Congratulations to His Holiness the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa on his honorary doctorate from the University of Redlands.
The Music of Immortality

A PRAYER FOR THE LONG LIFE OF HIS HOLINESS,
THE 17TH GYALWANG KARMAPA, OGYEN TRINLEY DORJE

Om Svasti Siddham

Wondrous, excellent wisdom body,
Endowed with the glorious ocean of qualities of freedom and ripening,
Karmapa, embodiment of all the Victors of the three times,
May your lotus feet remain firm; may your activity increase.

The energy of your wisdom issues forth from the Dharmadhatu.
You display wondrous, intentional rebirth
Dharma Lord of the three realms,
you are unequalled in the three times.
May your lotus feet remain firm; may your activity increase.

You place all who see, hear, touch, or think of you on the path to liberation.
You blaze with majestic wisdom, kindness, and power.
You dispel the darkness in the three levels of existence
And radiate a thousand light rays of virtue and excellence.
May your lotus feet remain firm; may your activity increase.

You are adorned by the three trainings and pure morality.
Your being is fully ripened through learning, nobility, benevolence,
And hearing, contemplation, and meditation.
You are able to liberate others.
May your lotus feet remain firm; may your activity increase.

You fill the whole world with the nonsectarian doctrine,
And especially the stainless Dharma tradition of the practice lineage.
May your lotus feet remain firm; may your activity increase.

Although you display innumerable oceans of
inconceivably wondrous miraculous forms,
You are beyond the elaborations of “leaving” and “remaining.”
May your lotus feet remain firm; may your activity increase.

In brief, glorious guru, Gyalwang Karmapa,
Pervasive lord of the hundred families and all mandalas,
May your lotus feet remain firm; may your activity increase.
May your activity reach everywhere.

If you are supplicated with such respect and longing, then,
Through the intentions of the three roots
And the ocean of victors,
And through the power of the truth of the pure Dharmadatta,
May these excellent aspirations be quickly fulfilled.

This pure aspiration was composed by H.E. Tai Situpa, transforming a rebirth supplication for the previous Lord into supplication for the longevity of H.H. the Seventeenth Gyalwang Karmapa, in response to the request by offering of Tashi Lhadar, the custodian of Rumtek Shedra.
(Translated by Karma Yeshe Gyamtso)
The Youthful Vitality of Immortal Nectar

A Long Life Prayer for the Glorious Lama, Scholar and Siddha Thrangu Tulku, Karma Lodro Lungrik Maway Senge by the 17th Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje

[In Praise of Amitayus]

The dharmakaya, free of elaboration is ever stable and never destroyed. Amitayus, your speech is the melodious sound of the nada, the invincible vajra. Through an enlightened mind that sees all possible phenomena Perfect Guide, you accomplish all goodness.

[In Praise of Thrangu Rinpoche]

From the golden age arose a new mansion of clouds poised in the depth of space;
May you remain for a long, long time.
Creating festive occasions for beings to increase their merit.
May you remain for a long, long time.
Through the blooming, full lotus of your flawless knowledge,
Your writings are suffused with great kindness and compassion.
Through limitless abilities, you satisfy a multitude of beings seeking liberation.
Guide of beings, may your life be long.
Through explaining the Dharma,
You release beings from the tangled net of ignorance and confusion.
In debate, you defeat the opponents' bold stance.
Our minds are carried away with joy by the nature of your writings.
You of genuine and powerful speech, may your life be long.
Rising from the jeweled ocean of your immeasurable merit,
The white moon, clear mandala of your wisdom,
Pours forth nectar that is the light of your activity.
Lion of speech, teaching scripture and reasoning, may your life be long.

By churning an ocean of milk with good intentions,
These words of aspiration — a white lotus garland — come to the surface.
Protector, through the merit of offering this to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas.
May the benefit of your life last for hundreds of aeons.
Glorious Lama, through the power of the truth of the Victorious One, Amitayus, and the power of a good connection with this sincere, pure intention, May your life remain stable until the end of the world.

May the vitality of all the four, perfect flourish (Dharma, wealth, enjoyment, and liberation).

This prayer was requested by the one responsible for Nenang Monastery, Lama Tsewang Tashi, who offered representations of the Buddha's body, speech, and mind, and was written by the 17th Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje during a fine waxing moon of Saga Dawa.

SHUBHAM.
May it be a cause for virtue!

(This prayer was translated by Michele Martin in February, 2000)
Osé 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. 9th Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche’s seat in North America. It was the first traditional Tibetan Buddhist monastery built in the Pacific Northwest. It belongs within a global network of centres under the guidance of Thrangu Rinpoche, who transmits teachings and blessings from the Karma Kagyu lineage. 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. This lineage, which can be traced from Dorje Chang (skt: Vajradhara) and the Buddha through to the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa, contains both “practice” and Mahamudra instructions. Dungse Lama Pema Tsewang (pictured top-right), Rinpoche’s devoted student, directs the Monastery’s activities and designs its yearly schedule.

The Monastery is a place that promotes peace and harmony. Built on a city road lined with churches and temples (nick-named “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 Bud-
dhists and non-Buddhists alike are always welcome. Thran-gu Monastery Canada stands as a testament to the power of peacefulness and care for others.

With regards to the 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 connect with the Dharma in many different ways such as by reading Dharma or by 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 activities can develop. Through seeing this magazine and being connected to the Monastery, one can accumulate great merit."

Members are grateful for Thrangu Rinpoche, Dungse Lama Pema, Khenpo Sonam, and all the resident monks' continuing care and leadership. With the teachers' wisdom and compassion for all beings, practitioners are given direction, hope, and inspiration. It is our aspiration that precious bodhicitta never wanes but continues to grow, so that all sentient beings realize lasting peace, happiness, and wisdom.
Table of Contents

- Filling Our Innate Potential, H.H. Karmapa ... 3
- Overcoming Obstacles, V.V. Thrangu Rinpoche ... 21
- Supplicating Lineage Masters, V.V. Thrangu Rinpoche ... 31
- Analytical Meditation, Dungse Lama Pema ... 41
- Preparing for Death, Lotsawa Karma Choephel ... 53
- Chan and Mahamudra, Khenchen Tsultrim Lodro ... 59
- The Value of Carefulness, Khenpo Tashi ... 69
- Examining our Perceptions, Khenpo Sonam ... 75
- Dealing with Destructive Emotions, Khenpo Jigme ... 85

- An Aspiration for the Well-Being of Tibet ... 15
- The Short Vajradhara Lineage Prayer ... 29
- Calling the Lama from Afar ... 51
- Seven Branch Offering ... 57
- An Aspiration to the Stages of the Path ... 65
- Dedication Prayer ... 89

- H.H. Karmapa’s U.S. Tour ... 1
- Long Life Prayers for H.H. & Thrangu Rinpoche ... 9
- Rinpoche Returns to Tibet ... 11
- 6th N.A. Kagyu Monlam ... 23
- Nepal Earthquake ... 45
- Maitreya Relic Tour ... 67
- Master Hai Tao Visits ... 83
Thrangu Monastery Canada  
Visits H.H. in Seattle

Every living being wants to be happy, and each of us seeks means to this happiness. Some people believe happiness is found in material wealth, so they spend their lives trying to get big houses, expensive cars, beautiful jewels, or more money. Others seek happiness through fame or the company of their families and friends.

However, the Buddha and other enlightened masters have said that happiness lies within, not in the conditions and appearances of our external worlds. This teaching, along with the rest of the treasury of buddhadharma instructions, reveal truths to listeners in the hope that all beings will find the happiness that is stable, lasting, and luminous. The person who leads us to the profound understanding of the teachings, and therefore ultimate liberation or enlightenment, is our teacher (Tib. lama; Skt. guru). The lama is regarded as the embodiment of the Three Jewels: the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.

For Karma Kagyu practitioners, His Holiness the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje, is the head of the 900 year-old lineage and a great enlightened lama. The Tibetan word “Karmapa” means “the embodiment of all the activities of the buddhas”. His Holiness is seen as the source of the entire lineage of very precious teachings that can be traced back to Shakyamuni Buddha, and is therefore a supreme guide along our path to ultimate happiness and wisdom. His followers regard him as an extremely wise, compassionate, and precious being.

Finding Buddhist teachers and teachings was once very difficult; Marpa the translator travelled from Tibet to India three times in the 11th century to find qualified Buddhist masters. But members of Thrangu Monastery Canada did not have to travel far to receive blessings from His Holiness. In May 2015, Dungse Lama Pema arranged for members to meet the Gyalwang Karmapa in Seattle. They were grateful for H.H’s efforts to travel from India to the United States where they could easily meet him, listen to his teachings, and attend an empowerment. They also deeply appreciated that Dungse Lama Pema arranged the day trip for them.

The 17th Gyalwang Karmapa is a meditation master, poet, artist, scholar, environmental activist, and the source of the lineage’s blessings. His teaching that follows talks about finding our innate potential. He says it is through compassion, love, and selflessness that we can all find true happiness.

May the guide who leads beings to the path of liberation and teaches all Dharma bring you joy and goodness.
May the teacher, beings’ support, who has achieved joy for the benefit of all beings, bring you joy and goodness,
May the protector who with loving mind always guards beings like his only child bring you joy and goodness.

From Auspicious Prayers from the Mulasarvastivada Vinaya (Kagyu Monlam Book)
I have been asked to speak about ngöndro, which is a traditional, formal Dharma topic. The ngöndro, or preliminary practices, are divided into two stages, the common preliminary practices and the special preliminary practices. The common preliminary practices are also called “The Four Thoughts that Turn the Mind to Dharma”. These four comprise “precious human life”, “death and impermanence”, “karma”, and “the defects of samsara”.

The common ngöndro begins with the contemplation of the preciousness of human life. This contemplation is important and necessary for all human beings who seek to make their lives meaningful, whether long-time practitioners of Buddhism, newcomers to Buddhism, or non-Buddhists.

Contemplating the fact that our precious human life is difficult to attain and easily lost helps us to recognise that in this moment we have all the conditions that are propitious for the practice of Dharma and are free of all conditions adverse to it. In this case, “Dharma” does not necessarily refer to some sort of religious practice, but can be taken to mean striving to be a good human being — someone who is compassionate and non-violent and who engages in positive actions and intentions. That, too, is practicing Dharma.

The teaching on precious human life shows us that this human body of ours has the potential to allow us to accomplish significant and vast things, not only for ourselves, but for many others. It points out just what an opportunity this human body represents. All human beings are fundamentally endowed with love, compassion and other positive qualities, not as products of religious practice, but as something present within us all right from birth. The most important thing, and the basis of Dharma practice, is for us to value these innate human qualities, and work to enhance and develop them.

Therefore, to be a Dharma practitioner does not imply becoming someone different. There is no need to become a strange or new person. Nor are we necessarily adopting a whole new lifestyle. Rather, we are bringing out the natural qualities inherent in us, within the life we are already leading. For this reason, Dharma practice is not something we do apart from, or outside of, our ordinary life.

For example, let’s say we have decided to practice Dharma. We may be confident that we are a Buddhist practitioner, but if pressed to say whether we are a good person, we are not certain. Sometimes we are sort of a good person, sometimes not so much. This is inadequate. We cannot be good Dharma practitioners without striving to become good human beings. This underscores the need for our Dharma practice to take place within our life, not outside of it. Practising Dharma means transforming ourselves and enhanc-
When we fall under the sway of our self-centredness, our environment closes in on us. Our selfishness traps us in a kind of prison. We become unable to extend our innate potential beyond the walls of that prison.

ing the positive qualities we possess. This is a key point.

Being human brings with it the opportunity to become better human beings, and that opportunity also represents responsibility. If I can share my own personal experiences: I lived like any ordinary boy up to the age of seven years, when I was recognised as the reincarnation of Karmapa. However, as I have mentioned, simply being given the name “Karmapa” did not imply being injected or fed some special substance that imbued me with special powers. I needed to study hard and practice.

Since I was Karmapa, many people connected to the Karmapa came to see me, bringing their great hopes and expectations of me and placing their trust in me. Initially, when I had first been told that I was the Karmapa, it was like a game to me. At first I did not see it as anything particularly serious. Only gradually did I come to realise that there are responsibilities that come with the name Karmapa.

Yet we all have responsibilities. We have responsibilities towards ourselves. We have responsibilities towards our families and, in the broadest terms, we have responsibilities towards the whole world. In my own case, I was especially alerted to my responsibilities by the fact that I was given the name Karmapa. But apart from that, we are all basically the same. It is mainly a matter of whether or not our responsibilities are made clear to us.

However, we have such strong habits of selfishness that we ignore the fact that we have these responsibilities, or we lack sufficient courage and confidence to assume them. I too sometimes suffer from the problem where my responsibilities begin to feel like a form of pressure, or a heavy burden that is difficult to carry. Why do we feel this sense of pressure? I think it is a lack of love and compassion. In my view, it is because our compassion lacks strength and the element of courage or confidence that we experience our responsibilities as a burden. Therefore it is very important to increase the strength of our compassion.

This brings us back to the topic of the preciousness of our human life. Although our human body has immense value, in order to be able to assume the responsibility for making full use of that value, we definitely need the power of compassion and courage. This will allow us to live our lives in a meaningful way.

Having a precious human life allows us to accomplish great things. As I have said, I believe that everyone is innately endowed with the power of compassion. Yet in our selfishness we find excuses for shutting the door on it. The great natural potential we have gets enclosed within our selfishness. When we fall under the sway of our self-centredness, our environment closes in on us. Our selfishness traps us in a kind of prison. We become unable to extend our innate potential beyond the walls of that prison. This is why it is so important to enhance the strength of our love, our compassion, and our altruistic intentions. Doing so will allow us to emerge from that prison, bringing forth our natural potential and our full capacity to benefit others. We will be able to fulfil the great purpose of our life, and make our human life fully meaningful.

In Europe and the West generally, it is considered very important to protect one’s individual rights, personal freedom, and interests. These should not become mixed with selfishness, and I believe there is a danger that the two do become mixed. For that reason, we need to ensure that we are able to distinguish correctly between selfishness, on the one hand, and the protection of individual rights, personal freedom and interests, on the other. To that end, it is very important to understand what is meant by ‘self’. There is a vast difference between actual reality and how the self appears to us.
We meditate on impermanence in order to see that the change that takes place moment to moment represents moment after moment of opportunity.

We assume that how things appear to us or how we experience them is how they really are. But, ultimately, there is a distinction between appearances and reality. Many people normally have a feeling that the self or what we refer to when we say “I” is something self-sufficient and not dependent on others. However, in reality, if we think about it, our very body, from our head to our toes, arises entirely based on others. Our ability to survive is thoroughly dependent upon others. The food we eat, the clothes we wear, even the air we breathe, this all comes from others. This is perfectly obvious.

There is nothing wrong with feeling that we have a self, but we need to ask what kind of a self exists. What is this “I” that exists? We must question whether it is singular and independent, as we usually assume. That kind of “I” in reality does not exist. But sometimes we can make up reality. It is not reality, but we think that it is. This is why we should have a very clear understanding of how this “I” exists. We need to examine carefully so that we see that in actual fact, our self is utterly interdependent on others, and is in no way independent or unrelated to anything else. It is not that “I” does not exist. We do exist, but we need to understand how we exist. When we see that we exist as an interdependent arising, in mutual dependence on others, then without a doubt we will feel a sense of responsibility for others. This is why I feel that interdependence is not just a philosophical view, but a value or a way of life.

If we have this awareness of our self as arising interdependently, then, when we consider all the resources we enjoy that come from the natural environment, we see how thoroughly we rely on it. From that awareness, a sense of concern and care will definitely arise, naturally. We will naturally think of protecting the environment. This is how a sense of responsibility is supported by an awareness of interdependence and of the preciousness of our human life.

