime, so you must find a guard will protect you. This guard is the practice of the Dharma. People and relatives dissuading you from Dharma practice are the enemy. They may be helping and loving towards you, but ultimately they are harming you. Therefore you must recognize these relatives to be an obstacle and cast them away behind you.

The next lifetime is a longer, more desolate road than this lifetime. You will need a horse so that you can travel along it easily. That horse is diligence. The enemy of diligence is laziness which will deceive you into thinking it is beneficial, although ultimately it is harmful. Recognize laziness to be an enemy and cast it away behind you.”



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CHENREZIG

WHY WE'RE HERE

MEMBERS' REFLECTIONS ON THE MONASTERY

As is taught in the Buddhist tradition, one needs to accumulate both merit and wisdom in order to generate the auspicious circumstances for realization. For many centuries, the vast knowledge of the Kagyu lineage has been preserved and propagated in the many monasteries throughout the world. The monasteries have served as a refuge for study and practice. Thus, this monastery serves as a means to accumulate wisdom.

In building a monastery and supporting its ongoing activities, we can accumulate merit. Through contributions of time, financial assets, and aspiration prayers, one can accumulate merit for all beings, including oneself. This is because the completed monastery serves all sentient beings. So whatever contribution you make, the merit will continue with each sentient being that encounters the monastery and its activities.

Q: How has this Monastery helped you?

A: At Thrangu Monastery, I find that the resident monks and guru set a great example. They are compassionate towards everyone, and I always feel sincerely joyful in their presence. This place has become a source of my strength. Being here has given me the chance to discover more of the Buddha's teachings. It has broadened my understanding of the actual practices, and strengthened my faith towards Buddhism. I am very thankful for the contribution of each resident monk.

A: 2014 was a remarkable year for me. I took the Refuge Vow and I feel very settled in this community. This Monastery invites so many famous teachers from all over the world to give us teachings so it's quite beneficial. Also, there are many Dharma friends with whom I can share all of my experiences. I feel very lucky because I have learned many things that I didn't know before.

A: I like to come to Thrangu Monastery to practice the Dharma. I have found the Dharma to be very useful in my daily life and it is very powerful. It has helped me to understand how to deal with my daily obstacles, and even with any thoughts or anything that bothers me a lot. We are very lucky here because we have the whole Sangha here. Even though Rinpoche isn't always here at the temple, there are many monks here to help us.

A: Thrangu Rinpoche, Lama Pema, and many monks are here to



It is excellent to know what the genuine Dharma is. However, if one does not meditate, the ultimate result will not be obtained, so practice is very important. Further, rather than practicing alone in a solitary place, it is better to practice in a group. Repa Shiwa said, "The basis of virtuous activity is compatible Dharma friends." Through the encouragement of Lamas and friends who truly follow the Dharma, one's faith and diligence grow and one's laziness and discouragement are turned around.

--Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche



teach me. In the past few years, I have received the support of many Dharma friends and have been able to participate in many activities. I have taken thangka lessons, Tibetan language lessons, and many other classes. So I am learning faster than before. I think this is a big blessing. Most importantly for me, I have started to apply bodhicitta motivation in my daily life. I think this is very beneficial for me.

A: By coming here, I've been able to develop a deeper understanding of what it means to practice the Dharma. Slowly I've been able to let go of my self-centredness and develop a mind that is more concerned about the well-being of others. Through this, I've naturally become happier, less influenced by anger and other nega-

tive thoughts, and my relationships have improved. Also, because the Monastery has many opportunities to do different kinds of work, practices, or other activities, all of which aim to help others, I am able to more consistently use my life for something positive and meaningful.

Q: Why do you come here?

A: I come here to be inspired to continually rest in the nature of mind.

A: It's a good place to come and a good place to practice. I think if you come here then it can bring you peace in life and bring you some happiness.



A: I come here to develop a connection with the Buddha.

A: It's a good place to share with others and learn from all the teachers who are here. I think Thrangu Rinpoche is one of the best teachers. His teachings are deep and direct. I can't put it into words but he addresses all the emotions and all the issues.

A: I don't know why I come here. I guess I come to broaden my views. There are a lot of things you don't think about prior to this but it gets you thinking. It gets you thinking about social issues, your responsibility for others, and how your actions affect others. It also gives me a definition for what I want to do in my life.