Among the four thoughts that turn the mind to Dharma, or the “four common preliminary practices”, the topic that follows “precious human life” is “the impermanence of life”. We usually describe this as “death and impermanence”, but today I do not want to talk about death!

From the time we are born, we undergo enormous changes throughout our life. Our body changes tremendously. Mentally we change a great deal. There are many changes that take place in our surrounding environment, and there is no stopping this process of change. We did not intentionally set out to make things change; it just happens, naturally. What impermanence means is that it is natural for things to change. Nothing stays the same.

Why do we need to contemplate impermanence? The fact that things change does not mean we lose something. Rather, it is a sign that we have new opportunities and new options. We meditate on impermanence in order to see that the change that takes place moment to moment represents moment after moment of opportunity. The opportunities available to us are inexhaustible and limitless, and are arising continuously. We meditate on impermanence so that we can make full use of these opportunities and make good choices.

Many people have difficult experiences in childhood, and never rid themselves of these bad memories. Instead, they internalise them, and are pained and oppressed by them throughout their lives. There are also people who have themselves done something terrible, and carry such guilt that they never get over it. Engaging in the practice of contemplating impermanence shows us that we can make a fresh start in life at any time. A new light can dawn for us. We do not need to continue on the same trajectory. Just because a particular situation arose in the past does not mean we need to keep living out that storyline. We can begin a
The teachings on karmic cause and effect show that we can change our lives as well as society as a whole. They show the great power that one individual has.

new chapter, a new story and a new life.

For instance, if a person with a strong practice of contemplating impermanence has only five minutes left to live, they will try to make those five minutes meaningful. Making those last five minutes meaningful can effectively make their entire life meaningful.

Life is something to be greatly cherished. It unfolds from moment to moment. Meditating on death and impermanence makes us aware of that fact, and teaches us to cherish each and every moment of our lives. If we make just one moment meaningful, that amounts to the same thing as making our whole life greatly meaningful. Our life is taking place in each moment.

Sometimes people think the traditional meditation on death and impermanence involves having the painful and frightening thought, "I am going to die! Oh, no!" That is not a correct understanding of what contemplating impermanence means. Rather, it means not letting even a tiny part of our life go to waste. By cherishing our life and earnestly applying ourselves to living it fully, we are accomplishing the purpose of meditating on death and impermanence.

Within the four thoughts that turn the mind to Dharma, there is some flexibility in the order in which the last two topics — "karma" and "the defects of samsara" — are presented. To take karma next, it could be described as cause and effect, as karmic connections, as the law of karmic causality, or just as karma. In any case, I believe the word "karma" now appears in the dictionaries of many Western languages. It can be challenging to explain what karma means, because the workings of karma are beyond our conception. For this reason, we generally find it to be a complicated and difficult concept. Yet I do not feel it needs to be complicated or confusing.

When I first arrived in Germany, I landed in Frankfurt. As the plane was descending, I was struck by how green everything was. The trees looked shiny and healthy to me. This is an indication that the people inhabiting the area care for the environment, and are aware of its importance. No one needs to explain that it is because someone has previously cared for the environment that we now see this result — it is immediately apparent to any observer, even to a complete newcomer like me.

Karma works in a similar way. To give an example, if someone plants a seed, provides all the necessary conditions, and wards off any adverse conditions, then at the end of that process they will be able to see a beautiful tree. That is how karmic cause and effect works. We can see that actions motivated by a positive, virtuous intention to protect that environment have tangible results, and this shows us that our motivation has great influence and power. Any action very much depends on the motivation and purpose of the person engaging in it. Thus in whatever we do, we should act assuming proper responsibility and paying careful attention to karmic causes and their results.

Karmic cause and effect is not limited to the conduct of individuals. It also points out the mutual connections among individuals, through which the actions of a single person can have an impact on society, and in broadest terms, can change the world. Even our subtle motivations and actions can affect the whole world in a vast way. The teachings on karmic cause and effect show that we can change our lives as well as society as a whole. They show the great power that one individual has.

We tend to think of the Buddha as someone with great powers — a kind of Superman with superpowers who will come to protect us and save us when something terrible happens. But who is the real superhero? You are. Superman is not the Buddha. You are. Who is your protector? You are. What is your
greatest power? It is the power of your noble motivations. Karmic cause and effect teaches us that each one of us is a person with tremendous power to change the world. Therefore, you should value yourself and trust in your own abilities. This is a key point in order to be able to take up great responsibilities, through your noble aims and intentions.

For this reason, we should not always be expecting something outside ourselves to intervene, as if we were entreating the buddhas and bodhisattvas, "Please bless me so that good things happen to me." We make continual requests to the teacher or lama to grant us their blessings. But sometimes the lama's battery is finished! So many people want a recharge from the lama that even the biggest battery can run down. There are also people who did something good in the past and now expect something good to be done to them.

I think it is very important not just to wait for the external buddhas and teachers. We also need to understand that we have an inner Buddha or an inner teacher. That means we need to be the ones who make the effort. We need to create the opportunities, or produce the good energy, without always waiting for someone to arrive and intervene from the outside. I think it is very important to produce this by yourself, because, actually, you are the Buddha. Not such an effective buddha, perhaps, but... a buddha, a small buddha. Our Buddha is like a child, not yet grown up enough to do more, so we need to nurture our inner Buddha, our child Buddha.

The fourth and final topic to contemplate is “the defects of samsara”. Among the four common preliminary practices, all the topics up to this one are readily comprehensible by anyone, whether they have studied Buddhism or not. When we arrive at this topic, we encounter discussions of “samsara” and “nirvana”, and these concepts require some understanding of Buddhist philosophy. However, this is not a philosophy class. I myself am not good at philosophy.
Nevertheless, we all know that we must act in certain ways to get the results we want. Everyone understands this, from tiny insects up. We all want to be happy and to avoid suffering, and we understand that we must act in certain ways to bring about those desired results. Yet we have many misunderstandings as to precisely what the causes of the desired result of happiness actually are. We mistake the causes that bring about undesirable results for causes that bring about desirable results.

In 21st-century society, many people place great emphasis on material development, in the belief that material goods will satisfy their desires and give them perfect happiness. We keep investing our energy in the consumption of material goods, recklessly and with unflagging eagerness. Yet it is exceedingly unlikely that we will ever be satisfied by the objects of our desire. No matter how much we attain, we are not satisfied. Our desires just increase, without limit, while the natural resources of our planet are subject to limitations.

There is simply no way for something limited to satisfy desires that have no limit.

Since we can already foresee the big disaster that lies ahead if we continue at our current rate of consumption, now is the time for us to reflect deeply on these issues.

His Holiness gave this teaching during his 2015 visit to Europe. Translated by Ringu Tulku Rinpoche and Damcho Diana Finnegan, the rest of his teachings can be found in the full e-book, accessible online at: http://karmapafoundation.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Nurturing-Compassion_ENG.pdf
Long-Life Prayers for H.H. & Rinpoche

Every year students of the V.V. Thrangu Rinpoche gather to engage in seven days of Long Life Prayers for His Holiness the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa and Thrangu Rinpoche. The longevity sadhana (practice text) used for the event is called The Union of Upaya (Method) and Prajna (Wisdom), which is based on a meditation on the Buddha Amitayus. Requesting Dharma teachers to live long, to remain in samsara and not
pass into nirvana, is one branch of the Seven Branch Offering that students can practice to accumulate merit. If students request the teachers to not pass away and to continue to teach beings the methods to attain happiness and complete freedom from suffering, then students can clear away mental obscurations that block the path to recognizing their true nature.
Rinpoche Returns to Tibet

The 2010 earthquake in Qinghai, China severely damaged Qinghai Thrangu Tashi Choeling Monastery. Twenty monks died that day and thousands of people in the area were left homeless. Members of the larger Thrangu family were devastated to hear of this suffering, but they began collecting donations and doing prayers for those affected by the earthquake.

Since the earthquake, many people have helped to rebuild Qinghai Thrangu Monastery. Therefore, the Monastery’s inauguration in August 2015 was a cause for celebration. The new Monastery was constructed magnificently, with care and devotion visible in the detailed carvings and artwork in all of the buildings. Kyabje Thrangu Rinpoche returned to Tibet for the inauguration and was welcomed by an estimated 35,000 people. This was Rinpoche’s first visit to the area in several years, and he worked tirelessly meeting well-wishers, giving blessings, and leading prayers while he was there.

Visitors from around the world travelled to Qinghai to participate in the ceremonies. Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche, Dungse Lama Pema, and many of Rinpoche’s students were among the happy crowd. A few were even fortunate enough to see the house where Rinpoche was born as well as experience the new Monastery. The Monastery now covers an extensive area, and includes the main temple, a stupa and mani wall, a library, shedra (monastic college), and housing for hundreds of monks.

The first Thrangu Monastery in the area was built 1,300 years ago, and at one time housed nearly 10,000 monks. Great masters such as Dusum Khyenpa, Jigten Sumgon, Mipham Rinpoche, and the previous Jangchub Khyenetrul have all visited Qinghai Thrangu Monastery. Therefore, the Monastery has profound historic and religious significance. The four Rinpoches who have continuously reincarnated together to guide and benefit this Monastery are the Venerable Trag Bar Mipham Rinpoche, Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, Dzongsar Rinpoche, and Lodro Nyima Rinpoche. The current Lodro Nyima Rinpoche lives at Qinghai Thrangu Monastery and has been overseeing the incredible building work.

Thank you to all the attendees who contributed the photographs on the next eight pages, documenting the August 2015 inauguration.

I pray the single door of joy and comfort for beings, the precious Dharma of the omniscient Buddha, never weaken in any place, time or circumstance. May it spread and flourish to the end of every direction.

I pray that the peerless lamas, the spiritual friends with immeasurable wisdom and splendid kindness, who cherish the buddhadharma more than their own lives, have long lives and flourish.

From Joy and Comfort for Beings (Kagyu Monlam Book)
Rinpoche Returns to Tibet

An estimated 35,000 people came for the inauguration of Qinghai Thrangu Monastery.
Prayers, offerings, special dances, and performances were integrated into the program.

Lama Sonam from Hong Kong offering an Amitayus statue.

It was an honour that Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche attended the inauguration.
An Aspiration for the Well-Being of Tibet

Undeceiving sources of refuge, Three Jewels and Three Roots; especially Avalokita, protector of the Land of Snow; Noble lady Tara; Guru Padmakara: I pray to you. Consider your pledges and promises. Grant your blessings that my aspirations be fulfilled.

Through the incorrect thoughts and actions of beings in degenerate times and turmoil of the outer and inner elements, there are new human and animal diseases. We are struck by planets, nagas, gyalpos, and evil bhutas; blight, frost, hail, and poor harvests; war and fighting; uneven rainfall, blizzards, destruction by voles and rats, earthquakes, fire, danger from the four elements; and, in particular, invasions that threaten the Dharma. May all such things that menace this Land of Snow be quickly pacified and eradicated. May all beings human and non-human, naturally generate precious bodhicitta and be free from malevolent thoughts and actions. May they love one another. May all of Tibet be filled with joy, well-being, and wealth. May the Buddhadharma spread, flourish, and long remain.

Through the power of the truth of the Three Roots, Buddhas, and bodhisattvas; the power of all the roots of virtue in samsara and nirvana; and the power of pure benevolence; may what we have prayed and wished for be accomplished.

The Lord Guru Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo said to me, "Because of the great uncertainty of the present time, I pray six times each day for the well-being of Tibet. It is important that you do so as well." In accordance with that command, I wrote this to remember to do so. This was written by Jamgon Lodro Thaye at Tsadra Rinchen Drak on the morning of an auspicious conjunction during the waxing phase of the month Gyal. YATHAASIDHDHIRASTU.
Rinpoche Returns to Tibet

Dancing for this special occasion.
Catching blessed rice grains.
Lama, think of us. Behold us swiftly with compassion. Bless us that within we bring the genuine Dharma to perfection. Bless us that repentance arise deep from within. Bless us that we curtail all our scheming. Bless us that from the depth of our heart we remember death. Bless us that we develop certainty in the laws of karma. Bless us that our path is free from obstacles. Bless us that we are able to exert ourselves in practice.
Kyabje Thrangu Rinpoche with some of his attendants and students. Many of his students were able to gather for this occasion.

Bless us that we bring difficult situations onto the path. Bless us that antidotes, through their own power, are completely effective. Bless us that genuine devotion arise. Bless us that we see the very face of the mind’s true nature. Bless us that self-awareness awaken in the centre of our heart. Bless us that elusive appearances are completely eliminated. Bless us that we achieve enlightenment in one lifetime.
Milarepa (1052-1135 CE) is Tibet’s most revered yogi saints and one of the Kagyu lineage fathers. Having left a wealth of instruction in the form of dohas (spiritual songs), Milarepa’s teachings continue to be passed down to us 900 years later. Thrangu Monastery Canada practitioners were grateful to listen to Kyabje Thrangu Rinpoche explain Milarepa’s Thirty Instructions the Guru Taught, teachings that Milarepa gave to Rechungpa at Drakya Vajra Fortress. The full video teaching can be accessed through livestream.com (search for Thrangu Monastery Canada, or go to livestream.com/accounts/3780604).

This morning we’ve come to the third instruction which talks about what needs to be eliminated. Yesterday evening we were talking about what we need to do or have. This morning, we are talking about what we need to eliminate. From the text:

“Concepts are a great demon,” he said.

Normally, when we think of demons, we think of someone from the outside who is going to harm us. We always think that harm comes from outside but that is not how it actually is. Really what impedes us and prevents us from practicing the Dharma is inside our mind. We have various thoughts happening in our mind and because we have so many thoughts, we develop the afflictions. That is what harms us and distracts our mind. As the great master Shantideva said, “those who are distracted in the mind have many afflictions.” So if we are distracted in our minds then the afflictions of greed, hatred, and desire arise. Because we have so many of these afflictions, we commit many misdeeds and unvirtuous actions. This happens because we have too many thoughts.

I once had a student who came to me and was sharing his experiences of doing the ngondro preliminary practices. The student said that when he was doing shamatha (calm-abiding meditation,) his mind was very relaxed and he was doing really well, but then when he started doing prostrations it became really difficult. He started feeling a lot of hate and anger in his mind. He asked me “Why is this happening?” When he first asked this question I thought, “How could this be? How could he get angry when doing prostrations?” But later I thought about it and it occurred to me what was probably happening was that when he was doing shamatha meditation, he was really applying mindfulness, awareness, and carefulness in his mind. However, when he was prostrating, he was really working hard with his body and sort of forgetting about the mind. Because of that he was chasing after thoughts of the past and anticipating the future. Because of following the past and anticipating the future, he started worrying a lot, which in turn caused him
You can be proud of various things. These puff up our mind and our mind can become conceited with these thoughts. These then impede us from having the motivation of wanting to properly practice the path.

to get angry. It started happening more and more with each session, and it started snowballing. This is why it is said thoughts or concepts are a great demon. If you think about an individual thought there is no great problem but when you start to follow your thoughts and are guided by them, then you just have more and more thoughts. This is how they became a great impediment or demon. So we need to pacify or subdue our thoughts.

"Slander is a great negative action," he said.

Slander means we might slander the Buddha, the Dharma, our gurus, the root and lineage gurus, or our companions in practicing the Dharma. If we slander them, this will harm others and it also causes us to commit various unvirtuous acts. For that reason, slander is a great negative action. So we must eliminate this slander which is an offense of speech.

Next is the fourth instruction. It says:

"Pride is a great mara," he said.

A mara or demon is someone who actually harms us. But they do not come from outside. Instead it is in our own mind where we have pride. There are different types of pride that we can have. We can think to ourselves, "I am really highly educated. I have great qualities." Or we might think to ourselves, "I am really intelligent." We might think to ourselves, "I am really beautiful." We might think to ourselves, "I have such good conduct." Or you might think to yourself, "I have such a nice voice." You can be proud of various things. These puff up our mind and our mind can become conceited with these thoughts. These then impede us from having the motivation of wanting to properly practice the path. That is why pride is a great mara or demon. We need to eliminate our pride and then we need to take a humble position. When we are humble we will think to ourselves "I need to practice the dharma." We will think, "I need to eliminate the afflictions," and "I need to refrain from doing misdeeds or negative acts." We need to have this kind of good motivation. That is why it says "Pride is a great mara, he said".

In this next section, among the thirty instructions that Milarepa gives here, we've already explained the first five. Continuing onto the sixth,

"Jealousy is harmful on the path," he said.

Previously we spoke about the difficulties of pride, which is a great mara. If we have pride, we will not develop qualities. Therefore, pride is a great mara. Loving-kindness and compassion are methods for the Dharma to really become the path. For the path to work properly we must have loving-kindness and compassion. Now what is it that impedes and harms our loving-kindness and compassion? A lot of competitiveness, envy, or jealousy. If we have these we will not be able to develop true loving-kindness, compassion, and bodhicitta. For that reason, when we practice the Dharma, in order that the Dharma really be the Dharma and that the Dharma becomes the path, if we have loving-kindness and compassion then that Dharma will become the path to the ultimate result and we will be able to bring benefit to ourselves and other sentient beings. What prevents this from happening is envy, jealousy, or competitiveness. So we must always examine our minds to see if we have competitiveness or envy. If we do, we must be mindful and aware, and then apply the antidote of loving-kindness. If we are jealous or competitive, we need to be humble. This is the method to eliminate this obstacle.
Kagyu Monlam

We don’t need to look far to see suffering — sickness, unhappiness, conflict, famine, and pollution can be found in every corner of our world. With such enormous challenges, we may feel powerless to enact positive change, in either our external environments or in our internal minds. Yet in reality, we can try to tame our minds. Taming our minds will benefit us, those connected with us, and eventually the rest of the world because it means that rather than spreading negativity, we will bring happiness to others.

People across the globe came to Thrangu Monastery Canada for the 6th Annual North America Kagyu Monlam (Monlam = “Great Prayer Festival”) from August 26th-30th, 2015. Their participation was their deliberate action to try to benefit others, now and in the future. In other words, participants understood that as humans, we are NOT powerless in the face of hardship. We can be assured that our positive actions will lead to peace and freedom. This year’s theme was based on a quote from the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa:

*You are the Buddha.*
*You are the Superman.*

*Each individual has the power to change the world.*

The five-day event was organized by the Karma Kagyu Association of Canada and Thrangu Monastery Canada. The Monastery was honored to host the Kyabje Thrangu Rinpoche, as well as over 300 ordained and lay sangha members, sponsors, and volunteers throughout the event. An extension of the larger annual Kagyu Monlam, which remains under H.H. the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa’s direction and is held in Bodhgaya every year, the 6th North American Kagyu Monlam was filled with positive aspirations and prayers for the well-being of the world.

The North American Kagyu Monlam was our rare opportunity to work towards taming our afflictions, and giving other beings everlasting clarity and love. We must all believe that this kind of change is possible. Bearing this in mind, we look forward to the 2016 North American Kagyu Monlam, which returns to the United States. Kagyu Thubten Choling in Wappingers Falls, NY, and Lama Norlha Rinpoche will be the gracious hosts for the 7th North American Kagyu Monlam.

*When any living being meets with another, may it be like the reunion of a mother and child who have long been separated. In a harmonious world such as this, may I see everyone sleep peacefully to the music of nonviolence. This is my dream.*

- H.H. the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje
Every morning during the Monlam Thrangu Rinpoche gave participants the Mahayana Sojong vows, which includes 8 vows that need to be kept until dawn the following morning. These vows are taken with the vast altruistic bodhicitta motivation of wanting to free every being from all of samsara's suffering and, thus, the vows bring great benefit to oneself and others.
The confession practice of reciting the *Sutra in Three Sections* was also done everyday during the Monlam. When done properly, this practice clears away negative karma and obscurations accumulated in this and previous lifetimes. For an explanation of the practice go to: http://kagyuoffice.org/the-29th-kagyu-monlam-day-one-mahayana-sojong-vows/.
In addition to making aspiration prayers for the benefit of all beings, members of the monastic and lay community diligently worked to ensure that the event went smoothly. Pictured above are lay community members serving the resident and visiting ordained sangha during lunch.
The Monlam is a valuable opportunity to serve and make offerings to the monastic community that upholds the teachings of the Buddha. Such acts ensure that the Dharma continues to flourish and provide beings with the happiness they’ve been seeking since beginningless time.
The Short Vajradhara Lineage Prayer

Great Vajradhara, Telo, Naropa,
Marpa, Mila, Dharma Lord Gampopa,
the knowers of the three times, omniscient Karmapa,
those who hold the four elder and eight younger lineages,
the Drikung and Taklung and Tsalpa, Great Drukpa,
and others who’ve mastered Mahamudra’s profound path,
unequalled protectors of beings, Dakpo Kagyu, we supplicate you.

Kagyu gurus, we uphold your lineage:
Please bless us to follow your example.
Revulsion’s the foot of meditation, as it’s taught.
As ones with no craving for food or wealth, who cut all ties to this life:
Please bless us to have no attachment to honour or to gain.

Devotion’s the head of meditation, as it’s taught.
As ones who pray always to the lama who opens
the gate to the treasury of oral instructions:
Please bless us to develop genuine devotion.
The main practice is being undistracted, as it’s taught.
As ones who whatever arises, rest simply,
not altering in just that fresh essence of thought:
Please bless us with practice that’s free of conception.
The essence of thought’s the dharmakaya, as it’s taught.

Not anything at all, yet arising as anything, in unceasing play we arise:
Please bless us to realize samsara and nirvana inseparable.

In all of our births may we never be separate
from the perfect guru, enjoying Dharma’s splendour.
Perfecting the qualities of the paths and levels,
may quickly we reach the state of Vajradhara.
Before each puja and teaching session, Kagyu practitioners recite the Vajradrhara lineage prayer (Tib. Dorje Chang Thungma). It is not only a way to remember the great meditation masters of our lineage who worked tirelessly to show others the path to enlightenment, but is itself a text of instruction. The Dorje Chang lineage prayer contains Mahamudra (“Great Seal”) instructions, which lead to the realization of one’s mind and the nature of phenomena. Kyabje Thrangu Rinpoche explained the Dorje Chang lineage prayer during the 6th Annual North American Kagyu Monlam. The full teaching can be accessed at: livestream.com/accounts/3780604.

The author of the lineage prayer was Bengar Jampal Sangpo. He was a student of the 6th Karmapa, Thongwa Dhadon, and a teacher of the 7th Karmapa, Chodrak Gyatso. Now, while he was alive, Bengar Jampal Sangpo did not write any great works or treatises of any great length, but he did write several different prayers or songs that have great blessings. The reason for this is that he spent many years in retreat, perhaps twelve years in retreat at Sky Lake in northern Tibet. Sky Lake is a place that is very difficult to get to and there are many stories of lamas who in particular had great difficulty in getting food and provisions during their retreats there. But Bengar Jampal Sangpo did not have any such difficulties during the time he was in retreat. One reason for this is perhaps he was provided with sustenance by the local protector Nyinchen Thangpa. Another reason could be that he sustained himself through the power of his samadhi meditation. In any case, he spent twelve years meditating on Mahamudra there and because of this, this lineage prayer has great blessings.

Now, the meaning of the Vajradrhara Lineage Prayer is that it primarily teaches instructions on Mahamudra meditation. By making the prayer, we receive blessings through which we are able to develop the realization of Mahamudra. Now in teaching the instructions of Mahamudra, first we need to know the history of the lineage of lamas from which it comes. This is at the beginning of the prayer, which is on page 255 of the Kagyu Monlam book. It begins:

Great Vajradrhara, Tilopa, Naropa, Marpa, Mila, Dharma Lord Gampopa, The Knower of Three Times, omniscient Karmapa, those who hold the four elder and eight younger lineages, the Drikung and Taktung, Tsalpa, Great Drukpa, and others who have mastered Mahamudra’s profound path, unequalled protectors of beings, Dakpo Kagu, we supplicate you Kagyu gurus, we uphold your lineage, please bless us to follow your example.

Now, the root or basis of the instructions comes from the Buddha Vajradrhara (Tib. Dorje Chang). Here, there is sometimes a doubt that many beginners have. The doubt
The transmission of Mahamudra...has not deteriorated at all. So we are very fortunate to be able to practice it. If we practice with great diligence then this is a really wonderful opportunity.

is that in general, the teaching of Buddhism came from the Shakyamuni Buddha. So why is it we say that the Mahamudra instructions came from Vajradhara? Well, there is a point to saying this and the point is that the Shakyamuni Buddha had the four kayas (bodies): the dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, nirmanakaya, and the essence kaya. Among these four different kayas, the dharmakaya is the essence of the wisdom mind of the Buddha. Then in order to appear to disciples, he also manifests in the form kayas which are the sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya. So, the Buddha that appeared in Bodh Gaya and sat underneath the Bodhi Tree, awakened to Buddhism, and then turned the wheel of the Dharma is what we call a supreme nirmanakaya. But his mind is the essence of wisdom and that is the dharmakaya. Then in order to appear to pure disciples, the Buddha then appears as a sambhogakaya. This is what we see in the paintings of the Vajradhara Buddha — blue in colour, holding a vajra and a bell, sitting with his legs in vajra posture, and wearing all of the ornaments of the sambhogakaya form. This is a form of the Buddha that those beings with pure karma can meet. So the great master Tilopa actually met Vajradhara and received the instructions from him so the instructions passed down from him. Receiving these instructions from Vajradhara is in essence no different from receiving the instructions from Shakyamuni. These instructions are the same in essence.

Now, it has been over 2,000 years since the Buddha appeared in the world so you might think that maybe Buddhism was really wonderful at the time Buddha taught it but that it has somehow deteriorated or become contaminated since then. But it is actually not like this. The reason for this, in particular with our instructions on Mahamudra, is that there is not really a very long lineage. The reason there is not a long lineage is because first Tilopa met Vajradhara and received these instructions from him. And in terms of the Indian tradition, Tilopa gave the instructions to Naropa. Then Naropa gave them to the translator Marpa, who came from Tibet. Marpa gave them to Milarepa, Milarepa gave them to Gampopa, and then Gampopa gave them to the first Karmapa, Dusum Khyenpa. Then, from the First Karmapa to the Seventeenth Karmapa there have been all of the incarnations of the Karmapa. Though their bodies may appear to be different, their wisdom mind is the same. So it is a single lineage, a single being, not different beings. For that reason the transmission of Mahamudra is not long and it is a very fresh lineage, a new lineage, and has not deteriorated at all. So we are very fortunate to be able to practice it. If we practice with great diligence then this is a really wonderful opportunity. Even if we are not able to be so diligent about our practice, if we merely enter the gate of the Dharma and have faith and devotion in this practice, it is still a very great fortune.

The reason we recite this prayer is that it is an aspiration to be able to practice Mahamudra. These Mahamudra instructions are beneficial for anyone who practices them. We can look to the life stories of our lineage’s great masters to show how beneficial and applicable Mahamudra is. For example, for lay people who want to practice Mahamudra without giving up their worldly lives, they can practice the samadhi meditation of Mahamudra, and/or do the preliminaries and the main practice of Mahamudra. For an example of householder life, they can look to Marpa the translator, who was a householder and yet went to India three times. He studied languages, learned to become a translator, received all of the instructions, and brought the teachings back to Tibet. By practicing the instructions, he was able to achieve the ultimate result. Then there are some who feel they need a simpler, more carefree and inelaborate lifestyle, who feel like they just need to have a yogic lifestyle. They might wonder if they are able to do the preliminaries and main practice of Mahamudra. They can! An example of this is the great master Milarepa who lived a yogic lifestyle of non-action. He
We should really have not much attachment at all, and if attachment arises we should apply the antidotes of mindfulness and attentiveness.

gave up all worldly affairs and achieved the ultimate result through his practice. This illustrates that people who want to give up all the worldly activities and forsake food, clothing, and shelter can also follow the example of Milarepa and practice Mahamudra. Next, there are some people in the ordained sangha, the bhikshus and bhikshunis, and the novice monks and novice nuns, who, following the example of Shakyamuni Buddha, have gone forth and done the Dharma practice according to the Vinaya. They also can do the practice of Mahamudra. An example of this from the lineage is Lord Gampopa, who became a monk and received the instructions from the Kadampa spiritual masters as well as received the instructions on Mahamudra and the Six Yogas of Naropa from Milarepa. By practicing these instructions, he was able to come to the ultimate result. These examples from the lineage demonstrate that whoever it is who is practicing Mahamudra, no matter what sort of bodily support he/she has, he/she is able to do the practice of Mahamudra.

That completes the history of the lineage lamas which is in the first two verses of the prayer. Following that are the actual instructions on Mahamudra meditation, which has five parts. The first two parts are the preliminaries. These are in the two stanzas which begin with “Revelation is the foot of meditation, as it’s taught,” and “Devotion is the head of meditation, as it’s taught.” Then following that are the teachings on the main practice, which read, “The main practice is being undistracted as it’s taught,” and, “The essence of thought is the dharma-kaya, as it’s taught.” These two teach shamatha and insight meditation. Next is a verse about conduct, and we wish to never be separate from the guru in all of our lives. This final stanza reads, “In all of our births may we never be separate from the perfect guru,” and so forth. In this way there are these five sections.

So the instructions begin with a discussion of the preliminary practices. There are two types of preliminary practices, the common and special preliminaries. The common preliminaries are taught in the stanza which reads “Revelation is the foot of meditation, as it’s taught.” This stanza gives an analogy — if we want to go to some other location we have to have feet. Likewise, when we want to escape from the three realms of samsara and go to nirvana we need a foot to get there. What is the foot we need? It is not being attached. Attachment is an obstacle to the practice of Dharma in general and to the practice of Mahamudra in particular. What is it we shouldn’t be attached to? Food, wealth, possessions, family, and friends. Strong attachment and fixation on them will prevent us from practicing the Dharma and Mahamudra. So we should really not have much attachment at all, and if attachment arises we should apply the antidotes of mindfulness and attentiveness.

We can reduce or eliminate our attachment by thinking about the nature of things. If we think about friends, family, wealth, or possessions, actually being attached to them does not benefit us. They are not beneficial because their natures are impermanent and they change. We might think to ourselves, “I want to be attached to my friends, family, wealth,” and so forth. But no matter how attached we try to be it will not work out because in the end they will change. In the end they are impermanent. In order to realize this, we mainly meditate on impermanence. Is our meditation on impermanence going to be fun or enjoyable? It might not be. It might be rather depressing or rather frightening. But even if it is so, there is great benefit to it.

The benefits are taught in terms of the three different qualities of meditating on impermanence. First, it is the condition that inspires us to practice the Dharma. At first we might not be able to enter the gate of the Dharma or focus on it. At that point, if we meditate on impermanence, then we will realize “I do need to begin to practice the Dharma. I do need to do my Dharma practice.” So in this way, in the
beginning, meditating on impermanence is the condition that inspires us to practice the Dharma. Second, in the middle, meditating on impermanence is the rod that spurs us to diligence. At first we might have entered the gate of the Dharma but then we get distracted by worldly affairs and become overcome by laziness. When that happens, what should we do? We should think about impermanence over and over again. Recalling impermanence acts as an antidote for our laziness. Then, we will become diligent. So, in the beginning, mindfulness of impermanence is the condition that inspires us to practice the Dharma. In the middle, it is the rod that spurs us to diligence. Then, finally in the end, impermanence is the companion to achieving the result. By practicing the Dharma we will be able to achieve a result and we will think, “I’ve gained something. I achieved something through doing this.” And this comes because of our meditation on impermanence. For this reason there is a great purpose and benefit to meditating on impermanence.