A: I have been frequenting the Monastery for less than a year. Having to join many classes half-way in, I feel rather lost at times. Much was taught prior to my visit, and I don't always know where to begin. On the other hand, I am very grateful that this wonderful place is close to home. It is a great fortune to have such ready access to the dharma, not to mention fantastic teachers and dharma friends to share it with.

A: I come to the Monastery to connect with the blessings of the lineage. It's a beautiful space that Rinpoche has created for us and it gives a lot of strength and power to our practice.

A: The path is the only way to ultimate happiness.

UNITING STUDY AND PRACTICE

A TEACHING & THE NEW CURRICULUM



Practitioners are often instructed on the importance of listening to, reflecting on, and meditating upon the teachings. For instance, in one of his commentaries, Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye the Great says meditation without the correct view that is won through studying is like trying to climb a cliff with no hands. Similarly, he compared someone who has won certainty of the view but does not meditate to a rich person who hoards his wealth out of miserliness. Jamgon Lodro Thaye wrote that if one practices both disciplines, if one gains certainty of the view by studying the instructions and meditates properly, then that person resembles a bird flying through the sky with two wings fully in tact. He tells us that the right wing of the bird is meditation, the left wing is knowledge, and when both wings are healthy the bird can fly freely. With such an understanding of the importance of merging study and practice, Thrangu Monastery Canada created for its students the curriculum shown on the right-hand page.

The following paraphrased teaching on the meaning of listening, reflecting, and meditating, was given by the Gyalwang Karmapa during the 2012 Monlam in Bodh Gaya.

Study, reflection, meditation are interconnected when following a genuine path. What exactly are study, reflection and meditation? The wisdom that arises out of study does not mean collecting various types of teaching. When we

just listen to teachings we tend to forget them. This is not the kind of study we are talking about.

Study and the wisdom that arises from study are separate. The wisdom that arises from listening comes first from remembering the words. When the meaning of the words remains in our mind-stream, this is called the wisdom that arises from listening. This wisdom is generated in us with the help of some other person. It can be a teacher or something else.

Reflection is based on careful listening and understanding. When we have complete understanding from listening, we reflect on it. We do not rely on someone else's power. We reflect again and again and try to understand it deeply.

After examination and reflection, we gain a clear understanding that if we train in this way, certain experiences will arise. The certainty thus gained through understanding and investigating is what we call the wisdom that is generated through reflection.

Similarly we can divide reflection into just reflection and the wisdom that arises from reflection. When we develop the wisdom of reflection we understand the meaning of all the studies we have done and how it leads to transformation. We then become highly motivated and inspired to



When we have complete understanding from listening, we reflect on it. We do not rely on someone else's power. We reflect again and again and try to understand it deeply.

practice the teachings. That is called the wisdom generated from reflection.

The result of investigation and the wisdom arising from it is that it becomes so important to practice immediately that we feel we must go away to a quiet place and practice without delay.

However, without meditation, study becomes static. If you understand intellectually but this does not interact with your experience, it doesn't become transformative.

The word meditation means to become familiarized. We try to use what we understand to subdue our rough mind.

When we make it a habit, then it becomes our life. Dharma practice is not separate from our life. We become the dharma. Dharma becomes our life. Bodhicitta is not outside, separate from our mind. Mix your experience with bodhicitta. Merging study with meditation right from the beginning is very important.

Meditation is there to improve the mind. That is dharma practice. There is nothing more to it than that. We have attained this precious human life and entered into the dharma. When we enter into the practice we need to make it true. To do that we need to turn our mind towards the dharma. We develop devotion, trust and certainty in buddha, dharma and sangha.