As an aid or focus for our meditation on impermanence, according to the instructions of the great Kagyu masters of the past, we also meditate upon three other subjects: 1) the precious human body with its pleasures and resources; 2) karmic cause and effect; and 3) the defects of samsara. Together with impermanence these make the four common preliminaries, or “the four thoughts that turn the mind.” By contemplating these we are able to have not much attachment to samsara. In this way it increases our sense of revulsion that is the foot of meditation. So this is why we meditate upon them.

The first of the four common preliminaries is the precious human body. We have now all gained human bodies. Generally, when we compare this human body to an animal’s body, we can see that we have a mind that is different and extraordinary. We are able to think things through and understand the reason for things. Therefore, this human body is especially fortunate for us. By thinking about this, we realize that we must not let it go to waste so we need to practice the Dharma. This is why we first meditate upon the precious human body.

We are extremely fortunate to have this human body now, but we need to make sure that in future lifetimes we won’t have an inferior body. How do we do this? By meditating on karmic cause and result. This is an extremely subtle and fine subject, and can only be really comprehended by the buddhas and bodhisattvas. Still, knowing it is very necessary. In terms of the general explanations on it, we can understand that all things arise from causes; nothing arises without a cause. Even our human bodies arise from a cause, which is our actions in previous lives. Actions means actions of our body, speech, and mind. In general, we say that through good actions we have good results in the future. On the other hand, bad actions lead to bad results. So, with our mind it is important that we have a kind heart and a good mind, and that we give up malice, ill-will, and so forth. With our body and speech, it is important to have good conduct, to do things with our body and speech that are beneficial rather than harmful to ourselves and others. In this way, we need to do good actions and we need to give up bad actions. This is the method of meditating on karmic cause and effect.

We need to respect karmic cause and effect and we need to put it into practice. This can happen by considering the sufferings of samsara. Sometimes we get attached to this lifetime’s happiness and pleasure, but what we really need is not to be attached to them. For this reason, the Buddha taught that everything by nature is one of the three types of suffering. The first type of suffering is the suffering of suffering. These are things like birth, aging, sickness, and death. These are painful experiences that are easy to recognize as being suffering. That is the suffering of suffering.

However, sometimes we don’t just experience suffering. We do experience pleasure and happiness in this life. But when
We should have devotion in the instructions and spiritual advice as well as have faith in the root and lineage lamas who give us these instructions. According to the tradition of the instructions, in order to increase and develop our devotion we do the practice of guru yoga so that devotion can truly become the head of meditation. When we do the guru yoga practice, we imagine our root and all of the lineage lamas either above our head or in the sky in front of us. We supplicate them, we feel faith and devotion for them, and by doing this we are able to actually increase the faith and devotion we feel. After we supplicate the lamas, we imagine that all of the lineage lamas dissolve into the root guru who is above the crown of our head. Then we imagine that light radiates from his three places (his forehead, throat, and heart) and dissolves into our three places, so that we receive all of the empowerments and all the blessings of the lama. So this is a way to increase our devotion for the root and lineage lamas. By increasing our faith and devotion for the root and lineage lamas we are also able to receive their blessings and develop superior realization.

As an aid for our guru yoga practice, we first do the practice of going for refuge and generating bodhicitta. We go for refuge to the unsurpassable protector, the true Dharma. What is actually going to liberate us from the suffering of samsara? It is the true Dharma that will do this. So the true and precious Dharma is the unsurpassable protector. It is by our practice of the Dharma that we can ultimately develop realization, and by developing realization we can liberate ourselves from the sufferings of samsara. But there are many types of Dharma in this world. Whose dharma do we go to for refuge? We go for refuge to the Dharma of our teacher the Buddha Shakyamuni. There are many different dharma teachers in the world but among all of them the greatest was the Buddha Shakyamuni. For that reason we go for refuge to the precious Buddha Shakyamuni as the unsurpassable teacher. We also go to refuge to the precious Sangha as our unsurpassable guides along the path. We have faith in the Sangha because it is due to them we can develop faith in
By following the Vajrasattva practice we are able to confess and purify our misdeeds and obscurations. In this way we are able to purify all of the temporary karmic obscurations.

Buddhism, we can practice, and we can receive the instructions. So in this way we go for refuge to the Three Jewels. We go for refuge to the Buddha as our teacher, to the Dharma as the path, and to the Sangha as our companions on the path.

Once we have followed these methods of going for refuge and developing bodhicitta, we need ways to make our Dharma work properly as the path. The two basic things we need to do are gather the accumulations and purify our beings. For gathering the accumulations, there is the referential accumulation of merit and the non-referential accumulation of wisdom. In the path of the Mahayana we generally practice the six paramitas, but in particular, in the secret mantra vajrayana we do the special practice of making mandala offerings to gather the accumulations. In terms of purifying our beings of misdeeds and obscurations, we have the practice of confession, the Vajrasattva (Tib. Dorje Sempa) practice. By following the Vajrasattva practice we are able to confess and purify our misdeeds and obscurations. In this way we are able to purify all of the temporary karmic obscurations and we are able to develop superior devotion, which in turn enable us to receive the superior blessings and develop the superior samadhi meditation. So that is why we practice the four special preliminary practices.

Now we come to the main practice of the meditation. This is talked about in the stanzas, “The main practice is being undistracted, as it’s taught”; and “the essence of thought’s the Dharmakaya, as it’s taught.”

In terms of the first of these stanzas, we could engage in and develop samadhi at any time, but because our minds are overcome by thoughts and afflictions, we are not able to develop samadhi meditation. What is the method for practicing shamatha meditation? It is not being distracted by our thoughts or afflictions. We apply mindfulness, awareness, and carefulness in order to rest and be undistracted. How do we do this? The instructions include two parts. There is the section on bodily posture, and then there is the section on how to rest the mind. In terms of the bodily posture, it is taught we should sit in the seven-pointed posture of Vairochana. But the main point is that if our bodies are straight, then the channels within them will be straight. If the channels are straight then the winds, that is the bodily energies, will move in a straight manner, and as a result the mind will also be straight. So it is important for us to sit up straight physically with our two hands in the posture of equipoise resting evenly. In that posture we can work at the methods to rest the mind. Instead of wandering in the waves of our thoughts, we need to practice shamatha meditation.

The second aspect is how we rest with our minds. We need to make sure that we are not overcome by distraction. There are many methods to do this but to present it easily, there are the instructions given by Lord Gampopa. These are,

Do not chase after the past.
Do not anticipate the future.
Rest directly in the fresh mind of the present.

So not following or chasing after the past means we don’t need to think about things that happened in the past. We don’t need to think about history. We just need to relax our minds. Then, we do not anticipate the future, we do not think about what will happen in the future. Instead we just rest directly in the present, in the mind of the present with its unceasing aspect of clarity, not letting ourselves be overcome by thoughts. This is the tranquility of the shamatha meditation. We should rest in equipoise within this.
During the Monlam, Thrangu Rinpoche gave the empowerment for the Chenrezig practice. On the day of the empowerment, there was a windstorm that caused the largest power outage in BC history. A generator provided power to flood lights in the shrine room so that the empowerment could go on as scheduled.
We concluded the Monlam with a sponsor and volunteer appreciation ceremony, followed by dinner and entertainment. The lamp prayer choir group (pictured middle-centre) performed for the occasion, as did the famous Tibetan singer Tenzin Dolma (pictured on the following page).
Dungse Lama Pema has taught on an essential Tibetan Buddhist text *The Seven Points of Mind Training* several years in a row, covering different sections of the text each time. Mind training (Tib. lojong) is the act of taming our minds to be less afflicted and less self-centered, and as a result more compassionate. The text gives methods to reduce the ego-clinging that is the root of all of our problems. It has been said that mind training is the point or essence of Buddhism. There are several mind training teachings and commentaries now available in English. Thrangu Rinpoche’s *Heart of Dharma: Mind Training for Beginners* is one such excellent commentary.

We are now going to speak about the main or actual practice of mind training. Here, we are assuming that we have already developed tranquility meditation (shamatha). We can then proceed to the main practice — developing absolute bodhicitta. This is conducted in two steps: i) meditating by focusing on external objects, and then ii) meditating by focusing on the inner mind. You can see that the first step relates to external entities and the second relates to the internal or subjective mind.

The first part here is meditation on absolute bodhicitta in relation to external objects. This means external objects are the focus of one’s meditation. The root text instruction in *The Seven Points of Mind Training* says to “Regard all phenomena as dreams.” “All phenomena” refers to everything in our world of experience, including externally perceived objects, the external environment of the world, and all of the world’s inhabitants, that is sentient beings. All of these are dream-like in quality, both in the way they appear and in the way they are experienced. This is because phenomena manifest and appear to our subjective perceiving minds in such a way that they are not eternally established in their own right. In other words, external phenomena, appearances, sentient beings, and so on are not really existent as external entities but rather they exclusively arise and are experienced within our inner minds. Thus, all phenomena are like dreams.

Imagine that from the very beginning of the day right down to the present moment, everything that you have experienced so far is like a dream. Of course in an actual dream, different experiences and impressions arise. While you’re asleep you can have a pleasant dream, one that leaves a positive impression or feeling. On the other hand, you can just as well have a very disturbing dream, where the appearances leave you feeling very uncomfortable or upset. But it in either case, if you were to suddenly wake up from the dream state, in the ensuing moments you would realize that the experiences of the dream, no matter how pleasant or unpleasant they might have been, simply vanish and are no more. They might have seemed real during the dream but, subsequent to that, you discover they’re insubstantial and non-
External phenomena, appearances, sentient beings, and so on are not really existent as external entities but rather they exclusively arise and are experienced within our inner minds.

existential in their own right. We can extend this understanding of the nature of the dreams we experience to encompass the entirety of all our phenomenal experience. Then, we recognize that all manifestations and appearances are, in fact, essentially no different from the appearances of dreams.

When we are told that everything is empty and dream-like, we might wonder “is this something that our lamas are telling us as a matter of dogma? Does it have a basis in truth?” The answer is “no”. We can go back to the past, back to the time of the Buddha himself and to the teachings that he gave. For example, in the Heart Sutra, he himself declared that “There is no form. There is no sound. There is no smell. There is no taste. There is no touch.” And so on. The doctrine of emptiness was presented by the Buddha himself, but he did not teach this simply to garner support from others or to force people to believe what he was saying. Rather, he told anyone who was interested in his teachings to carefully and thoroughly examine them, just as you would first carefully test and examine any gold you intended to buy to determine its authenticity and quality.

It was not only the Buddha who indicated that all things are empty and like dreams. Great masters and scholars of the most extraordinary caliber who subsequently appeared in India — Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Chandrakirti, and many others — presented their own detailed and extensive explanations of the doctrine of emptiness, explaining how things are not really existent as independent entities and so forth. They exerted extraordinary effort to elucidate teachings on emptiness. In this manner, we have a tremendous basis for developing our own conviction in the truth of the Buddha’s teachings on emptiness and the dream-like quality of phenomena. The essential meaning of teachings on emptiness is that nothing is established by virtue of an independent nature. In other words, nothing exists independently.

The great Indian master, Nagarjuna, ascertained emptiness by using various modes of analytical reasoning. One of the especially powerful lines of reasoning he used to prove all things are empty is that of interdependence. Interdependence, or dependent origination, argues that all phenomena are established only in relation to other relative phenomena. They are real in relation to other things but not independently as entities in their own right. There are different ways that we can explore this teaching and ascertain it for ourselves. To give a very simple example, think about your hand. Generally speaking, we take it for granted that a hand is a hand. But what does that really mean? What is a hand? If you examine it, you will discover the hand consists of many different parts or elements. You have the thumb and then all of the other fingers. You have the skin, tissue and so forth. “Hand” as such is not an independently or absolutely existing thing. Rather, it is something that is designated conventionally only in relation to other things, such as the material from which it is composed. We can extend this example of the hand and apply it to all phenomena that arise through dependent relationships. We conceive and designate entities in conventional terms, and yet, no phenomenon has an independent nature as such. This is the meaning of Nagarjuna’s reasoning of great interdependence or dependent origination. We need to recognize the truth of this teaching for ourselves.

Speaking from my experience, I'm a monk and I'm part of a larger monastic community. And yet, if it were not for the existence of lay people, I couldn't be a monk. There would be no such thing as a monastic way of life because a person can only be a monastic in relation to those who live the lay person's or householder's life. Therefore, I can say that it is through the kindness of the lay people that I have the opportunity to identify myself as a monk. In that way, the community of lay practitioners and the community of monastic practitioners (Skt. sangha) have a mutually dependent relationship; one can only exist in relation
to the other. Similarly, if we look at a person’s qualities, s/he might have a very impressive presence, while another person might seem to lack such a presence, but that’s purely relative. One person’s qualities can only be understood or evaluated in relation to another person’s. This relativity applies to all manifestations. We can discover again and again that everything is purely relative. In fact, everything is like a dream in the sense that it arises through dependent relationships and only exists in terms of interdependence.

Now to continue with the second part of cultivating the absolute bodhicitta, we will discuss meditation that takes the inner mind as the focus. In the foregoing instruction, it said we should regard all phenomena as being dreams. However, even once we’ve established the perception of external things as dream-like, we might still assume that the inner mind is really existent. In order to counteract any such assumption, we proceed with the next part of the meditation, which uses as its focus the inner experiencing mind.

The next line of the root text says “Examine the nature of unborn awareness.” Here our focus shifts from external objects to the inner mind. As the instruction tells us, we should investigate the nature of our awareness in order to determine our mind’s actual state. How do we do this? We simply look at the awareness and investigate. For instance, as our attention is directed inwards, we ask “Where is the mind? What is it like? And just who is experiencing my mind, my thoughts, my afflictions and so forth?” This is how we directly investigate the nature of the experiencing awareness.

As you direct your attention inwards, it seems as though there is a person experiencing everything. Someone is experiencing your mind, your thoughts, and your afflictions. And yet, when you search for that someone or that experiencer, you cannot find where s/he is located, how s/he exists, or what s/he is like. You simply cannot find anything! You cannot find anyone or anything to point to. You cannot say “This is my mind as distinct from everything else.”
So what is happening here? What is this process? Generally, we say there are two approaches in meditation: resting and analytical. The investigative process described above is analytical meditation because it involves direct examination and discernment of the object of meditation. By contrast, resting meditation does not involve analysis. It is simply a natural, unconstrained state of placing or resting the mind in meditation. So, resting and analytical meditation are the two general approaches that we identify. The two root text lines of instruction, "Regard all phenomena as like dreams" and "Examine the nature of unborn awareness" are concerned with the analytical approach to meditation, which is distinct from resting meditation.

When we search for the unborn awareness of the mind, we may ask ourselves "Where is the mind and what is the nature of this mind like?" We also thoroughly examine and analyze external phenomena, as was indicated by the instruction "regard all phenomena as like dreams", in order to discover what external phenomena are like. This investigative process and careful discernment is called analytical meditation. Returning to the instruction to "regard all phenomena as like dreams", we direct our attention outwards toward external things and discover in that process of analytical meditation that nothing can be independently apprehended or established; external phenomena do not have independent natures. Thus, we realize that external things are all empty.

As we continue with the following line of instruction, "Examine the nature of unborn awareness," we direct our attention inwards and scrutinize our own inner experiencing mind. Here we discover exactly the same principle, wherein the inner mind has no independent or substantial nature. It too is emptiness in just the same way that apparently external things are emptiness.
H.H. the Gyalwang Karmapa was on his U.S. teaching tour when the 2015 Nepal earthquake struck. Hours after the devastating 7.9 earthquake, His Holiness issued a statement of condolence, calling on the Karma Kagyu monasteries in Nepal to take steps to protect their surrounding communities. At the same time, he began directing relief efforts from afar, asking that material and monetary funds be sent to Nepal from India. His statement is as follows:

“Today, in the morning of the 25th of April, in Nepal, the land where Lord Buddha was born, there occurred a devastating earthquake. Many thousands of people have been killed or injured, and historic buildings and private homes have been turned into ruins. As soon as I learned of this painful and distressing situation, I made my deepest aspiration prayers and dedications for all the people affected, and continue to do so. Especially at times when we are faced with such a desperate situation, we cannot sit idle, unfeelingly. We must join forces and carry the burden of sorrow together. It is important that each one of us light the lamp of courage. Additionally, it is important that each of the Karma Kagyu monasteries in Nepal, while looking after their own pressing needs for immediate protection, also extend any and all aid and protection they can to the public in their surrounding communities. From my own side, I will make every effort to come personally in the near future to offer my solace and support as well.”

Around 2,000 people from different regions joined H.H. for a “Monlam” at Riverside Church, NY on May 2nd, 2015. The Monlam, a mass prayer, was initiated and lead by His Holiness himself for the victims of the massive earthquake that claimed thousands of lives. After the prayers, the Gyalwang Karmapa said, “We have gathered here today, to pray for those who passed away and to comfort for those who survived.” He thanked many countries and organizations who extended their relief effort in Nepal.

In the end, His Holiness added, “I wanted to offer my strongest prayer for the good and happy rebirth of all those who have passed away due to this earthquake.” He assured people that he would do whatever he could to help the victims of this earthquake.

Fortunately, Thrangu Rinpoche, his monks, nuns, and students were safe after the earthquake. Lama Pema returned to Nepal to offer assistance to the Thrangu community, his family and other victims.

May those now in despair be whole in mind, endowed with sterling constancy.
May every being ailing from disease be freed at once from every malady.
May every sickness that afflicts the living be wholly and forever absent from the world.
May those who go in dread have no more fear.
May captives be unchained and now set free.
And may the weak receive their strength.
May living beings help each other in kindness.

From The Way of the Bodhisattva
Although the earthquake caused significant damage to Tara Abbey, where Thrangu Rinpoche’s nuns reside in Nepal, everybody in the Abbey was safe after the earthquake. Acting in accord with the wishes of H.H. and Thrangu Rinpoche, Tara Abbey’s nuns (pictured above) and the
Namo Buddha’s monks went to work to provide relief to the surrounding communities. Their diligent efforts brought food, clothing, tents, and additional necessities to those in need.
Though the Tsum Valley, Dungse Lama Pema’s birthplace, experienced very few deaths due to the earthquake, almost every house in the region was destroyed. Out of concern for his people, Lama Pema made great efforts to get to the region, only accessible by helicopter, so that he could
offer financial assistance and emotional support. Members of Thrangu Monastery Canada, pictured bottom-centre, also gathered clothes, tents, and other relief supplies to be sent to earthquake victims.
Devotion that Moves the Heart

A Prayer Calling the Lama From Afar
by Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye the Great

Alas, sentient beings like ourselves, who have committed negative actions,
Wander in samsara from beginningless time.
Still experiencing endless suffering,
We do not feel even an instant of repentance.
Lama, think of us, behold us swiftly with compassion.
Bless us that renunciation arise from the depth of our heart.

Although we have attained a precious human birth with leisure and resources,
We waste it in vain, constantly distracted by the activities of this hollow life.
When it comes to accomplishing the great goal of liberation,
We are overcome by laziness,
And return empty-handed from a land filled with jewels.
Lama, think of us, behold us swiftly with compassion.
Bless us that we make this life meaningful.

There is no one on this earth who will not die.
Even now, people are passing away, one after the other
We also soon must die.
But like a fool, we plan to live long.
Lama, think of us, behold us swiftly with compassion.
Bless us that we curtail all of our scheming.

We will be separated from our closest friends.
Others will enjoy the wealth we as misers kept
Even our body we hold so dear will be left behind.
And our consciousness will wander without direction in the bardo of samsara.
Lama, think of us, behold us swiftly with compassion.
Bless us that we realize the fulility of this life.

This excerpt from ‘Calling the Lama from Afar’ was translated by Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche and Michele Martin and it is indebted to a version by the Nalanda Translation Committee in Journey without Goal by Chogyam Trungpa (Shambala, 1985).
Preparing for Death
By Lotsawa Karma Choephel

Karma Choephel, Thrangu Rinpoche’s principal translator, kindly took time out of his very busy schedule to give instructions on Padampa Sangye’s One Hundred Verses of Advice (for the People of Dingri) in November 2015. Although much of the text’s focus is on impermanence, the advice contained in One Hundred Verses covers all aspects of life, and is practical, accessible, and relevant to everyone. Rinpoche’s recently published book Advice from a Yogi: An Explanation of a Tibetan Classic on What is Most Important offers a comprehensive explanation on Padampa Sangye’s One Hundred Verses, and Karma Choephel gave students at Thrangu Monastery Canada an overview of this treasured work. The full video teaching can be accessed at: livestream.com/accounts/3780604.

So the Dharma we are listening to this evening is The Hundred Verses of Advice by Padampa Sangye. I’m very happy to be able to share this with you. I received this teaching from Thrangu Rinpoche when he taught it in Toronto in 2009. It’s one of these wonderful teachings that has a little bit of everything. It’s a teaching that is very helpful for living your lives and getting along with your families, living practically in the world, but it is also a teaching that is extremely valuable for our practice of Dharma itself.

A reason why this is one of the most helpful teachings we can go over is because it focuses on impermanence. It touches on many other topics but the primary emphasis of the text is on impermanence. And this is helpful for us no matter where we are in our Dharma practice.

Here in Vancouver at this Monastery there are a lot of people who are doing the preliminary ngöndro practices. One of the first and most important things you can do when doing the ngöndro practices is to meditate on impermanence. Of course there are other meditations that go along with the practices but really one of the most important ones is to meditate on impermanence. This is because it gives you that feeling of urgency like you really have to do it and a feeling of excitement about doing the practice.

There are also quite a few of you here who have finished the ngöndro practices. This is wonderful, but once you finish them you need to keep going on with your practice and in order to be diligent in your practice the best thing you can do is contemplate impermanence.

Then there are many people who may not have begun the preliminaries yet but who are serving the Monastery, who volunteer and help this place keep going. For being committed to that, meditating on impermanence, remembering impermanence and remembering what a precious opportunity we have right here right now is also extremely helpful. It helps us keep things in perspective because sometimes
There is going to come a time, if we don’t die violently or suddenly first, we are going to get a fatal illness and we will be beyond medical treatment at some point. We have to recognize that this time is going to happen.

when you volunteer things don’t go the way you expect them to or something happens that you don’t understand. If you let it get out of perspective then you can get upset and it can be difficult for you, but if you remember impermanence then pretty much everything else fits into perspective. Whatever was difficult really doesn’t matter much because we are going to die anyways! So why bother getting upset? (laughter) Meditating on impermanence is really helpful no matter where we are or what we are doing.

So this text we are talking about, The One Hundred Verses of Advice for the People of Dingri was (spoken by) an Indian master who we call in Tibetan Padampa Sangye. Now that’s a Tibetan name, not an Indian name, but it’s the name we in the Tibetan tradition remember him by. His actual or original name was Kamalashila. You may have heard of him. He was a great master and a student of Shantaraksita. He came to Tibet and engaged in a very famous debate with the Chinese Hwa Shang monk in the eighth century. Then he went back to India. He went to China. He went all over the place, and he lived a very very long time.

Kamalashila was a great scholar. He wrote a long commentary on Shantaraksita’s Tattvasamgraha (The Collection of Thuness or Compendium on Reality). He was also a great meditation master and a great yogi. Through his practice he developed many powers. For one thing, he developed the power to be able to transfer his consciousness from one body into another body. He also achieved what we call the siddhi or accomplishment of long life — he was able to live basically as long as he wanted to live. So he was both a great scholar and a great meditation master.

Eventually Padampa Sangye made his way up to Tibet and he stayed in the area of Dingri. While he was there he met Milarepa. You can read about his encounter with Milarepa in the 100,000 Songs of Milarepa. But he lived a very long time and his students were beginning to think “If we practice like Padampa Sangye we can be immortal too. We never have to worry about dying. Look at him. He’s been alive for hundreds of years now. We can live a long time too.” At that point Padampa Sangye realized that he needed to teach one final lesson. That was the lesson of impermanence.

So Padampa Sangye got sick, and then his student Dampa Charchen said “please teach us one final teaching. Leave us a last testament.” This text here is like Padampa Sangye’s last testament. It is like he is leaving his wealth to his students, and the wealth he is leaving is these instructions.

The text begins with a bunch of analogies or comparisons to help us understand impermanence. It says

Listen, all you fortunate yogis here in Dingri —
Just as tattered clothes cannot be made like new,
A fatal illness can’t be healed by drugs or doctors.
All the people on this earth must surely leave.

When your clothes get old and tattered, there is not much you can do about them. You can patch them only so much before you have to use them as rags or throw them away. Likewise when you get a fatal illness there is only so much a doctor can do for you. Eventually you’ll have to go to a hospice and die. There is only so much that medical treatment can do. There is going to come a time, if we don’t die violently or suddenly first, we are going to get a fatal illness and we will be beyond medical treatment at some point. We have to recognize that this time is going to happen. Whether sooner or later we don’t know, but it’s important to realize that at some point we have to leave this life.

So that’s the first analogy about the tattered clothes. The second is about rivers.
All rivers eventually lead to the same place — they all flow into the ocean. It doesn’t matter whether they are long or whether they are short. They can be long like the Amazon. They can be short like the Connecticut. But no matter how long or short they are, all rivers will eventually make it to the ocean. In the same way, all of us from the moment we are born are headed for the same destination. We don’t know how long it is going to take us. Some people don’t stay in this life more than a month or two. Some people stay a long time. These days in North America the average life expectancy is 75 or 80, but we don’t know exactly when we are going to go. We do know, however, where we will end up; we will all end up dying at some point.

The third analogy is about a bird flying off from a treetop.

A bird flies to a treetop and then eventually it is going to fly away. Here in particular Padampa Sangye is talking about himself: “I cannot stay long; I must move on.” Everyone has to move on. Sometimes we might look at someone like Padampa Sangye who has lived for a very long time and think, “I can live for a long time myself.” But if even Padampa Sangye has to move on then we can know that it doesn’t matter who we are. We can be great or we can be small. No matter who we are, eventually we are going to have to pass away.

Now all this talk about impermanence is not just to make us depressed. The reason for talking about impermanence is that we have to realize what a good opportunity we have in this lifetime. This is what the next couple of verses are about. The first is about how we have a good opportunity and since we have a good opportunity we have to use it. If
we let this opportunity go to waste, we don't know when we will get it again. The verse reads,

*If you waste this life and leave it empty-handed,
You won’t easily find a human birth again, people of Dingri.*

Wasting this life and leaving it empty-handed means leaving this life having done nothing that will help us in the future. We come into this life naked, a little baby with nothing at all, and we grow up. Many of us spend our whole lives accumulating more things. We need something for retirement, we need to leave something for our children, we need a nest egg. But once we finish this lifetime and go onto the next lifetime, no matter what it is, we can't take it with us. Our retirement plans or nest eggs will not follow us to the next lifetime. They don't have some sort of way to recognize reincarnations of ordinary people so that your retirement and pension plan follow you to your next life. They haven't done that in Canada and the United States yet! So you can't take that with you.

You can't take any of your clothes. Your friends and family can't go along with you. So you came into this life naked and alone, and you are going to leave naked and alone. The only thing you can bring with you is your actions in this lifetime. That means we need to use our lifetime to do good things and practice the Dharma. Just like you make your monthly deposits in your retirement fund, you also need to make your deposits in the bank of karma. The bank of karma pays very good interest, compounds incredibly, and is unfailing! When you make a deposit in a retirement account you don't know if you're going to live to 65 or even 62 and ever be able to enjoy it. But if you recite 100 mani mantras, or one million manis, or if you do the four preliminary foundations, then you know that you are going to reap the rewards of that in your next lifetime if not before. It is definite. It is unfailing. If you do your dharma practice well in this lifetime it will benefit you not just in this lifetime but in the future and from lifetime after lifetime. That is what is meant by not leaving empty-handed. You need to start saving for your next life.
Seven Branch Offering

Taken from ‘Instructions for the Mahamudra Innate Union’ by the Third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje.

I pay homage to the glorious, sublime guru
in the palace of Akanistha Dharmadatu;
he is the essence of all the buddhas in the three times
and is the one who truly shows my own mind to be the dharmakaya.

I praise you and offer to you my body, my possessions,
and all the offerings manifested by my mind.
I confess to you every bad action I have done in the past,
and from now on I will not do any other bad actions.

I rejoice in the good actions of all beings.
I make a dedication as a cause for supreme enlightenment.
I pray that you remain and do not pass into nirvana.
I request that you turn the wheel of the unsurpassable supreme vehicle.

Give me your blessing so that I will develop unbiased love and compassion
and will directly realize the ultimate, innate wisdom,
just as all the buddhas and bodhisattvas have realized it.

Give me your blessing so that I will realize my illusory body to be the nirmanakaya.
Give me your blessing so that I will realize my life-force to be the samboghakaya.
Give me your blessing so that I will realize my own mind to be the dharmakaya.
Give me your blessing so that the three kayas will manifest indivisibly.

Translated by Peter Roberts.
Khenchen Tsultrim Lodro’s Visit

Khenchen Tsultrim Lodro, a Dharma heir of Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche and teacher at Larung Gar in the Sichuan province of China, kindly accepted the Monastery’s request to come and teach at Thrangu Monastery during his North American teaching tour. Many people
from various backgrounds came for this teaching in which Khenpo emphasized unifying elements of two Buddhist traditions that some might incorrectly think of as incompatible.
Outer appearances may suggest that the popular Chinese Buddhist tradition of Chan and Tibetan Buddhist traditions are essentially different, incompatible, or opposed. As Khenchen Tsurtrim Lodro explained during his May 2015 visit to Thrangu Monastery Canada, despite their differences, these two paths lead to the same goal. Khenchen Tsurtrim Lodro Rinpoche is a main disciple of Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche, a great Mahasiddha. Khenchen Tsurtrim Lodro, an extraordinary scholar and practitioner whose devotion to spreading the Dharma manifests in all of his activities, is an abbot at Larung Gar, one of the largest Tibetan Buddhist establishments in the world. Students at Thrangu Monastery Canada were excited to have the opportunity to listen to him teach. The full teaching can be watched on youtube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cI3VqVKP1U).

Let us begin the teaching by making an aspiration of bodhicitta. I hope everybody really dedicates themselves diligently to the practice of bodhicitta because it’s so vital to us as students of the Mahayana tradition. If we possess bodhicitta, then even the smallest act of merit that we might undertake will take on great proportions. If we lack bodhicitta then regardless of how our external acts may conform with appearances of pious conduct, whether it be making incense offerings, reciting the Buddha’s name, or doing other things, ultimately without bodhicitta these actions won’t amount to much. Bodhicitta, particularly in the Mahayana tradition, is absolutely vital.

In the Chinese Buddhist tradition, the sutras often describe the virtue and merit of bodhicitta. This is something that is exactly the same in the Tibetan tradition as well. One difference, though, is that the Tibetan tradition contains somewhat more concrete practices for the cultivation of bodhicitta. Whether this be in Tsongkhapa’s Stages of the Path, in Words of My Perfect Teacher, or the introduction to the Dzogchen preliminary practices, there are a wealth of concrete practices or methods for the cultivation of bodhicitta. In a nutshell, the essence of bodhicitta is the aspiration to lead or assist all other living beings to Buddhahood. In order to do this more or most effectively, we undertake to achieve liberation and enlightenment for ourselves. This resolve, this aspiration, is what bodhicitta is.