THE MONASTERY'S STUDY AND PRACTICE CURRICULUM FOR THE PATHS OF THE TEN LEVELS

LEVEL	STUDY TEXT/SUBJECT	PRACTICE
First Level	37 Practices of a Bodhisattva	Prostrations & Vajrasattva
Second Level	Types of Mind	Mandala & Guru Yoga
Third Level	Jewel Ornament of Liberation	Shinay & Insight Meditation by way of Milarepa Guru Yoga
Fourth Level	Letter to a Friend	Gampopa Guru Yoga
Fifth Level	The Way of the Bodhisattva	Marpa Guru Yoga
Sixth Level	Prajnaparamita	Könchok Chidü
Seventh Level	Eliminating the Darkness of Ignorance	Vajravarahi
Eighth Level	Entering the Middle Way	Gyalwa Gyatso
Ninth Level	Abidharma	Chakrasamvara
Tenth Level	The Supreme Continuum	Amitabha

2015 SCHEDULE

WEEKLY & YEARLY PROGRAM



WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Tuesday-Sunday at 9am: Green Tara Practice
 Tuesday-Sunday at 4:30pm: Mahakala Practice
 Tuesday at 7:30pm: Teaching on *Harmony in the Buddhist Community* with Dungse Lama Pema
 Wednesday at 7:30pm: Torma Class with Yeshe Wangdi
 Thursday at 7:30pm: Intermediate Tibetan Language Class with Acharya Sangpo Tsering
 Saturday at 10:30 pm: Chenrezig Practice
 Saturday at 1:30pm: Finding Happiness (Meditation & Buddhism for Everyday life) with Acharya Tenzin Yonten & Acharya Karma Tsundru
 Sunday at 10:30pm: Medicine Buddha Practice
 Sunday at 1:30pm: Teaching on Shantideva's *The Bodhisattva Way of Life* with Khenpo Sonam
 Sunday at 7:30pm: Tibetan Art Class

YEARLY SCHEDULE

January

9 ~ 11 • WHITE TARA RETREAT

When Dharma Lord Gampopa was 42 years old, he was told that he would die within 3 years. He practiced White Tara for 3 years and was then able to live until he was 80. By living a longer life, he benefited a vast amount of beings.

White Tara helps prolong life, overcome obstacles, prevent untimely death, and ultimately helps us attain realization.

February

12 ~ 18 • 7-DAY MAHAKALA PRAYER

Mahakala is known as the “Dharma Protector.” An emanation of Avalokiteshvara, Mahakala eliminates obstacles in one’s dharma practice, keeping away deception and delusion. When chanting the Mahakala mantra or reciting his sadhana, practitioners’ negative thoughts and actions are purified and they are protected from negative forces .

19 • TIBETAN (LOSAR) AND CHINESE NEW YEAR

21 • WHITE TARA EMPOWERMENT

On the auspicious third day of the lunar New Year, Dungse Lama Pema will bestow the White Tara Empowerment. Empowerments are special events, initiating practitioners into tantric deity practices. They are likened to a seed that is planted on the path. This seed will eventually bear fruit and bring us to liberation.

March

4 • MARPA AND YOGI MILAREPA'S ANNIVERSARY

This event celebrates two Kagyu lineage masters, the translator Marpa and Tibet’s beloved yogi saint, Milarepa. Lord



All the joy the world contains has come through wishing happiness for others. All the misery the world contains has come from wishing pleasure for oneself. --Shantideva

Marpa (b. 1012) translated teachings he received in India into Tibetan. The life of his student, Milarepa, continues to inspire people to develop renunciation of samsara and devotion to the Dharma.

13 ~ 15 • MEDICINE BUDDHA RETREAT & TEACHING ON THE MEDICINE BUDDHA'S 12 ASPIRATIONS

A Medicine Buddha weekend retreat is held every year at Thrangu Monastery Canada. The Medicine Buddha embodies the healing qualities of all the Buddhas. This year, a teaching on the Medicine Buddha's 12 Aspirations will also be covered. These 12 Aspirations were made by the Medicine Buddha to illuminate, heal, and benefit all beings.

April

3 ~ 5 • AMITABHA PRAYERS FOR LONGEVITY & FOR MAKING DEDICATIONS TO THE DECEASED

The Amitabha practice helps create the conditions through which beings are born into the pure land of Dewachen, where it is much easier to work towards enlightenment. Causes for rebirth in Dewachen are visualizing the pure land, accumulating merit, developing the altruistic mind, and making dedications for all beings to be born there.

May

1 ~ 3 • SEVEN POINTS OF MIND TRAINING BY DUNGSE LAMA PEMA

From Lord Atisha's mind training instructions, the Seven Points of Mind Training teaches us how to overcome self-grasping and self-clinging. It is our belief in "I" and "mine" that causes harm to others and our world. By reducing selfish tendencies and developing compassion, we can put others ahead of ourselves.