Within the Chinese Buddhist tradition, the two most influential lineages or sects are Chan and Pure Land. Since both of these schools are part of the Mahayana tradition, bodhicitta is essential to both of them. In terms of the Pure Land practice, is it possible in reciting the Buddha’s name to enter Amitabha’s Pure Land (Tib. Dewachen) without bodhicitta? Yes, it is possible to enter Amitabha’s Pure Land without bodhicitta. However, upon arriving there one has the status of an arhat and not a bodhisattva.
An experiential awareness of emptiness is a true beholding of the Buddha. The basic nature of our mind is the Buddha, and aside from this there is no other Buddha.

So the generation of bodhicitta is extremely important to the Chinese tradition, but it goes without saying it is also extremely important for the Tibetan tradition. In all scriptures, even in the shortest tantric sadhana that is only a few verses in length, the first two lines will be taking refuge and generating bodhicitta. Therefore, the foundation of tantric practice is also bodhicitta. A deity practice for example, if undertaken without bodhicitta, doesn’t amount to a practice within the Tibetan Vajrayana tradition. That is to say bodhicitta is essential for any kind of practice, such as a deity practice, to conform with the standard of the Mahayana teachings.

Of course everybody knows in theory that bodhicitta is important. However, it’s absolutely vital that we practice and implement it. Just knowing it’s important without doing anything doesn’t really have much use. As we mentioned before, bodhicitta is so important to tantric practices that even in a very short sadhana of only one or two pages, there will always be two or four lines about the generation of bodhicitta. The motivation of bodhicitta is critical to the tantric tradition. Bodhicitta is therefore the foundation of the Chan school, the Pure Land school, and the tantric tradition too. Any of these traditions without bodhicitta don’t amount to Mahayana Buddhism. So if we really aspire to be a genuine practitioner of Buddhism, it’s very important that we properly cast our aspiration of bodhicitta.

We really need to remind ourselves to make the aspiration of bodhicitta anytime we engage in some kind of positive conduct. It’s not just tonight listening to the teaching that we need to make this aspiration, or say when we are doing volunteer work at our Dharma centre or whatever. It’s an aspiration that we need to be mindful of generating every time we are engaging in positive actions.

We are going to move on now to the topic of tonight’s teaching — integrating Chan and tantric practice. First, we can look at the meaning of the word Chan. Usually the meaning that most people understand is that of meditative absorption, the state of one’s mind being in a calm meditative state. But in actual fact, this isn’t the true meaning of Chan. The first patriarch of the Chan tradition, Bodhidharma, described Chan as being the realization of the basic nature of the mind, of emptiness, or enlightenment. This really is the true meaning of Chan. Now we need to understand what the core or essence of the Chan teachings is.

The Chan school is the most influential of all of the different lineages in Chinese Buddhism. It is through Chan teachings and through relying on Chan practices that countless numbers of great masters in the past attained enlightenment. Here, let’s talk a little bit about Bodhidharma. He was the 27th generation of Zen patriarchs. In terms of the Chinese Chan tradition, he was the first patriarch. Bodhidharma has a very famous work called *The Treatise on Realizing the Nature*, which is about realizing the ultimate nature of the mind, attaining enlightenment. Bodhidharma has a very famous saying that describes how having true experiential awareness of the basic nature of one’s own mind, an experiential awareness of emptiness, is a true beholding of the Buddha. The basic nature of our mind is the Buddha, and aside from this there is no other Buddha. This means that any single person seated here tonight, if he or she were to have direct experiential awareness of his or her own mind, then this would be for them witnessing or beholding the Buddha.

In the Diamond Sutra, it was asked whether seeing or beholding the Buddha in person 2,500 years ago was really seeing the Buddha. It stated that this was not the true seeing of the Buddha. As we said, the truly seeing the Buddha is when we perceive or have an experiential awareness of the basic nature of our minds. The way the Chan tradition
The Chan approach and the tantric approach, are essentially just two roads or channels that ultimately lead to the same objective, that is the realization of the basic nature of our minds.

renders or views the nature of perceiving the Buddha is in accordance with Dzogchen and Mahamudra teachings in the Tibetan tantric tradition. So in terms of this question, the Chan and tantric positions are in exact accordance with each other. In fact, the Chan tradition can be seen as part of the Mahamudra teachings of the Kagyu tradition.

From the point of view of the Tibetan tradition, Chan is not a straightforward sutric school nor view. In fact, its teachings are part of the Mahamudra teachings. When the Mahamudra teachings were transmitted from India to the master Marpa, he possessed two different lineages of Mahamudra teachings. The difference between these two lineages he possessed is that one of them required tantric initiation in order to practice and the other did not. The origin of the lineage that did not require tantric initiations was the sutric tradition, the exoteric sutras such as the Lankavatara sutra. The other Mahamudra lineage was one that required tantric initiation, and its source was the esoteric tantras. Marpa possessed both of these lineages. However, over the course of history in Tibet, the lineage that was disseminated most widely was the one that requires tantric initiation in order to practice. In fact, the tantric practices of the Tibetan tradition all require initiations. Similarly, the Mahamudra lineage that was spread most widely was the one requiring initiation. The lineage that didn't require initiation was precisely that which Bodhidharma disseminated in China. From the point of view of the Chinese tradition, this is the Chan teaching, and from the point of view of the Tibetan tradition this is part of the Mahamudra tradition.

However, a lot of people are not aware of this fact and believe the Chinese and Tibetan traditions are fundamentally different in nature, or that the sutric teachings and the tantric traditions are as different as fire and water. In actual fact this view is mistaken. In terms of their content, their view, and ultimately the state of realization to which they are oriented, both lineages are exactly the same. In terms of their concrete method of practice, however, there are some differences between the two. The practice outlined in the Chan teachings is very accessible and can be undertaken by anyone in a step-by-step manner until one ultimately becomes enlightened. The lineage that requires initiation, even though it is the same as the Chan approach in terms of its content, the form of its practice or its methods may not necessarily be as widely accepted or understood as those of the Chan approach. Practices oriented towards the realization of one's state have different methods for doing so; this is an entirely normal situation. The reason for this is that practitioners have different needs and capacities. For example, the Chan approach would be appropriate for practitioners who are not attracted by the prospect of practicing all kinds of generation and completion stage practices that involve meditation on all kinds of wrathful deities and so forth. For them, the Chan approach may be more appealing, and may be more suitable. On the other hand, for a practitioner who desires a very speedy and expedient approach, the tantric approach may be more appropriate.

But these two different paths or approaches are equally capable of leading one to the same goal or objective. For example, in a situation of an illness, there are two different approaches we could take. One would be more conservative; we would simply take medicine rather than have an operation. The second would be more proactive, the actual operation or surgery. Both of these are alternative approaches we could take in resolving the problem of a disease or illness. As to which approach we should choose for the healing or curing of our illness, this really depends on the nature of our body, our body type, and the condition of our body. An operation for example may enable us to resolve the problem more quickly. By taking medicine we would be able to reach the same result but ultimately it would take more time. In any case, the approach we would choose would depend on
It is certainly the case that both in the past and in the present there are people who use the tantric approach and carry the banner of Vajrayana Buddhism as an excuse to engage in all kinds of negative and unvirtuous conduct.

our own individual circumstances and physical conditions. By applying exactly the same logic we are able to achieve enlightenment through sutric practices or through tantric approaches. The Chan approach and the tantric approach, are essentially just two roads or channels that ultimately lead to the same objective, that is the realization of the basic nature of our minds. The question of which path to follow really rests upon our needs and capacities as individual practitioners. If we prefer a more stable and easily acceptable practice path, then the sutric approach would be a good one to take. If on the other hand, we are willing to take a more extreme approach then the tantric approach is indeed fast and expedient. As to which path we decide to pursue, this is ultimately a matter of individual choice. Of course many people will think, “Since there really is a fast, expedient path that exists, why wouldn’t I take it?” However, in order to qualify to be a student of this path one needs to be properly equipped. One needs to have the capacity to follow this path.

So the tantric approach which I just described as being more extreme in nature can also be described as a demon-like training method. Both the Chan and tantric traditions emphasize and talk about the importance of letting go. The way the Chan tradition teaches us to let go is a more gradual, easily accessible, and acceptable approach. It enables us to let go step-by-step. It may take slightly longer than the tantric approach, which makes or forces us to let things go in a relatively short amount of time. While both approaches are oriented toward enabling us to realize the nature of our minds and to let go of attachments, the tantric approach forces us to let go of attachments as opposed to enabling us to let go of them in a more gradual way. For this reason it’s an approach that is somewhat more extreme and is not necessarily easily understood or appreciated by people without some foundation of practice. For this reason it is not necessarily an approach that is advisable or accessible to everyone.

If we compare the stances on eating meat taken by the sutric and tantric traditions, we will find they have exactly the same approaches. The sutras very much stress the importance of vegetarianism and not consuming meat. In the tantric tradition, and in the Kalachakra tantra in particular, there is an explanation on the benefits of not consuming meat. Therefore, both the Mahayana sutric and Mahayana tantric traditions equally advocate and emphasize the importance of vegetarian practice. Now we might ask, if this is the case, why is it in the tantric tradition that the tsok offerings in the tsok feast contain both alcohol and meat? The important point here is that in the context of the tsok offering, the meat is not there for us to consume as a source of food. The purpose of meat in the context of the tsok offering is to help us overturn our dualistic conceptual notions of say vegetarianism as being pure and eating meat as being impure. This tantric approach, the extreme approach that compels us to abandon dualistic conceptions of, for example, clean and impure, is really effective for people who already have a certain standard of practice and realization. For such people, this kind of approach is extremely beneficial and extremely expedient. However, until our own level of practice has reached the requisite level for this kind of approach to be effective, we won’t be able to accept the alcohol and meat offerings during the tsok.

It is certainly the case that both in the past and in the present there are people who use the tantric approach and carry the banner of Vajrayana Buddhism as an excuse to engage in all kinds of negative and unvirtuous conduct. As we mentioned last night when speaking about taking refuge vows, until we are at a particular stage of practice, then we are better to follow the approach outlined in the sutric teachings.
An Aspiration to the Stages of the Path

By gathering a mass of the two accumulations
As vast as space through long effort,
May I become a lord among buddhas,
A guide of all beings who are blinded by ignorance.
Throughout all my lives until that occurs,
May I be kindly cared for by Manjugosha,
Find the supreme path that includes all the Dharma’s stages,
And please the buddhas through practice.
Motivated by intense affection,
May I dispel the darkness of beings’ minds by skillfully explaining
The points of the path that I have correctly realized.
May I uphold the Buddha-dharma for a long time.
With great compassion may my mind be moved to those places
Not reached by the supreme, precious Dharma.
And those places reached by it where it has declined.
May I illuminate that treasure of benefit and happiness.
Through the stages of the path of awakening established through
The wondrous activity of the buddhas and bodhisattvas,
May I glorify the minds of those who seek liberation.
May I sustain the buddhas’ deeds for a long time.
May conditions favourable to the accomplishment of this good path be amassed.
May adverse conditions be dispelled.
In all their lives may no one, human or non-human,
Ever be without this pure path praised by the buddhas.
While properly practicing with diligence
The Ten Dharma activities of the Supreme Vehicle,
May we always be assisted by powerful beings.
May all directions be filled by an ocean of auspiciousness.

This was composed by the great lord Tsongkhapa.

This prayer was taken from the Kagyu Monlam textbook.
This year the Monastery hosted the Maitreya Loving-Kindness Relic Tour, which is under the guidance of Lama Zopa Rinpoche. The exhibit includes sacred relics from the Buddha Shakyamuni and other great masters from India, Tibet, and China. The tour's core message is that
loving-kindness resides in every person’s heart and is the basis for respect, peace, and happiness both individually and globally. Representatives from the India Cultural Centre and Ram Krishna Mandir on No. 5 Rd offered prayers and blessings during the Opening Ceremony.
Before any Dharma practice or event in which we engage, Kyabje Thrangu Rinpoche reminds us to develop the purest of all motivations, that is the bodhicitta motivation to help all beings realize the ultimate truth. For this, Rinpoche has said that our Dharma practice must be unaffected and wholehearted. He writes,

“The Buddha said that when we do Dharma practice, it should be in a genuine and heartfelt way. This means that when we practice Dharma, we must not just do it as an outer show or pretense or like a theatrical performance where actors dress up as kings and ministers even though they are not really kings and ministers. We must practice Dharma wholeheartedly and very properly with our body, speech, and mind. When we perform virtuous actions with our body, our mind should be there also working for Dharma.

When we say things, our mind should mean it as well. Practicing the Dharma whole-heartedly is very important. If we do a prostration, for instance, our mind should also be filled with faith, devotion, and confidence to make that prostration meaningful ... With this whole-hearted approach the bodhisattva’s practice is the practice of the six paramitas/perfections (generosity, moral conduct, forbearance/patience, diligence, meditative concentration, and wisdom).”

We’ve taken an excerpt from Khenpo Tashi’s July 2015 teaching on Nagarjuna’s Letter to a Friend that talks about the second and third paramitas, those of moral conduct and of patience. The full video teaching can be accessed at: livestream.com/accounts/3780604.

The thirteenth stanza [of Nagarjuna’s Letter to a Friend] talks about being very careful and very mindful. It reads,

Carefulness is the way to deathlessness,
While carelessness is death, the Buddha taught.
And thus, so that your virtuous deeds may grow,
Be careful, constantly and with respect.

Here, carefulness means being very aware and very mindful. Why does one need to be very careful? Of what does one need to be very mindful? You need to be very mindful and careful of the things that don’t benefit you and the things you need to abandon. Then, we need to be careful to adopt, accept, and put into practice all of those qualities that benefit and help us. So we need to be careful of what we need to reject and what we need to adopt.

As the text says, “Carefulness is the way to deathless while carelessness is death.” So, if our mind is not very careful and always confused, we will always be running after our afflictions. Too many thoughts will arise and because of those
If our mind is not very careful and always confused, we will always be running after our afflictions. Too many thoughts will arise and because of those thoughts, too many disturbing emotions will arise.

Sometimes, even though with our minds we try to be very careful, we, as samsaric individuals, still make mistakes, fall into carelessness, and engage in unvirtuous actions. However, when we fall into carelessness and make mistakes, there is a path or method for overcoming the unvirtuous actions we have done. The antidote is to confess and turn one’s mind in a positive direction. In the fourteenth stanza it says,

Those who formerly were careless
But then took heed are beautiful and fair,
As is the moon emerging from the clouds,
Like Nanda, Angulimala, Darshaka, Udayana.

Here it gives the example of the moon emerging from the clouds. The moon is naturally very bright and beautiful. When we look at the bright, beautiful moon, our minds feel very refreshed and calm. But when that moon that is very bright and beautiful in nature is obstructed by very thick clouds, we are unable to see its qualities. Only when there are no clouds blocking the moon can we see the moon’s the moon’s qualities or brightness. Similar to this, if we’re able to recognize our carelessness and our mistakes, then we will surely be able to overcome unvirtuous actions through confession or other methods.

In this stanza, Nagarjuna gives examples of four people to whom we can look for inspiration. In the early part of their lives, these four individuals were very careless. They were not cautious about their actions. One of them, through strong attachment and clinging, committed unvirtuous actions. Another, through strong ignorance and a deluded mind, fell into carelessness. The next, through strong hatred, fell into carelessness. The last one, Udayana, fell into carelessness due to the combination of attachment and anger. Although those four people fell into carelessness they were still able to recognize their mistakes, and through recognizing their mistake they were able to become arhats.

The first one, Nanda, had a very strong attachment to women. Even after becoming an ordained monk, Nanda had a strong attachment and clinging to the wife he left and other women. The Buddha knew what Nanda was like and showed him different ways to overcome his attachment to women. Sometimes the Buddha would take him to the hell realm and show him the terrors, the suffering, and the difficulties there. Sometimes Buddha would take him to the heavenly realm where things were very peaceful and calm. Through being shown different methods and different paths, Nanda was able to overcome his strong attachment to women. In the end he reached the state of an arhat.

The second example is Angulimala. Anguli means finger and mala means beads. The story is that Angulimala fell into ignorance because he had a very deceitful teacher who told him that if he killed 1,000 people and made a garland of their fingers, he would be reborn in a Pureland, go to heaven, or be born as a celestial being. Because of this very bad and deceitful teacher and his instructions, Angulimala killed 999 people. The last person he had to kill was his mother. Through Buddha’s omniscience he saw what Angulimala was going to do and told him to kill him instead. Angulimala tried to chase the Buddha but no matter how
hard he chased him, he was unable to catch and kill him. Eventually, Angulimala became very tired and frustrated. The Buddha then explained to him how he had taken a wrong path and fallen into ignorance. Through following the Buddha’s instructions he reached the state of an arhat.

The third example is Darshaka. Darshaka who very strong hatred. His evil friend, Devadatta, convinced Darshaka that he needed to kill his father and he did. Later he met the Buddha who gave him instructions through which he was able to develop strong faith and devotion in the teachings. Through listening to the teachings and cultivating strong faith he was able to become an arhat.

The fourth example, Udayana, had very strong anger. On top of the anger, he had very strong attachment. His mother tried to prevent him from sleeping with someone else’s wife because it was not a good action, would not give him good reputation, and so on. He became very frustrated and angry with his mother for trying to stop him from sleeping with this married woman and would not listen to her. Instead, he killed her. So it was due to his strong anger and attachment to women that he killed his mother.

These are the stories of people who because of their carelessness committed many unvirtuous actions, such as killing their mothers and so on. Through meeting the Buddha and recognizing what they had done and seeing the negative acts they had committed, they were able to confess their negative deeds, overcome their afflictions, and become arhats. So these unvirtuous actions were all due to carelessness, but as Nagarjuna mentioned, if one is able to be careful, if one is able to recognize the negative actions one has committed, one can become awakened. One can become a Buddha. This is an important subject that one must recognize, that one must understand.

The third paramita is patience or forbearance. With regards
to patience, the text reads,

_Hard to practice, patience knows no peer,
So never allow yourself a moment’s rage._

_Avoid all anger and you will become
A non-returner, so the Buddha said._

In our lives we experience many difficulties, and to put effort into the practice of patience is extremely challenging. But practicing patience is the main antidote to our anger. We need patience to avoid or abandon anger so that very strong anger or hatred toward someone else does not arise. When very strong hatred or anger arises within oneself, we practice patience and we will be able to gain control of our emotions. In some other religions, people practice patience by harming their bodies. They sometimes practice patience by burning themselves, by putting their bodies in fire. Or sometimes people go into extremely cold water or in very hot weather or they go naked. In order to practice patience, they put their body through such difficulties. But no matter what difficulties you put your body through, it will not help you attain a higher state or become awakened. In regards to this, Nagarjuna said to his very dear friend, King Gautamiputra, in order to practice and familiarize yourself with patience, what you need to do is not let your mind be carried away by disturbing emotions. Your mind should always be controlled even when you have strong hatred or anger arising within yourself. Your mind shouldn’t be taken over by those emotions. If you are able to do so you can practice patience, you can get control of your emotions. So this is friendly advice Nagarjuna gave to the king. He said not to be carried away by the disturbing emotions but instead, practice patience repeatedly. Also, Lord Buddha himself said by practicing patience one would certainly, without any doubt or confusion, be awakened and become a budha.
It is taught in Gampopa’s *Jewel Ornament of Liberation* that seeking solitude and staying in an isolated place for the sake of enlightenment and benefitting sentient beings pleases the Buddhas more than making offerings of food, drink, flowers, and so forth. Thrangu Monastery’s facilities for those who want to do personal or group retreats provide optimal practice conditions; experienced teachers and meditators are always available to act as our spiritual guides during these retreats.
When Dharma Lord Gampopa was 42 years old, he was told he would die within the next three years. By meditating on White Tara he was able to live until he was 80. As a result, he was able to benefit many more beings by showing them the path to ultimate happiness. Similarly, our root guru, Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, has also taken White Tara as his yidam deity and has been able to live a long life for the purpose of transmitting Dharma teachings and helping his students develop their compassion and wisdom.
“Khenpo” designates a scholar who has achieved not only a thorough and detailed knowledge of Tibetan Buddhist writings and thought, but a person who, through the actions of his/her body and speech, personifies compassion and equanimity, as taught by the Buddha. Khenpo Sonam is Thrangu Monastery Canada’s resident Khenpo, and frequently speaks on the need to abandon negativity, self-clinging, ignorance, and blind Buddhist faith. He reminds us that these self-centered habits only lead to further suffering. However, through studying the Dharma, we can develop our positive qualities. His explanation on Rangjung Dorje’s *Distinguishing Consciousness from Wisdom* clarifies the reality of our perceptions so that it becomes easier to eliminate self-cherishing and develop wisdom. The full video teaching can be accessed at: livestream.com/accounts/3780604.

I gained a thorough understanding through hearing the teachings and contemplating them.

I then resided in solitude, in order to engage in the process of meditation. I shall describe here the kind of realization that arose at that time.

This verse is Rangjung Dorje’s commitment to compose and finish writing the text *Distinguishing Consciousness from Wisdom*. What is the text’s principal subject? It is how to free ourselves from the suffering of our sensory perceptions and inner thoughts. What we actually need is the wisdom that arises first from hearing, contemplating, and meditating on the teachings, but the afflictions (Skt. *klesha*) prevent us from gaining that wisdom and our subsequent freedom.

Hearing the teachings, and in particular, contemplating the teachings, are important for developing the necessary wisdom for freeing ourselves from suffering. First we must hear the teachings that lead to enlightenment. For example, we need to hear about the causes of samsara. Second, we must contemplate the teachings. In this case, we contemplate in order to understand the causes of samsara. Lastly, once we’ve contemplated the teachings, we will be able to meditate properly and wisdom will develop from within that meditation. If we have done this, then we will be able to attain the wished-for result, that is freeing oneself from the suffering that we have endured since beginningless time as beings in samsara. Without having heard or contemplated the teachings, we will not be able to develop wisdom through meditation.

In order to benefit his pupils, Rangjung Dorje presented this verse on how he developed wisdom through meditation. He had realization of the view, the wisdom that one attains through resting in meditation, and he was free from all conceptualization, karma, and afflictions. He presented this teaching in this way so his pupils would gain an understand-
Phenomena are by their own nature empty, devoid of being single or multiple, and completely free of being either false or true. They are like illusions, like the moon’s reflection on water.

ing of the ground consciousness through meditation. They would be able to understand how all the difficulties of samsara, as well as all of the positive qualities that lead to liberation from suffering, arise from the ground consciousness.¹

There are those who believe that the three realms and all beings, are a creation arising from themselves, or from another, from both, or from no cause. There are those who state that there is a creator: Cha, Shiva, Brahma, or Vishnu, or that there are external atoms or truly existing imperceptible matter, that has created the self and the world.

The Buddha taught that the three realms are just mind. Samsara and all the causes and results of samsara have come from the ground consciousness. This means that the three realms of beings (the desire, form, and formless realms) arise from the ground consciousness.

Desire realm beings are attracted to the six sense objects and sense pleasures. They have the affliction or klesha of attachment to the sense pleasures. However, for beings in the form realm, the desire realm is unpleasant and unattractive. Instead form realm beings are attracted to the subtle pleasures and happinesses of the states of the four jñānas, the states of meditation. Then, beings of the formless realm find the desire and form realms undesirable. Instead, they have the affliction of attachment to subtle formless states. This means they are attached to what is called the state of infinite space, the state of infinite consciousness, the state of nothingness, or the state of neither perception nor non-perception.

The traditions, views, or philosophies that were mentioned above don’t understand how ordinary beings take rebirth within the desire, form, or formless realms as a result of their state of delusion. The outer, non-buddhist traditions do not have the subtle knowledge of how ordinary beings are reborn in samsara. They don’t have this understanding of cause and result and they don’t understand how rebirth occurs on the basis of the ground consciousness. Rather, they only have a coarse understanding and therefore have erroneous views. For them, they think these three realms were as being created by a creator like the god of wealth called Cha, by Brahma, or so on. There is the idea that there is this permanently existing matter or a permanent external reality as well as a creator. Or, there are those with the view that beings have no previous lives that cause the three realms, nor any other cause for the three realms of beings. So in that way these traditions have these incorrect views.

Some non-buddhist traditions say all of the world and its beings have a creator who made the world, and all of the outer elements are comprised of earth, air, fire, and water. Dharmakīrti discussed this in his commentary on pramāṇa (valid cognition). For example, some non-Buddhist traditions say that the king of mountains, Mt. Meru, was created by a deity. What is their proof for that? They say that when humans build houses they build them square. So the houses have a creator. When you look at Mt. Meru, it is also square so therefore it too has a creator. Dharmakīrti analyzed that argument, and responded by saying ants create anthills and a potter makes pots, and both anthills and pots are made of earth. Because the ant and the potter both make something of earth, you could say according to their point of view, ants make pots because anthills and pots are both made of earth. If you are saying that Mt. Meru must have a creator because
it is square then by that logic ants make pots because pots are made of earth.

Then there is the view of the Buddhist tradition called the Vaibhashika. According to the Vaibhashika, all sensory perceptions, form, sound, smell, taste and touch, all of these objects we perceive are composed of indivisible particles which are 1/36th the size of dust motes that you would see in a sunbeam. These particles have a true or real existence of their own. Similarly, in terms of consciousness, one can go down to a very subtle division of consciousness, the smallest instant of consciousness. These smallest instances of consciousness also have a true reality or are self-existing. This text, Distinguishing Consciousness from Wisdom, says that the Vaibhashika’s view is incorrect. There is no such thing as an indivisible particle, and there can never be the shortest indivisible instant because that instant itself must be divisible. There must be the part of the instant that connects with the preceding instant and there is the instant connecting with the next instant. So there is nothing which is indivisible in that way.

There is also the Buddhist tradition called the Sautrantika. Sautrantika philosophy teaches that external matter or phenomena are directly imperceivable — the form that we see is not the actual form itself. For example, when we see a table, we see a particular shape and colour and we think that it is a table, but we are not perceiving the actual table. The actual matter of the table is hidden within that perception that we see. But the text here says this is also an incorrect view.

All the incorrect views of these non-Buddhist as well as the Buddhist traditions of the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika prevent one from understanding that there is the ground consciousness and prevent one from understanding the actual cause and result of the process of how samsara arises.

The unique omniscient one has taught that these three
realms are purely mind. They do not arise from themselves, from another, from both, nor are they without a cause. All phenomena arise through interdependence. They are, by their own nature, empty, utterly free of being single or multiple, utterly free of being falsehood or truth, like the moon’s reflection upon water and so on.

Knowing this, the Buddha taught it to beings.

The Buddha taught that all phenomena arise through interdependence. Phenomena are by their own nature empty, devoid of being single or multiple, and completely free of being either false or true. They are like illusions, like the moon’s reflection on water and so on. According to the Buddha’s teachings, what is samara, the cause and result of samsara, the relative phenomena of samsara, and ultimate truth? What did the Buddha say about all of samsara and nirvana? The Buddha taught that the three realms of beings arise from the delusion in the mind. Therefore, all the realms of beings are just mind. In non-buddhist traditions, it may be taught that there is creator who created these three realms, or that these three realms have this permanent nature. Or some traditions may teach both. Alternatively, some traditions may teach the three realms are without any cause. However, the Buddha said none of these are correct.

So, there is this process of dependent origination of samsara from the ground consciousness. From the ground wisdom, liberation or nirvana arises. This is its nature, it is naturally occurring. In the text, what is meant by “neither single nor multiple”? It means that one has this ground consciousness, but there is additionally this ground wisdom. Are they one and the same? No they are not. Are they separate? Do they come from a separate source? No they do not. It’s just like with relative phenomena. Relative phenomena is not ultimate. The ultimate cannot be the relative. It’s really like the reflection of the moon on the water. You see the moon on water but the actual moon is not present there. So in this way, this is what the omniscient one has understood. Then he taught those he was guiding so they would have a correct understanding.
Helping & Learning at the Monastery

The Monastery offers plentiful opportunities to cultivate our minds and hearts. Volunteers help with kitchen, shrine room, audio-visual, garden, administrative, and housekeeping responsibilities. Without these volunteers, many of the Monastery’s programs would not be possible. If you are interested in volunteering please speak to main office staff.
People can also participate in any of the Monastery's classes: Buddhist philosophy and teaching, torma (sculptured offerings), Tibetan language, and Tibetan Buddhist rituals. When one volunteers or learns with pure bodhicitta motivation, the benefit it brings to oneself and others is immeasurable.
Canada Day Parade

For the last two years, Thrangu Monastery Canada has participated in the Highway to Heaven Association’s Canada Day float, showcased in the Steveston’s Canada Day Salmon Festival. In 2015, the float was awarded second place amongst 100 entries.
The Highway to Heaven Association was founded through the initiative of the India Cultural Centre and several religious organizations along No. 5 Rd in Richmond. Association members work together with the hope of strengthening interreligious ties and demonstrating to the world that great things can be achieved when we cooperate with our neighbours.
Master Hai Tao’s Visit

Popular throughout Taiwan and amongst the Chinese Buddhist diaspora, Master Hai Tao has instituted many programs to spread Dharma and alleviate social problems, such as Life TV education. Master Hai Tao taught in the Greater Vancouver area in July 2015.
Thrangu Monastery was honoured to host him and some of his students on July 18th, 2015. Though Master Hai Tao follows the Tien Tai school of Buddhism, he promotes non-sectarianism and, in particular, feels close to His Holiness the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa.
Khenpo Jigme radiates kindness and delivers the truth of Buddhist teachings with humour and warmth. He lives in Colorado but visits Thrangu Monastery Canada frequently. In November 2015, Khenpo Jigme introduced Geshe Langri Tangpa’s *Eight Verses for Training the Mind.* Khenpo informed interested students that everything one needs to practice is contained within these eight verses, even though the verses are few in words. By practicing these instructions, people interact harmoniously, experience fewer sicknesses, and gain peace of mind. He also said that for him, mind training (Tib. lojong) was the most useful practice when encountering personal difficulties, more so than reciting mantras or doing yidam visualizations. We would like to thank Khenpo Jigme, as well as translator Chris Stagg, for travelling from the US present these teachings. The full teaching is accessible on livestream.com (search Thrangu Monastery Canada or go to livestream.com/accounts/3780604).

The first verse states,

*With a determination to achieve the highest aim*
*For the benefit of all sentient beings*
*Which surpasses even the wish-fulfilling gem,*
*May I hold them dear at all times.*

In the last line, “May I,” primarily refers to the composer of the text, Geshe Langri Thangpa. Of course when you are practicing these instructions, it is perfectly fine to think of “I” as being yourself and think, “May I practice in this way.” So then the second and third line of the text says that all sentient beings surpass even the wish-fulfilling gem. A wish-fulfilling gem is something that used to exist, so it’s taught. What is a wish-fulfilling gem? It’s said that if one were to take this wish-fulfilling gem, clean it, and supplicate it then one would be able to attain whatever one wished for. If one wanted something to eat or drink, one would obtain something to eat or drink. Wealth, any kind of rich substances, whatever one desired, one would be able to obtain it by supplicating a wish-fulfilling jewel. Because of its power, if one had a wish-fulfilling jewel then one would want to keep it and would hold it very highly. Here, Geshe Langri Thangpa says sentient beings are like wish-fulfilling jewels. How is this the case? It’s because of sentient beings we can obtain temporary and ultimate happiness. Therefore, seeing sentient beings like wish-fulfilling gems is the first practice taught here in the text.