27 • BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY

The Buddha-bathing ceremony symbolizes letting go and ridding oneself of delusion. Purifying the mind allows it to return to its natural state, in which thoughts come and go

without suppression or clinging. Purifying the mind means to move from ignorance and delusion to understanding and awakening, which is our original state.

June

12 ~ 14 • RANGJUNG DORJE'S *DISTINGUISHING CONSCIOUSNESS & WISDOM* BY KHENPO SONAM

Distinguishing Consciousness from Wisdom is an important text on psychology and Buddhist philosophy. The text was written by the eminent scholar, the Third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje. Like most other texts on Mahamudra, this treatise is in the form of a song of realization, or doha.

July

3 ~ 5 • NAGARJUNA'S "LETTER TO A FRIEND" BY KHENPO TASHI

Nagarjuna wrote his celebrated poem "Letter to a Friend" as a letter of advice to King Gautamiputra. This advice gives a concise and comprehensive introduction to the entire path and practice of Buddhism. It guides both householders and the ordained on the path to liberation and enlightenment.

27 ~ 2 • ANNUAL LONGEVITY PRAYER & DEDICATION TO H.H. KARMAPA, V.V. THRANGU RINPOCHE & ALL BEINGS

Thrangu Monastery Canada is pleased to invite all of Rinpoche's students to join in longevity prayers for Rinpoche. At its conclusion, offerings will be made for Rinpoche to remain with us and guide us. The Drubchen will use the longevity sadhana known as the "Union of Upaya and Prajna".

SUMMER RETREAT FROM JULY 31 TO SEPT 13

Since the time of the Buddha, Buddhist monastics around the world observe the summer retreat. The Monastery's resident monks will take retreat and Sojong vows every day. This is a time for increased studying, reflection, and engagement in Dharma activities.

2015 SCHEDULE

YEARLY & MONTHLY PROGRAM



August

6 ~ 9 • MAITREYA LOVING KINDNESS RELIC TOUR

Maitreya Loving Kindness Tour is a world-wide touring collection of sacred relics of the historical Buddha Shakyamuni and other Buddhist masters from Tibet, India, Korea & China. The relics were found among the cremation ashes of the masters. They resemble beautiful, pearl-like crystals that Tibetans call 'ringsel'. Buddhists believe relics embody the master's spiritual qualities of compassion and wisdom and are deliberately produced by the master at his death.

14 ~ 16 • AKSHOBHYA RETREAT

Buddha Akshobhya, the 'Unshakeable One' and Lord of the Vajra Family, is one of the Five Wisdom Buddhas. The Akshobhya ritual and practice is a very powerful purification practice done for the benefit of oneself and innumerable sentient beings. It can liberate not only the practitioners themselves, but all beings.

26 ~ 30 • NORTH AMERICA KAGYU MONLAM

Join us for this remarkable 5-day "Great Prayer Festival" when we will pray for world peace. H.H. the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa described the Monlam as an avenue whereby we can spread the genuine spirit of love and compassion to all the people of the world. On the last day, we'll do Lamp Prayers and celebrate the Gyalwang Karmapa's birthday.

September

18 ~ 21 • NYUNGNE FASTING PRACTICE

Nyungne is a practice that helps to quickly purify negative karma and accumulate merit. It also aids in healing illness and opening the heart to compassion. Nyungne practice helps to overcome and purify unvirtuous activities of the three gates and focuses on generating bodhicitta.

October

2 ~ 4 • HEVAJRA PRACTICE

In 2002, H.H. the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa presided over a conference that included all Kamtsang monasteries. H.H. asked the monasteries to focus on reviving the cycle of the Thirteen Tantras of Lord Marpa, which are central to Kagyü monastic practice. At that conference, the V.V. Thrangu Rinpoche accepted responsibility for the Hevajra practice. This will be the first time the Hevajra practice will be done at Thrangu Monastery Canada.

23 ~ 25 • PADAMPA SANGYE'S HUNDRED VERSES OF ADVICE BY KARMA CHOEPHEL

Padampa Sangye (Kamalashila), an 11th-century Indian yogi, travelled to Tibet 5 times. When visiting the village of Tingri, villagers asked him how to best practice the Dharma. He responded with these 100 verses. The verses advise us how to relate to every-day difficulties, such



Even when someone I have helped, or in whom I have placed great hopes, mistreats me very unjustly, I will view that person as a true spiritual teacher. --Geshe Langri Thangpa

as loneliness, craving, business, and family.

November

3 • BUDDHA SHAKYAMUNI'S DESCENT FROM TUSHITA HEAVEN (RAIN OF WISDOM)

To repay his mother's kindness and benefit gods in the heavenly realm, the Buddha ascended to Tushita heaven to teach for three months before a heavenly audience, which included his mother. The 22nd day of the Tibetan calendar's 9th month is when we celebrate the Buddha's return from Tushita heaven.

6 ~ 8 • GESHE LANGRI THANGPA'S 8 VERSES OF TRAINING THE MIND BY KHENPO JIGME

We welcome Khenpo Jigme back to Thrangu Monastery Canada to share his profound instructions and wisdom. During this teaching he will discuss *The Eight Verses of Thought Transformation*, a text by the Kadampa geshe Langri Thangpa, which explains the Paramitayana practice of method and wisdom. The first seven verses deal with method — loving kindness & bodhicitta — and the eighth deals with wisdom.

13 ~ 15 • CHÖD PRACTICE

The Mahamudra Chöd has the express aim of full enlightenment - of attaining Buddhahood in this very lifetime in this very body. But along the way, Chöd also has remarkable effects here and now, on both ourselves and those around us. It helps us to cut through ego-clinging.

21 • THE V.V. THRANGU RINPOCHE'S BIRTHDAY

Join us in celebrating the birthday of the V.V. Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche with prayers and musical offerings. These are requests for Rinpoche to remain and guide us.

December

11 ~ 13 • DZAMBALA PRACTICE

Dzambala practice allows us to cultivate our generosity and

accumulate wealth that will benefit all beings. Dzambala frees beings from poverty and starvation, and leads them towards Buddhahood.

31 • LAMP PRAYER FOR WORLD PEACE

On the last day of 2015, we offer candles for world peace and harmony. During this short prayer, we imagine lighting candles that will illuminate all the pure realms of all of the buddhas and bodhisattvas, such that sentient beings in the six realms can achieve realization. In turn, they will be at peace with each other and the world they inhabit.

MONTHLY SCHEDULE

MEDICINE BUDDHA DAY

Jan. 27, Feb. 26, Mar. 27, Apr. 26, May 26, June 24, July 24, Aug. 23, Sept. 20, Oct. 21, Nov. 19, Dec. 18

GURU RINPOCHE DAY

Jan. 29, Feb. 28, Mar. 29, Apr. 28, May 28, June 26, July 26, Aug. 25, Sept. 23, Oct. 22, Nov. 21, Dec. 20

CALLING LAMA FROM AFAR and LAMP PRAYER

Jan. 20, Mar. 20, Apr. 18, May 17, June 16, July 16, Aug. 14, Sept. 13, Oct. 11, Nov. 11, Dec. 11

CHÖD PRACTICE

Jan. 15, Feb. 14, Mar. 15, April 14, May 13, June 12, July 11, Aug. 9, Sept. 8, Oct. 7, Nov., Dec. 5

LONG MAHAKALA PRACTICE

Jan. 18, Feb. 18, Mar. 19, Apr. 17, May 17, June 14, July 15, Aug. 13, Sept. 12, Oct. 11, Nov. 10, Dec. 10

DZAMBALA PRACTICE

Jan. 4, Feb. 3, Mar. 5, Apr. 4, May 3, June 2, July 2, July 31, Aug. 29, Sept. 27, Oct. 27, Nov. 25, Dec. 25

We shouldn't feel that Dharma occurs only when we sit down and meditate. Dharma should be present with us all the time. Dharma should be practiced in everything we do and at all times and used in all our actions. Of course, at the moment we can't act like Milarepa and the Buddha, but at least we can try to be responsible for our own mind. We must try our best not to let the negative mental states develop. We must try to feel more compassion and to develop more bodhicitta. Although we can't do this immediately, at least we can do whatever we can by doing it everyday, again and again.

-Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche



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