If one is able to increase one’s cherishing of others, then one’s own self-cherishing will be reduced. If one reduces one’s own self-cherishing, then one will be able to obtain both temporary and ultimate happiness. Therefore, cherishing others is to be regarded as very important and precious for us. Our mind training practice will go very well if in the
If one is able to increase one’s cherishing of others, then one’s own self-cherishing will be reduced. If one reduces one’s own self-cherishing, then one will be able to obtain both temporary and ultimate happiness.

beginning, for several months for example, we can consistently engage in this practice of cherishing others more than cherishing ourselves, and put others before us.

When we cherish others in this way and put them before ourselves, on a temporary basis we can feel a sense of loss. We might feel like we are losing something by putting someone else before ourselves. But in reality, if we look at it, we have a lot to gain from practicing like this because in the long run, we are getting real happiness. Whether we experience a temporary happiness by cherishing others or whether ultimate happiness is attained through it, in the end there is a great profit for us that comes from being in this practice of cherishing others more than ourselves.

If we are practicing cherishing others, we will see them as more important than ourselves. But sometimes along the way, it might happen that we start to value ourselves more and think, “I’m the one who is really important here.” In particular, because we are practicing mind training, we might think “I am a mind training practitioner, I practice lojong, and therefore I’m very important and precious.” When that kind of mind state arises we should look at that and see how that kind of pride won’t benefit us in any way. Then we should change our minds into thinking “Other sentient beings are very important, very precious, and I’m the worst of all sentient beings because all other sentient beings are like a precious jewel. It’s because of other sentient beings I’m able to attain temporary and ultimate happiness.” We should reflect in this way. Now the second verse states,

Whenever I interact with someone, 
May I view myself as the lowest amongst all,  
And, from the very depths of my heart,  
Respectfully hold others as superior.

This is what is addressed in the second verse and it is primarily associated with abandoning pride. Generally speaking, when pride arises and is present in ourselves, then one isn’t happy because of that pride. One’s mind isn’t at ease and there isn’t a sense of happiness present because what happens is we are not able to see others as more important than ourselves. What we think is “Oh, I’m richer than everybody else. I’m more handsome than others. I’m stronger than everyone else.” We think we have everything when pride is present in us. When that kind of mindstate is present then the positive qualities are not able to arise within the mind and we do great harm to ourselves. When pride is present in our mindstreams, it becomes an obstacle that prevents bodhicitta and other positive qualities from arising. Consequently, we will not be able to understand how others are to be regarded as precious or important. So this second verse was taught by Geshe Langri Thangpa particularly for abandoning pride.

Whenever pride is present in our mindstreams it is though our minds become very full. When pride is present, when we speak with others we don’t do anything but harm them. There won’t be any benefit that comes from our speech with them. Even if we speak in a very good way there will only be harm that comes from the way we interact with others. We might have words that are intended to benefit others but when pride is present, rather than benefitting them we will only harm them. The reason for this is that when we have pride it’s as though our minds become very solid like a big block. So if we are able to reduce our pride even just a little bit then we will be able to benefit others. So if pride is present we should try to reduce that.

If we don’t engage in practice we won’t be able to see pride as a fault. Rather we will see it as a positive quality and see ourselves as important. But if we listen to and contemplate the teachings, we will be able to see pride as a fault. Since the beginning of beginningless samsara we have been seeing faults
as qualities and positive qualities as faults. When we engage in the practice of mind training, it’s important for us to reverse that mentality and understand that pride is a fault.

Then we come to third verse of the text which states,

    In all my deeds may I probe into my mind
    And as soon as mental and emotional afflictions arise
    As they endanger myself and others
    May I strongly confront them and avert them.

Whatever activities we are engaged in, whether it is speaking with someone else, meditating, or working, we always need to examine and analyze our mind to see what is present in our minds. In particular we need to see if any pride or any other kleshas (=mental afflictions) are present. When a klesha arises for us we should be able to say “Ohhh yep I got a klesha.” We need to be able to recognize them in this way. So if anger is present, we need to know that the anger is not going to do any good. Rather, it will only harm oneself and others. Knowing that the presence of kleshas is harmful, we will understand why we need to abandon them. We need to confront them strongly and avert them.

Generally speaking when we speak about aggression there are many types and levels of aggression. Sometimes aggression manifests in a very strong way, sometimes there are more middling types, and then there are just minor irritations. There all kinds of different levels of coarse and subtle aggression. When one is raging with anger, the anger disturbs one’s happiness of body and mind. Even if our aggression is more subtle, then in whatever we do we have a sense of being unsatisfied and unhappy with our current situations. We might think something like, “Oh, they said that awful thing to me,” and we’ll be unhappy in that instance. So wherever we go, all we see are things that are not pleasing to us. All of these are different kinds of aggression.
Another example is if someone does something we don't like and we hold onto that deed they did. We hold a grudge. We might even see holding a grudge as a positive quality. But we need to understand that it is not in any way a positive thing at all and that it's something we need to get rid of. When someone does something bad to us and we hold onto a grudge towards them, this aggression towards that person makes us unhappy as well as makes others unhappy. Therefore, all sentient beings are harmed by the aggression we hold. This is what is addressed here in this third verse, that we need to be aware when such mental afflictions are present and do our best to abandon them.

Generally speaking, there are many different remedies we could employ to abandon our afflictions. The first thing we need to do is see such mental afflictions as problematic, a fault for us. If we see mental afflictions as problematic, then we won't see them as something to hold onto or keep around. It becomes easier for us to abandon them. On the other hand, if we don't see the mental afflictions as a fault then we do tend to hold onto them. That makes it very difficult for us. What we should do is gradually engage in hearing or studying, contemplating, and meditating on these lessons. Then, gradually even very strong or forceful mental afflictions will become weaker and weaker.

Sometimes it comes about that we spend time around people who don't practice. When that happens we might think, “Well, they are not practicing patience so why should I practice patience? They don't have any at all so why should I even try to have it?” We have this way of thinking. “If they do it then I'll do it. If they don't do it then I'm not going to do it.” But what we need to consider here is that one's own happiness comes from oneself and one's own misery likewise comes from oneself. So it's important for us not to focus on others in this case. We should try to tame our own minds. We should try to work with our minds and take our happiness as our own responsibility, not relying on or focusing on others.
The Monastery’s Study & Practice Curriculum

1st Level
Study Text/Subject: 37 Practices of a Bodhisattva
Practices: Prostrations & Vajrasattva

2nd Level
Study Text/Subject: Types of Mind
Practices: Mandala & Guru Yoga

3rd Level
Study Text/Subject: Jewel Ornament of Liberation
Practices: Shinay & Insight Meditation by way of Milarepa Guru Yoga

4th Level
Study Text/Subject: Letter to a Friend
Practice: Gampopa Guru Yoga

5th Level
Study Text/Subject: The Way of the Bodhisattva
Practice: Marpa Guru Yoga

6th Level
Study Text/Subject: Prajnaparamita
Practice: Konchok Chidu

7th Level
Study Text/Subject: Eliminating the Darkness of Ignorance
Practice: Vajravarahi

8th Level
Study Text/Subject: Entering the Middle Way
Practice: Gyalwa Gyatso

9th Level
Study Text/Subject: Abhidharma
Practice: Chakrasmavara

10th Level
Study Text/Subject: The Supreme Continuum
Practice: Amitabha
Dedication

May beings everywhere who suffer
Torment in their minds and bodies
Have, by virtue of my merit,
Joy and happiness in boundless measure.

As long as they may linger in samsara,
May their joy be undiminished;
May they taste unsurpassed beatitude
In constant and unbroken continuity.

Through the spheres and reaches of the world,
In hellish states as many as there are,
May beings who abide there
Taste the bliss and peace of Sukhavati.

May those caught in the freezing ice be warmed,
And from great clouds of Bodhisattvas
Torrents rain in boundless streams
To cool those burning in infernal fires.

Excerpted from Chapter 10 in
Shantideva’s Way of the Bodhisattva
WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Tuesday-Sunday at 9am: Green Tara
Tuesday-Sunday at 4:30pm: Mahakala
Tuesday at 7:30pm: Dungse Lama Pema’s Teaching
Wednesday at 7:30pm: Torma Class
Thursday at 7:30 pm: Tibetan Language Class
Saturday at 10:30am: Chenrezik Practice
Saturday at 1:30 pm: Finding Happiness (Meditation & Buddhism for Everyday Life) with Acharya Tenzin Yonten
Sunday at 10:30am: Medicine Buddha Practice
Sunday at 1:30 pm: Teaching on The Way of the Bodhisattva with Khenpo Sonam

* Schedules are subject to change. Updates will be posted on our website.

CALLING LAMA FROM AFAR and LAMP PRAYER
January 9, March 9, April 7, May 6, June 5, July 3, August 2, September 1, October 30, November 29, December 28

CHOD PRACTICE
January 3, March 4, May 1, May 31, August 27, September 25, October 25, November 23, December 23

LONG MAHAKALA PRACTICE
January 8, February 7, March 8, April 6, June 4, July 3, August 2, August 31, September 29, October 29, November 28, December 27

HEART SUTRA & DZAMBALA PRACTICE
January 23, February 23, March 23, April 22, May 21, June 19, July 19, August 18, November 13, December 13

MONTHLY SCHEDULE

MEDICINE BUDDHA DAY
February 14, March 16, April 14, May 14, June 12, August 11, September 9, October 9, November 6, December 7

GURU RINPOCHE DAY
January 19, February 17, March 18, April 16, May 17, June 14, August 13, September 11, October 11, November 9

YEARLY SCHEDULE

January
15 ~ 17 • 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 benefitted a vast amount of beings. White Tara helps prolong life, overcome obstacles, prevent untimely death, and ultimately helps us attain realization
February
1–7 • 7-DAY MAHAKALA PRAYER
Mahakala is known as a 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. Having fierce and powerful energy, Mahakala takes on different forms and colours.

9 • TIBETAN (LOSAR) AND CHINESE NEW YEAR
Celebrate Tibetan and Chinese New Year with us.

21 • MANJUSHRI EMPOWERMENT
Ordinary beings, such as ourselves, cannot understand the profound meanings of the Buddha and enlightened masters’ teachings. We therefore need the help and explanations of realized guides. Manjushri, the bodhisattva of Wisdom, makes teachings clear and understandable. This empowerment allows us to practice the Manjushri sadhana and develop the wisdom that is needed to ultimately help all living beings.

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 Marpa translated teachings he received in India into Tibetan. The life of his student, Milarepa, continues to inspire people to develop revulsion for samsara and devotion to the Dharma.

1–13 • MEDICINE BUDDHA RETREAT & TEACHING ON THE MEDICINE BUDDHA

A Medicine Buddha weekend retreat is held every year at Thrangu Monastery Canada. The Medicine Buddha embodies the healing qualities of all the Buddhas. By doing this practice with an altruistic mind one cures oneself of the three poisons and can see one’s own healing qualities.

April
1–3 • AMITABHA PRAYERS & MANTRA ACCUMULATIONS FOR LONGEVITY & FOR MAKING DEDICATIONS TO THE DECEASED
The Amitabha practice helps to create the conditions through which beings are born into the pure land of Dewachen. The essential practice in Pure Land Buddhism is chanting the name of Amitabha Buddha with one-pointed concentration, trusting that one will be reborn in Dewachen, where it is much easier for beings to work towards enlightenment.

May
13–15 • JA CHEKAWA YESHE DORJE’S SEVEN POINTS OF MIND TRAINING WITH 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. Lama Pema continues with his yearly teaching on the Seven Points of Mind Training.

13 • 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 clamping. Purifying the mind means to move from ignorance and delusion to awakening.
June
24–26 • NAGARJUNA’S LETTER TO A FRIEND WITH KHENPO TASHI
We are pleased that Khempo Tashi has accepted our invitation to continue his explanation on Nagarjuna’s “Letter to a Friend” that he started in 2015. Nagarjuna wrote this 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 onto the path leading to liberation and enlightenment.

29–31 • THE 3RD KARMAPA RANGJUNG DORJE’S TEACHINGS ON BUDDHA NATURE WITH LOTSAVA KARMA CHOEPHEL
One of the clearest explanations of buddha nature is found in the 3rd Karmapa Rangjung Dorje’s Teachings on Buddha Nature, considered one of his most important works. Lotsawa David Karma Choephel will explain this text and show how an understanding of buddha nature is an essential foundation for the study and practice of mahamudra.

July
8–14 • ANNUAL LONGEVITY PRAYER & GURU RINPOCHE EMPOWERMENT
Thrangu Monastery Canada invites all of Rinpoche’s students to join in longevity prayers. 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”.
This is the year of Guru Rinpoche (Skt. Padmasambhava), the lotus-born 8th-century master who helped establish Buddhism in Tibet. Although his physical body died centuries ago, Guru Rinpoche never ceases to help us. This fully enlightened being teaches, protects, and reveals the profoundest truths and the path to liberation. The empowerment enables us to fully practice the Guru Rinpoche sadhana and achieve the enlightened state of Guru Rinpoche.

August
19 ~ 21 • 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.

September
16–18 • NYUNGNE FASTING PRACTICE
Nyungne is a practice that helps us to quickly purify negative karma and accumulate merit through meditating on 1000-armed Chenrezig. It also aids in healing illness and opening the heart to compassion.
O son, if the root of faith is not firm,  
The root of nonduality will not be firm.  
If you do not develop unbiased compassion,  
The two rupakayas will not be attained.  
--from “The Song of the Twelve Instructions”

30-2 • MAITRIPA’S SONG OF THE 12 INSTRUCTIONS WITH KHENPO LOBSANG
We are honoured that Khenpo Lobsang has agreed to teach students at Thrangu Monastery Canada. Although he has visited before to participate in prayer events, this will be the first time he will bless students by giving textual instructions. These Twelve Instructions, given by Maitripa to Marpa, embody all of key instructions of Mahamudra meditation. Khenpo Lobsang was previously the director at Vajra Vidya Institute and currently resides in Colorado. The depth of his dedication to the Dharma and his warmth will make this teaching meaningful.

October
14-16 • VAJRAYOGINI PRACTICE
The wisdom-deity of Vajrayogini is a manifestation of female enlightened energy. She is no different than luminous wisdom and emptiness itself.

28-30 • THE 3RD KARMAPA RANGJUNG DORJE’S DISTINGUISHING CONSCIOUSNESS FROM WISDOM WITH KHENPO SONAM
Distinguishing Consciousness from Wisdom is an important text on psychology and Buddhist philosophy. The text talks about how the mind works, in a different way from that of modern Western psychology. Khenpo Sonam’s detailed comprehension of Rangjung Dorje’s high-level text will help all students during this second year of instruction.

November
3 • BUDDHA SHAKYAMUNI’S DESCENT FROM TUSHITA HEAVEN (RAIN OF WISDOM)
To repay his mother’s kindness and to 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.

18-20 • 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.

December
9 • BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION FOR THE V.V. THRANGU RINPOCHE
Please 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.

16-18 • DZAMBALA PRACTICE
Dzambala practice allows us to cultivate our generosity and accumulate wealth that will benefit all beings. Dzambala has the power to free beings from poverty and starvation, and lead them towards Buddhahood.

31 • LAMP PRAYER FOR WORLD PEACE
On the last day of 2016, 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.
We all have fears and anxieties. And these fears and anxieties really stem from the fact that samsaric or cyclic existence is fundamentally full of impermanence, and therefore full of suffering. If you ask, is there no way to transcend these fears and anxieties, the answer is, “Yes, there is a way. If you practice dharma, and if, by so doing you connect with the blessings, the compassion, and the aspirations of buddhas such as the Medicine Buddha, fear and anxiety can be transcended…”

-Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche