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Cover photo by Rita Frizzell.

Kindly note: This magazine contains sacred images and should not be disposed of in the trash. It should either be burned or shredded with the remainder going into clean recycling.



ENRIQUE GIRALDO, JR

Venerable Khenpos pet a "snow lion" during the Puerto Rico sangha's 15th anniversary celebration.

Dear Dharma Friends,

Tashi Deleg! To all of you we send our greetings at the start of this the Fire Dog Year along with our sincere wish that the very best will arise for each of you, your friends, and everyone you contact. Thank you very much for your help with the many ongoing PBC projects in this country and elsewhere in the world. Because of your support, everything is developing smoothly. Whatever we achieve, we achieve together and we dedicate it to all beings — those who are here and those who have passed beyond our sight. We dedicate it for worldwide peace among sentient beings and the harmony of the natural elements.

Once again, may all that is good manifest in your lives.

Yours in the Dharma,

Khenchen Palden Sherab Rinpoche
Khenpo Tsewang Dongyal Rinpoche



Journey to Gochen



WHEN STUDENTS JESSICA AND TASHI PALDEN JOURNEYED TO THE VENERABLE KHENPOS' TIBETAN HOMETLAND, IT WAS MORE THAN AN EXCURSION; IT WAS A SACRED PILGRIMAGE.

by Jessica Palden (Padma Changchub), Albany, New York

The first time I saw a photo of the Khenpos, I was staying at my father's house in Maine and my stepmother Mardie (a longtime student) had been talking with me about the dharma. She sensed my sincere interest and led me to her shrine, where I was instantly drawn to a photo of two lamas in red and saffron robes with a knowing twinkle in their eyes. I picked up the frame and said, "How can I meet them?" Soon after we drove to Manhattan to attend teachings at John Giorno's loft on the Bowery, and when I saw the Khenpos tears of joy rolled down my cheeks as I experienced a homecoming like none other before. Little did I know that sixteen years later I would have the extraordinary homecoming experience of making a pilgrimage to my root Lamas' birthplace.

The Road to Doshul

The road to the Doshul region of Kham is not an easy one; in fact, there is no road. It's completely off the map. When we first went to Tibet two summers ago, I told my husband Tashi that I wanted to travel to Doshul and make a pilgrimage to Gochen Monastery, which lies at the foot of the great white glacier mountain Jowo Zegyal. He replied, "Yes, Jessie" (as he always does). Unfortunately, we did not get there that year because our two-month trip to Tibet was mostly spent running around from one office to another, and waiting in-between to secure the proper visas. When we finally arrived in Riwoche, we had only three weeks left before we had to return home. Naively, I thought that three weeks was plenty of time to visit Doshul for a few days. We went to pay our respects to the local lama, Thenby Gyaltzen, and I asked him to do a *mo* for us. He told us that this was not the right time for the journey to Doshul. As determined as I was, I knew we could not disobey the lama's advice. We would have to wait until next year.

This past summer we arrived in Riwoche only one week after leaving the States. That left us five weeks to get to Doshul. Tashi's brother Puntsok took charge of contacting the Khenpos' paternal cousin, Kunzang Lodro. There are no phones in Doshul, so messages have to be sent in person, which takes three days or so. He found Kunzang Lodro's nephew, who is a student there, and asked him to deliver the message that

Khenpos' students from *Ari* (Tibetan for America) wanted to come to Doshul. We would drive as far as we could and then we would need horses to carry us and our provisions the rest of the way. Kunzang Lodro graciously made the arrangements and the meeting date was set. We packed up the truck and were accompanied by thirteen happy companions, none of whom had ever made the pilgrimage to Zigi (the local name for Jowo Zegyal) before, but all of whom knew the merit gained would be vast.

The drive took twice as long as planned due to the notoriously bumpy roads. We parked the truck where the road and phone lines stopped and unloaded it. We were met by two of Kunzang Lodro's brothers who had come down from Doshul with seven horses, three for us to ride and four to carry our provisions. Our companions all had to go by foot. The beginning of our first day on horseback was spent in the pouring rain. Our daughter Maura, then three years old, was rocked safely to sleep on the pommel of our saddle under a huge rubber poncho. We were hand led up the valley along a rolling glacier river.

The small Tibetan horses were amazingly strong and nimble; they managed to climb over huge white boulders at least four feet high for lengths at a time. I remembered Khenchen Palden Sherab describing the road conditions as he reminisced about riding down from Doshul to Riwoche for Shedra. Although he had described the boulders just as they were, it's an experience that needs to be seen to be believed. Along the way we stopped to receive blessings from the various stupas, stone carvings, and self-emanating deities and dragons in the cliffs. When it stopped raining, Maura awoke to the wondrous display of a self-emanating Buddha in a terra cotta cliff ahead of us and exclaimed "Ama, I see Buddha!"

Arriving in the Homeland of the Lamas

We arrived after nightfall in Doshul at Kunzang Lodro's house. He brought us into his home and provided us with a full Tibetan buffet spread: tea, *tsampa*, yak meat, butter, *chura* (dried cheese), yogurt, and kapsi. As is customary, everyone in our party was shy and ate from their own provisions, but Kunzang Lodro insisted that we all enjoy the food. I looked up on the wall and saw the Guru Rinpoche thangka that the Khenpos had printed

Opposite page: Vintage photos of the Venerable Khenpos' home area from their private collection. *Top:* The snow-covered peaks of Jowo Zegyal, the sacred mountain above Gochen Monastery. *Below left:* The remains of Gochen Monastery, at the foot of Jowo Zegyal. *Below right, top:* Venerable Khenchen Palden Rinpoche's birthplace. *Below right, bottom:* White Milk Lake, a sacred lake in the area connected with Chenrezig, which has medicinal properties. The sand is golden colored and, when placed on the tongue, melts like butter. *Following:* Photos on the following pages are provided courtesy of Jessica and Tashi Palden.



for their students in 2000 and felt at home. We woke up the next morning and presented Kunzang Lodro and his family with letters from the Khenpos, photos of Pema Samye Ling, the Miracle Stupa in Shravasti, and the monastery in Sarnath, and copies of *Pema Mandala*. Kunzang Lodro immediately placed the issue of *Pema Mandala* with the Khenpos on the cover upon his shrine. He then beckoned me to follow him with my video camera to come outside to film a message from him for Khenpos. In the late morning, we packed the horses for the second half of the journey to Gochen. Kunzang Lodro sent his eldest grandson along with us to help with the horse herding.

When we arrived at the top of the green but treeless plateau and set up camp, many pilgrims were gathering to do *khora* (circumambulation) practice the following day, Dakini Day. Khampas rode in from all over, from both Riwoche and Nangchen. There was enough daylight left to visit the monastery, so we walked up to the humble two-floor stone-walled structure that looked like it had arisen naturally out of the stony cliffs behind it. The resident lama, Kunchok Samphel, came out to greet us. We had met him the summer before when he had come down to Riwoche to show us some of Gochen's precious relics, which we photographed for the Khenpos. He was pleased to see us and invited us into his room. We gave him the letter from the Khenpos, which expresses their desire to bring the local community together in an effort to start a reconstruction project for the monastery. He then led us to meet the resident Puja Master, who took a minute from his afternoon Dharmapala practice to meet us. He told us that he knew Khenchen Palden when Rinpoche was just a small boy living at the monastery. The lama then showed us the protective deities of Jowo Zegyal in order to bless us for the following day's journey up and around the white glacier mountain. We visited the simple shrine room, where one of our companions offered two *thangkas* to the monastery. We were told that Namchak Tulku (the current reincarnation of Tsasum Lingpa) was expected to arrive any day, and that the timing in delivering Khenpos' letter was auspicious. Maura and I went outside and sat down for a bit while Tashi stayed inside the monastery and spoke with the lama. An old woman sat down with us and began to talk in a very animated way, and her story drew quite a crowd. I wondered who this woman with quite a gift for gab

was, and why she had sat down with us. We returned to our tents and fell asleep quickly, as we were already tired from the three-day journey and knew that the horses could take us no further.

Circumambulating the Sacred Mountain

We arose at four-thirty AM in the pitch dark and started our *khora* around Jowo Zegyal with flashlights in hand. I carried Maura in a Kelty pack, but my female companions soon took over. I naively thought I would be able to pull my child and myself up these mountains. Thankfully, I had three Tibetan dakinis beside me to help. Kunzang Lodro and others back in Riwoche had tried to convince me to stay at the foot of the mountain and forego the climb. They all said that Zigi was an ambitious climb and that many Tibetans have had to turn back or worse. They said that the altitude was very high and that no foreigner had ever attempted the climb. I listened to their concerns, but my devotion and faith in my Lamas' protection drove me on. Had I come all the way to Jowo Zegyal only to miss doing *khora* around it? After a couple of hours of walking in the dark, the sun rose and we were able to quicken our pace. We were the first pilgrims to start out that morning, but were quickly passed by many others who were literally skipping up the mountain, dressed in their Sunday best. We westerners have all sorts of specialized gear for mountain climbing; Tibetans get dressed for a festival. Each of the pilgrims who passed us stuck out their tongue in greeting and then continued to sing their beautiful *mani* prayers. I listened in awe of their ability to sing while enduring such physical exertion. Our group had split up at this point. The younger and faster teenagers were up ahead and I would not see them again until the end of the day. The older members were behind but I often took breaks to catch my breath and converse as I waited for them. We snacked on yak meat, *tsampa*, and *chura*. I wondered how Maura was doing. She was far up ahead of me at this point.

After four hours we arrived at the peak of the mountain. I thought to myself, "That wasn't so bad, what was all the fuss about?" Then Tashi told me we had only arrived at the first and easiest summit, and there were four more ahead, each progressively harder. I was pretty angry to say the least. I exclaimed, "What?! You mean we're climbing five mountains today? I



thought we were climbing Mount Zegyal, not his whole family!” I now understood why Puntsok always held up his hand palm facing up with his five fingers pointing up to the sky as he talked about Zigi. In order to circumambulate Jowo Zegyal, one has to climb up and down the five mountains that surround it. So I had my dharma practice cut out for me the rest of the day. As difficult as the rest of the climb was, something magical pulled me along. The raw rugged energy of the mountain dispelled my anger and every moment of the khora was enjoyable, even the pounding descents.

There is a huge Guru Rinpoche statue with 108 stupas near this first summit. We did not have time to climb there, as we had to keep moving at a steady pace in order to make it back by nightfall. Looking at the view, I suddenly recognized where we were. I remembered a sculpture Khenchen Palden had made out of clay at Mardie’s house in Maine, which depicted exactly the place where I was standing at that very moment! We were standing on top of the mountain looking into a gorgeous valley. Beneath us were huge boulders that spilled down into the green valley below. I could make out the silhouettes of black yak-hair tents dotting the grass. I asked if the nomads below were related to the Khenpos and was told that yes, indeed, this is the exact valley where the Khenpos spent their summers with their father, mother, and sisters. I imagined a young Khenchen Palden bounding up the huge boulders to climb up the sidewall of Jowo Zegyal, remembering his stories about how he would spend his days running around the mountain. I now understood firsthand why his childhood nickname was Cyclone; this rigorous climb to any seasoned mountaineer was a backyard playground for Khenchen Rinpoche.

Halfway through the adventure we were on the backside of the mountain, where we sat down for a lunch break. We finished our lunch quickly, as the wind was blowing strongly and the temperature was dropping. We could see many magical glacier lakes and the white glacier peak of Jowo Zegyal, which was up close now. We passed a black wall with many strange markings on it, and a local lama who had joined our group told us that this is where a local dharmapala named Damchan does his metal work — the wall functions as his anvil.

By the time we reached the Dolma Pass the weather had

changed. The rain came down in heavy sheets. We were all soaked. We had to take extra care to climb the boulder cliff as the footing was now slippery. I worried for Maura as I sensed her fear and sang Tara’s mantra for protection.

Soon the rain stopped and we continued up to the last ascent: a muddy *nyelwa*. According to Tibetan custom, the different stages of a khora have different names, and *nyelwa* is the hardest stage because at that point, toward the end of the khora, the pilgrims are at their weakest. Oddly enough, I remember this being the easiest part of the climb for me. Tashi said that everyone was amazed at how easily I passed through *nyelwa*. We were filled with joy to reach the fifth and final summit. We joked and sang and talked about how good it was going to be to lie down in our tents and rest our weary legs. Little did we know that a three-hour walk lay ahead before we could rest.

Night was slowly falling and we were cold, tired, and wet. We walked alongside a never-ending lake and were passed by the last pilgrims who had probably started out hours after us. One young woman walked beside me and asked where I was from and what I was doing there. Her Tibetan was easier for me to understand, as she spoke to me in the Lhasa dialect instead of her native Khampa dialect. We quickly learned that we had one degree of separation between us when I told her I was there through the blessings of Khenchen Palden Sherab Rinpoche. She shrieked with joy and said that she was a close friend of Kalzang, a cousin of the Khenpos who lives in India and whom I met in Sarnath six years ago. She was also pleased to learn that my husband is Tibetan and immediately shared this information with her mother, who had been peacefully spinning her *mani* wheel all the while. We continued to talk as we walked and her presence helped me to forget my tired legs for awhile until she and her mother split off in another direction.

Reflecting on the Lamas from Afar

We finally arrived back at our tents just before nightfall. My legs collapsed beneath me and I fell into my tent. Maura screamed with glee when she saw me. “Ama! Ama! I fast! I fast!” She had finished the khora well over an hour before me and took great pleasure in the fact. She was happily eating ramen noodles and hot dogs. Tashi came into our small tent

followed by his brother, a friend, two Tibetan nomad children, and the old woman I had seen the day before outside the monastery. “Om Chung Ma wants you to film her message to the Khenpos, Jessie.”

Everyone squeezed into the tent and found a seat on top of one another as I got out the camera. I was tired, hungry, and annoyed that I had to record another video. The wind had really picked up at this point and it started to howl, shaking our tiny tent and rustling the plastic tarp draped over it. The talkative old lady was Kunzang Lodro’s sister, thus another paternal cousin of the Khenpos. After finding us yesterday, she had started to transmit the family history, but I had been unaware of who she was. As I had missed my opportunity in the daylight, I had no choice but to film her that night in our tent in the middle of a windstorm. Om Chung Ma had no problem projecting her voice over the fierce mountain wind and I wondered in awe at her ability to speak continuously without seeming to take a breath at any point. She recounted the family history and reminisced about the Khenpos and their father, and she cried as she spoke of their leaving for India years ago. She said she couldn’t tell the Khenpos to return, for it is not her place, but she wishes they would. The battery ran out just as Om Chung Ma’s finished her message. (The Khenpos later told us that Khenchen Palden had named her “Om Chung Ma” when he was a little boy; the nickname evidently stuck.) We said goodbye to everyone and ate our cold ramen noodles before settling down to a much needed night’s sleep.

We awoke the next morning sore and bruised, but in the good spirits that arise from a feeling of great accomplishment and blessing. Kunzang Lodro’s grandson herded up the horses and we packed up the loads and rode back down to Kunzang Lodro’s house. We had a picnic outside his house and enjoyed the afternoon. Many of our companions enjoyed celebrating with the help of Kunzang Lodro’s homemade *chang*. Kunzang Lodro and his younger brother Gadi asked me to tell them how I met the Khenpos and recount some of my experiences with them. I was greatly touched by their request and spoke from my heart as Tashi translated. Tears of joy welled up as I described the deep devotion that hundreds of western students and I have for the Khenpos. I gave examples of their immeasurable kindness to all of us and Kunzang Lodro soon had tears in his eyes as well. They thanked me for sharing my story with them and I thanked them for opening their hearts and homes to us.

Gadi asked us to ride up to his house to see Khenchen Palden Rinpoche’s actual birthplace, which I had read about in Khenchen’s book, “The Smile of Sun and Moon.” When we arrived at Gadi’s house, he pointed to a mountain with a small

spring emanating from it and the top of a cliff, whose formations resemble two deities in tantric embrace. He explained that this is a self-emanating Dorje Phalmo *yab yum*, and it was here that our precious teacher was born.

Racing the Wild Horses of Kham

After visiting at Gadi’s house for a while, we rode back to Kunzang Lodro’s house. During all this time we had spent on horseback, I had allowed Maura and myself to be hand-led. Being an experienced equestrienne, I longed to ride free and see what these wild Tibetan ponies were really like. I asked Gadi to let me ride alone, but he said it wasn’t a good idea and the rest of the family agreed. I asked Tashi to explain that I was capable and after much persistence I won out. This resulted in the whole family dressing up in their finest *chubas* and fox fur hats to have a horse race right there in the field in front of Kunzang Lodro’s house. At first everyone watched as I fought to ride free of Gadi’s hold on my horse’s reins. He rode alongside me and after one short minute of riding at a hurried trot with Gadi close at my side, he pleaded with me to stop and dismount. (Even if I were to fall, the distance to the ground from a short Tibetan pony’s back is not that far.) Although unsatisfied, I had compassion for him and the rest of the family who were so fearful for my safety. The family all agreed that I knew how to ride, but even so they insisted that the horses were far too wild for me to be able to stop them if I had ridden any further.

After my short jaunt, the Doshul Khampas, four brothers in their full regalia, mounted their horses and raced back and forth across the meadow while we all cheered and laughed. As the sun set, we gathered inside and reminisced and joked about the adventure that was drawing to a close. We all teased one of the members of our group who had declared at the onset of the journey that he was planning to circumambulate Jowo Zegyal two times for greater merit. We told him he was welcome to go back tomorrow for another turn and we’d gladly wait for him in the comfort of Kunzang Lodro’s home, but he gave no reply.

The next morning we woke up with the sun, packed up the horses one final time, and rode back to the truck for the trip to Riwoche. Tashi and I were already planning our return to Gochen this coming summer to witness the reconstruction of the monastery. We will be bringing a digital video camera to document the project. (And I’ll be bringing my show jumping photos to prove I am not full of hot air about riding those wild ponies.) We are hoping to meet Tsasum Lingpa’s incarnation Namchak Tulku this time. Most important of all, we are making aspiration prayers that the Khenpos will return themselves one day soon so that Om Chung Ma can talk to them in person. What an amazing homecoming that will be. ■



Cutting Demons & Obstacles

A TEACHING BY KHENCHEN PALDEN SHERAB RINPOCHE & KHENPO TSEWANG DONGYAL RINPOCHE

This selection is from the Longchen Nyingtik Chöd teachings given by the Venerable Khenpos in Grant, New Mexico, in July 1991.

Chöd is a Tibetan word that means “cutting through.” According to the Dzogchen teachings, the view of Chöd is the same as the view of Dzogchen. Chöd practice is actually the practice of *Trekchö*, which means “cutting thoroughly” or “cutting instantly.” With *Trekchö* and Chöd practices, we are cutting through confusion instantly and directly, without giving it a second chance. We are not going to say *mañana* or next year, but we are going to eliminate our confusion right now.

MACHIG LABDRON IMAGE USED WITH THE KIND PERMISSION OF DHARMA MEDIA.

Qualities of a Chöd Practitioner

For students want to do Chöd practice, four characteristics are needed. The first the correct view, a good understanding of the true nature. This is the skylike view, free from doubt and hesitation. The second quality is infinite compassion for all sentient beings. This compassion is without partiality and expands to all living beings in all directions. Thirdly, you need the lineage blessings, instructions, and perfect samaya. And fourthly, you must have continuous joyful effort and devotion to the teachings.

A Chöd practitioner also needs to have the fearless attitude of vajra courage. In order to directly cut through confusion, practitioners need great confidence, great joy, and great effort. People who have these qualities are perfectly qualified to do Chöd. If you do not have all these as yet, then at least you need to have devotion, joyful effort, courage, and commitment.

What Is Being Cut

There are many different ways of talking about what we will cut in our practice; foremost, it is our ego-clinging. Our self-importance is the main target.

The second thing to be cut is our dualistic conceptions. This refers to the way we discriminate between subject and object, the way we separate our inner mind from outer objects. We usually make big distinctions, almost to the point of fighting a war between subject and object. This sense of duality is the second target of our cutting thoroughly.

The third target of our cutting is the notion of solid existence, the belief that what we name or label is real. This arises from our fully not analyzing or investigating reality. So, solid existence is the third target.

The fourth target is our belief in characteristics. We think, “This is blue. That is white. This is small. That is yellow. This is high and that is low.” We identify the characteristics of things, but those characteristics are just our fabrications. We need to cut through all the different characteristics we identify with.

Among all these objects, the last one — our belief in characteristics — is the strongest and most difficult to cut through. We really believe in the characteristics of the relative level and the absolute level. We think that samsara and nirvana have their own characteristics, and we cling to them as true. We may think that holding on to these characteristics is great, but that clinging deceives us. We simply fall to one side or the other in

our habitual patterns. All the characteristics we identify with need to be cut.

Recognizing the Four Demons

There are several other ways of looking at what has to be cut or removed. The great masters of the Chöd lineage, such as Machik Labdrön and Phadampa Sangye, broke down ego-clinging into four parts, which are called the “the four demons.” The four demons are really the same as the four targets mentioned above. They are described using different words because hearing different words can bring a clearer understanding of the meaning. It is very important to be able to recognize the four demons. Once you recognize them, then you can begin to transcend them.

The two ways of describing the four demons, according to the general Buddhist teachings and according to the special practice of Chöd, are given as follows.

The Four Demons According to the Sutras

Buddha Shakyamuni taught the first way of categorizing the four demons in the sutras, and these four demons are also part of the Vajrayana teachings. These four demons are the demon of the aggregates, the demon of death, the demon of the emotions, and the demon of distraction. They are called demons because they are obstacles to us on the relative level of samsara. They keep us from succeeding at what we really aspire to. Most people think that someone who aids them is like a god, and someone who obstructs them is like a demon. That is why these obstacles are called the four demons.

The first demon is our aggregates. On the simplest level, the aggregates are our body and mind. Maybe you wonder why these would be obstacles; it is because they keep us from accomplishing our spiritual activities. There is a saying in the villages of Tibet: “This body is not very big; it is just the length of one’s outstretched arms. This mouth is also very small. The mind is even smaller; it is so small that we cannot even see it. However, we find ourselves always working for this small body, this small mind, and this small mouth.”

We are permanently employed, from the time we are born until the time we die, in giving full service to this invisible mind, tiny mouth, and body the length of our outstretched arms. Of course, we do not think of it that way. Instead we say, “I am so busy. I have to do this, and then I have to do that.” We use different words, but if we look closely, what we are working for and what keeps us busy is our body and mind. We are so busy serving them that we do not have time for spiritual practice. We

may feel devotion and aspire to benefit beings, but we do not actualize these longings. So, the aggregates are an obstruction because they take us away from our primary goal.

The second demon is death. Death is a major obstacle to fulfilling our intentions and wishes. Nobody wants to go through that transition, but the experience of death is inevitable. We do not know when, where, or under what circumstances we will take that journey. Whatever the circumstances are, we cannot stop them from happening. Death is coming to everyone, but everything else about it is completely unclear. That unclear aspect is known as ignorance.

Death is powerful and urgent. Even if you have a wonderful motivation and a wonderful practice, death takes you away. Even if you just started a great project and are on the road to success, you still have to leave. You have to go. You have no way to put death off by saying, “Let me wait a little while. I will go later.” You cannot really say that to death. Instantly and unexpectedly, you are caught. Death interrupts all your activities. That is why it is called a demon.

The third is the demon of the emotions. This demon is even stronger than the first two demons. The emotions are the main engine or driving force behind all the other demons. In fact, the reason that the aggregates and death manifest is mostly because of the emotions. In addition to calling the emotions a demon, the Buddha used another metaphor for them: poison. The three poisons are ignorance, attachment, and anger.

On the basis of these three poisons, other poisonous emotions develop. When you are successful, you naturally develop pride or arrogance. You feel so special that you swell up, like using baking powder. Once you develop arrogance, then the next poison arises, which is jealousy. Everyone has a tendency to be jealous, but mostly it arises along with arrogance. When you see that someone is going to be more successful than you, you fear that you will lose out to them, and you become jealous.

These five emotions do not always arise in order. Ignorance is definitely the ground, and attachment comes next. Then, either anger and jealousy or anger and pride might appear together. All these emotions are big obstacles. They make us restless, and they obstruct us from fulfilling our goals. They also create problems for others. These obstacles do not allow any peace or joy in our minds. They are truly demonic. They make us engage in negative actions or karmic activities. It is due to the combination of karma and the emotions that we create our

whole experience of samsara.

The fourth demon is the demon of distraction, sometimes called the demon of beauty. This demon is subtle and hard to notice. Even the highest practitioners can be deceived by the demon of distraction or beauty. It can arise when you feel that you have achieved something. You do not see that feeling as a distraction; however, it has already distracted you. You may recognize it later, but by then it is too late — and you are experiencing the karmic result of that obstacle.

This demon is called the demon of beauty when you get carried away by external luxuries and beautiful sense objects. You see them as so attractive, so nice, but inwardly they are distracting you from loving-kindness, from compassion, and from meditation. Without any difficulty, you are almost uprooted from your spiritual life and carried off in another direction. Even great practitioners can be carried away by this, so there is always a need for mindfulness.

The Four Demons of Chöd

The Chöd practice has a special set of four demons to be eliminated. They are not totally different than the previous group; they are another way of describing the same thing, which is basically our ego-clinging. According to Chöd, the four demons are the demon of obstruction, the unobstructed demon, the demon of exhilaration, and the demon of pride.

The demon of obstruction, the first Chöd demon, refers to external obstacles, to anything in the outer world that causes an obstacle to your practice. This demon exists in a form perceived through your sense organs. It includes the four elements of earth, water, fire, and wind, and wild animals like tigers, leopards, snakes, and scorpions. Human beings, such as your enemies, can also cause big obstacles. Even your family and friends can obstruct your realization. All these are included in the demon of obstruction.

The second Chöd demon is called “unobstructed.” Unlike the demon of obstruction, which appears as a material object, the unobstructed demon appears only in your mind. It refers to your mental conceptions, your thoughts and emotions. For example, when you have a positive thought, you feel happy. You might regard that thought as divine, like a god. When you have a negative thought, like anger or fear, you feel unhappy. You might regard that thought as a demon. When the mind is in this dualistic state, it is constantly going up and down. The thoughts and emotions are called “unobstructed” because they are insub-

stantial. However, they are also demonic because they disturb the mind, and they prevent spiritual growth and realization.

The demon of exhilaration, the third Chöd demon, is connected with hope and expectation. Sometimes, when you experience results from your practice, you get very excited. At the same time, you want something more. You feel very important and very special. You think that you might not need to practice anymore. You may develop the expectation that the world will recognize your achievement and now you will be praised and honored. This exhilaration affects your ability to meditate and visualize; thus, it really weakens your spiritual practice. This kind of excitement is definitely an obstacle.

The fourth Chöd demon is pride. Jealousy and anger are the two ministers of this demon. Once you have pride, there will soon be jealousy, anger, and active attachment. For example, you might have some sudden realization from your Chöd practice. Then you may feel that you are very important. You may not really care very much about others, but feel that you are successful and superior to everyone else. You become a spiritual yuppie. This is how the fourth Chöd demon of pride works.

Finding the Four Demons

We do not have to search elsewhere for the four demons. We do not need radar to find them. The obstacles or demons are right here. No matter what conceptions we have, no matter what realizations we have, if we start clinging and holding onto any of them, they are demons. Anything we cling to is an obstacle.

It is important to understand that the demon does not exist externally. You should not expect to see a demon outside, like some stranger haunting your doorway at twilight, staring at you with one eye. This demon is not some weird creature that is going to come and attack you. The demon has no existence of its own; it does not exist by itself. It exists because of your clinging. It resides within your own mind. The biggest demon of all is the grasping mind of ego-clinging.

According to the Buddha's teachings, as long as we have grasping and clinging we will have demons — we will have obscurations. It is very important that we recognize our confusion. We need to know how much ego-clinging we have, where it is, and what it is doing. Once we can see the demons, then we can cut them. When we practice Chöd, we should not miss the target. We have to work to remove our grasping and clinging. Ritual implements and ceremony are part of Chöd practice, but they are only the outer, symbolic aspect. They are symbols

of thoroughly cutting through and removing the four demons instantly, the moment they appear.

How to Cut Ego-Clinging

When we use the cutting techniques of Chöd, we are working to remove our clinging and smash our dualistic conceptions. We are subduing them by cutting them instantly. As soon as any concept or emotion arises in your mind, whether it is good or bad, cut it instantly by applying your understanding of non-duality. For example, in Western countries, loneliness is a common feeling. Do not allow the feeling of loneliness to grow stronger and stronger in your mind. Cut it instantly. The moment it arises, cut through it. Every thought, whether it is joyful or frightening or whatever, has to be cut right here, right now. All conceptions must be cut.

What weapons do we use to cut them? We don't need any weapons or soldiers. We don't need nuclear bombs or missiles, swords, bows and arrows, or any of those things. So, how are we going to do it? In Chöd practice, we use the sound of PHAT. This is a Sanskrit syllable made of two letters, PHA and TA, which are joined to make the syllable PHAT. These two letters contain profound meaning. PHA is the letter that symbolizes great compassion. TA is the letter that symbolizes wisdom. So PHAT symbolizes the inseparable union of wisdom and compassion. The moment we chant PHAT, if we strongly invoke great compassion and wisdom within our mind, it will cut through our ego-clinging.

When we join wisdom and compassion together, we are not putting wisdom on one side and compassion on the other. They are in one single state. The Buddha said that the wisdom of great emptiness and the skillful means of compassion must be united. Both of them are equally important. When you do your meditation, you can first meditate on great emptiness, and then generate love and compassion for all beings. Or you can focus on emptiness in meditation, and generate thoughts of love and compassion in post-meditation. Another approach is to start with bodhichitta, then meditate on emptiness, and then unite them. These are methods that will enable us to cut all the demons and obstacles.

It is important to know that if we meditate only on love and compassion, without seeing the emptiness nature, we can fall back into grasping and clinging. If we practice only on the wisdom of emptiness, without having bodhichitta, then emptiness becomes very dry and can end up as nihilism. If we fall to either side, it is a mistake because the true nature is beyond those

extremes. Thus the Buddha and other great masters taught that we should always mingle bodhichitta, love, and compassion with the understanding of great emptiness. Then we will be able to truly meditate and do Chöd practice.

Realizing Great Equanimity

The essential focus of Chöd is to bring all extremes into one single state. This is the nondual state of great equanimity. In the true nature, samsara and nirvana are equal; dirty and clean are equal; high and low are equal; happiness and sorrow are equal. If this is true, then why do so many divisions appear? They appear because of ego-clinging. Our dualistic thinking creates all those distinctions.

Now we are going beyond those boundaries. Great practitioners of Chöd equalize high and low, dirty and clean. They equalize the eight worldly concerns. Usually, in terms of the eight worldly concerns, we want happiness rather than suffering; we want to be praised rather than blamed; we want to achieve rather than fail; we want to have a good reputation rather than a bad one. As long as we have these eight worldly concerns, no matter what we do, we never feel quite right. There is always something uncomfortable, something unbalanced. The great master Longchenpa said that these eight worldly concerns are like a sick person's pillow. If it is high, it is not right; if it is low, it is not right. It is always a little off.

Chöd practitioners equalize these eight worldly concerns. They stop making distinctions. This does not mean that they become stupid or ignorant. They see that whatever happens is completely equal in the true nature. Whatever arises, that's great. If somebody is praising them, that's great; if somebody is blaming them, that's great. Real practitioners understand and accept that everything appears in the single state of great equality.

If you have this attitude, you will always be joyful and never be upset. This is because you see that everything is transforming and changing within the true nature, which is free from dualistic notions.

By accomplishing the Chöd practice, we can definitely have great realization in this lifetime. We do not have to wait until the bardo or the next life. In this life, we can remove all the obstructions to enlightenment. ■

Edited by Ann Helm, Padma Samye Ling

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Pema Mandala is entirely dependent upon the generosity, devotion, and joyful effort of PBC friends and sangha members, and we invite all our readers to subscribe. Produced by volunteers on a very small budget, every penny of your subscription goes toward the printing and mailing of the magazine. Those who become Patrons or Sponsors of *Pema Mandala* help us expand with more pages and color printing.

Pema Mandala is published twice a year by Padmasambhava Buddhist Center under the direction of Khenchen Palden Sherab Rinpoche and Khenpo Tsewang Dongyal Rinpoche.

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The Purification Practice of Nyungne

by Dolly Carlisle (Pema Rangsz) and David Hinton
(Pema Namdrol), Nashville, TN

For everyone who has attended a Nyungne retreat offered by the Venerable Khenpos or Ani Lorraine, it has been a powerful experience and an important part of their journey along the Buddhist path. Nyungne is a practice designed to purify negative karma and enable the participant to accumulate merit and wisdom. It is a rigorous practice that combines fasting, silence, recitations, and prostrations over two and a half days.

Longtime practitioner Diane Avice du Buisson of Nashville, TN feels that the rigors of the retreat, including the fasting and the silence, are of great benefit to the participants. Discussing her experience, she said, “The Nyungne retreat provides a rare opportunity to watch the mind as the body adjusts to the absence of some of the most basic things that we are involved with every day. So much of our time is spent thinking about, preparing, and consuming food. Additional energy is spent talking. To give ourselves a body holiday from these activities is an unusual relief while the beautiful and melodious chanting of the Avalokiteshvara mantra fulfills each participant in a way that one hundred feasts cannot.”

The idea of Nyungne retreat as a true retreat, away from the cares and concerns of everyday life, is echoed by Melisa Applegate of Lake Worth, FL, who has attended four Nyungne retreats with Ani Lorraine. After noting that, for her, each



*Eleven-faced Chenrezig statue in the Dharmakaya shrineroom
at Padma Samye Ling's Gompa.*

retreat built on the experience of the previous retreat, she commented that “It’s rare that we have the opportunity to totally withdraw from worldly concerns and devote each and every moment to spiritual practice. To have the right teacher, the right conditions, and the opportunity to do so is an incredible gift!”

As the body and mind melt into the rhythms of the practice, Nashville sangha member Stacey Andersen remarked that “I had some very important insights about some of my deeply rooted conditioned behavior. When they were no longer obscured, I had the opportunity to change my behavior.” Stacey plans to attend the next Nyungne retreat offered in Nashville because “It gives me a good opportunity to generate merit and overcome negative karma.” Although she recommends the retreat to all of the Khenpos’ students, she cautions that new participants need to be aware of what the retreat involves

“because it’s quite intense. When those negative obscurations come to light it can be overwhelming sometimes.”

That sentiment is reinforced by the experience of Alan Pope of Carrollton, GA at a Nyungne retreat given by the Khenpos several years ago at Padme Samye Ling. Alan recounts, “The Nyungne retreat was a challenging experience, to be sure, but its impact on my life was huge. After struggling through feeling dehydrated — and almost fainting during prostrations — I was



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The Nyungne practice of Avalokiteshvara (Chenrezig), the Buddha of compassion, is a purification achieved through silence and fasting. This profound teaching on eleven-faced Avalokiteshvara was transmitted through the stainless lineage of a great accomplished female master, Gelongma Palmo. Practicing it with great devotion will increase peace, happiness, and fortune and fulfill all wishes in this life. In the next life it will bring rebirth in Dewachen, the pure land of great bliss.

Left: Ani Gelongma Palmo from the mural paintings in the Gonpa at Padma Samye Ling.

Top: Om Mani Padme Hung calligraphy by Khenpo Tsewang Dongyal Rinpoche.

on my cushion during the group practice, near the end of the retreat. Unbidden, a line from the sadhana illuminated the sudden recognition of my participation in the disharmonious relationships I had had with my (now deceased) parents. I found myself plunged into a deep feeling of remorse that reached peak intensity just moments before Khenpo Tsewang snapped his fingers to end the retreat. Since that time, I have not felt the slightest hint of blame or negativity toward my parents. Something was profoundly lifted from me, and I am still moved by the transformative power of that experience.”

As always during a retreat with the Khenpos, the powerful solemnity of the practice is matched by the joyous humor radiating from our teachers. Alan described his experience at the end of the fast: “Everyone rose from their cushions to eat breakfast which, to my surprise, consisted of omelets and bagels.

There was no way I could digest such heavy food after two days of fasting! I simply sat there and watched with amazement as others dug in. Khenpo Tsewang noticed me and signaled for me to come over. ‘Khenpo,’ I said, ‘how can everyone eat so much food after fasting?’ He smiled and joyfully rubbed his belly with both hands, laughing, ‘We have been building our digestive fire!’ ‘Ohhhhh,’ I said. Emboldened, I ate breakfast and my belly digested just fine.”

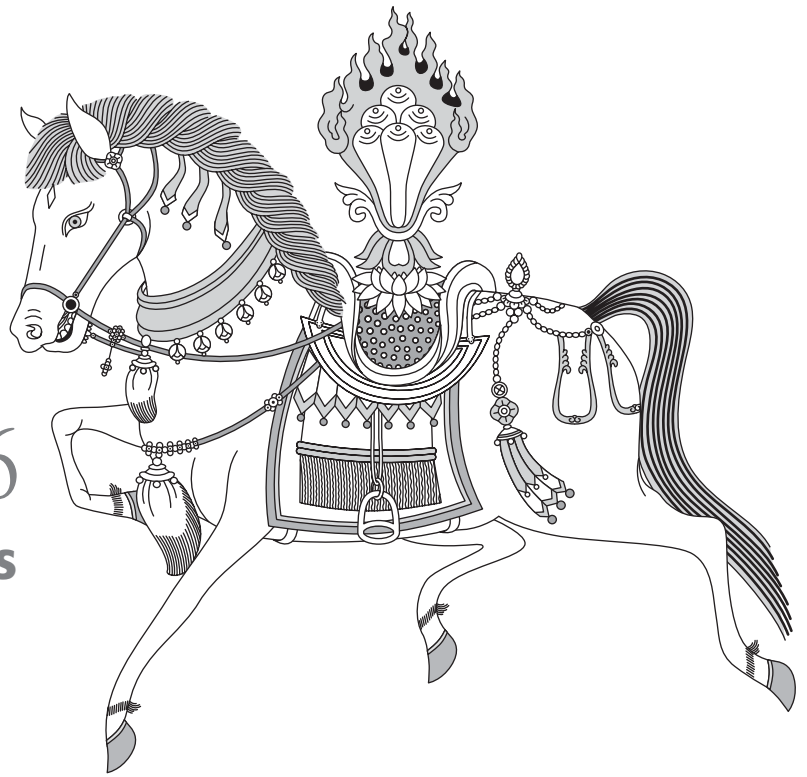
Yolanda Giraldo of Puerto Rico summarized her experience of the Nyungne retreat: “The practice is so heartfelt that I realized tears had been flowing from my eyes all throughout this practice, it was so beautiful.” ■

See the schedule on the following page for upcoming Nyungne retreats with the Venerable Khenpos and Ani Lorraine.

**PADMASAMBHAVA
BUDDHIST CENTER**

**spring/
summer 2006**

SCHEDULE OF TEACHINGS



**RAISING THE VICTORY BANNER OF
GOODNESS AND VIRTUE**

**Empowerment of and Teachings on
Lord Buddha Maitreya**

May 27–29 • Padma Samye Ling

Maitreya, the loving protector of all beings, is now the regent of Buddha Shakyamuni and will be the fifth of the One Thousand Buddhas of this Fortunate Aeon. The teachings will tell the story of how in previous times he completed the activities of a bodhisattva and recount the excellent aspirations he made.

When the glory of springtime is bursting forth, we'll raise the wind horse and five-color victory banners drawing upon Gesar's blessing energy, and invoke the hidden warrior and indomitable courage within us all.

*Suggested Donation: PBC members \$166; \$69/day
Nonmembers \$198; \$79/day*

**Nyungne Retreat with Ani Lorraine,
Jomo Pema Saldon**

**May 20–22 • Yeshe Tsogyal House,
Nashville, Tennessee**

*For information, contact Dolly Carlisle at
coordinator@pbc-tn.org, (615) 292-6219, or go to
www.pbc-tn.org.*

Kriya Yoga Workshop

May 29–June 4 • Padma Samye Ling

All are welcome to participate in nurturing the mandala of Padma Samye Ling for this and

future generations. Members, students, and friends with skills they would like to contribute are invited to come share in this week of joyful and intensive activity.

Areas of contribution where your capabilities are needed include: outdoor landscaping, gardening, exterior painting, khora lighting installation, and other preparations for the upcoming summer season. Morning and evening practices will be held.

Donations are your time and effort.

SAGA DAWA EVENT IN NEW YORK CITY

**Medicine Buddha
Empowerment and Practice**

June 10 & 11 • 222 Bowery, NYC

Saturday 1 pm to 5 pm; Sunday 10 am to 1 pm

The strength and power of practice is multiplied one hundred thousand times during this auspicious month of Saga Dawa. May our invocation of the Medicine Buddha's healing energies be beneficial for oneself, others, and our entire planet.

In addition, transmissions related to Buddha Shakyamuni and the Bodhisattvas and Arhats will be given. On Sunday the refuge ceremony will be offered for new students; sangha members wishing to reaffirm their vows are welcome to attend.

For further information, call Cathy Allen at (212) 683-4958.

*Suggested Donation: PBC members \$52; \$30/day
Nonmembers \$65; \$35/day*

**Empowerment & Teachings on
Medicine Buddha**

**June 16–18 • Padma Gochen Ling,
Monterey, Tennessee**

*For information, contact Dolly Carlisle at
coordinator@pbc-tn.org, (615) 292-6219, or go to
www.pbc-tn.org.*

**Nyungne Retreat with Ani Lorraine,
Jomo Pema Saldon**

**June 24–26 • Pema Tsokye Dorje Ling,
Santurce, Puerto Rico**

*For further information, contact Fernando Gonzalez at
padmasambhavapr@prw.net or (787) 722-7156.*

Tsa Tsa Making Workshop

July 1–4 • Padma Samye Ling

Buddha's teachings detail a great number of meritorious activities that, when performed, bring benefit to oneself and others. One such activity is the making of tsa tsas, molded objects in the form of stupas or buddhas. Each tsa tsa made is a nirmanakaya given birth. Tsa tsa can be formed of space, fire, wind, water or earth. We'll craft our earthen ones outdoors in the open air, surrounded by natural beauty reflecting the mind's innate freshness.

*Suggested Donation: PBC members \$80; \$20/day
Nonmembers \$88; \$23/day*

ANNUAL SUMMER DZOGCHEN RETREAT
Empowerment of the One Thousand
Buddhas and Teachings on the
Clear-Light Dzogchen
July 22–30 • Padma Samye Ling

This empowerment is according to the terma of the great tertön Rigdzin Dudul Dorje, the emanation of Khyechung Lotsawa. This lineage was preserved and sustained by His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche, himself the emanation of both these masters. The teaching presents the pith instructions of the ground, path, and fruit of the Clear-Light Dzogchen: the great rain that extinguishes the raging fire of the emotions; the wish-fulfilling jewel that dispels the poverty of clinging to existence and nonexistence; the great sun that scatters the heavy darkness of the two obscurations; the wondrous path that leads smoothly and directly to liberation and enlightenment; the heart treasure of the vidyadharas, yogis, and yoginis, and male and female bodhisattvas.

Special Ceremonies on Saturday, July 29th:
Chökhör Duchon celebration commemorating Buddha Shakyamuni's first turning of the wheel of dharma in Sarnath.

Suggested Donation: PBC members \$390; \$47/day
Nonmembers \$495; \$62/day

SELF DEVELOPMENT DZOGCHEN RETREAT
Teachings of Aro Dzogchen
July 31–August 6 • Padma Samye Ling

The teaching will center on the *Chogzhag Zhi* (Four Abidings) according to the instructions of the renowned Dzogchen master Aro Yeshe Jungne and the commentary of Patrul Rinpoche.

Special Ceremonies on Friday, August 4th:
Ganachakra festival honoring Guru Rinpoche's birth, as well as concluding and dedicating the sangha's collective *Du Sum Sangye* practice and the third annual mantra drubchen.

Suggested Donation: PBC members \$279; \$47/day
Nonmembers \$340; \$62/day

Tibetan Language for Beginners
August 7–13 • Padma Samye Ling

A seven-day course led by Acharya Karma Gongde and Philippe Turenne, this introduction to the basic structure and principles of Tibetan grammar will provide a base for continued learning. Morning and afternoon classes for participants will focus on conversational Tibetan, pronunciation, and basic reading skills, as well as practical techniques for consulting Tibetan dictionaries.

Suggested Donation: PBC members \$275
Nonmembers \$332

SHEDRA: The Four Philosophical
Schools Series, Year Four
August 26–31 • Padma Samye Ling

The principal subject of this year's shedra will be Mipham Rinpoche's *The Lion's Roar*, a treatise elucidating such topics as the provisional (*drang dön*) and ultimate (*nges dön*) levels of explanation presented in each of the three turnings of the wheel of dharma; the distinctive features of the Shentong and Rangtong views and the disputed issues between them; and the difference in the ultimate view of the Prasangika and Svatantrika positions.

Suggested Donation: PBC members \$278; \$47/day
Nonmembers \$342; \$62/day

Developing Natural Vitality
with Calm Abiding
September 1–5 • Padma Samye Ling

Daily cycles of calm abiding meditation and *Heart Sutra* recitation, yoga, and nature walks. The Venerable Khenpos will give introductory instruction on shamatha and vipashyana meditation according to the Mahayana. Diane Avice Du Buisson will guide daily yoga sessions. Each day of the retreat will begin with a morning yoga practice of gentle postures to prepare the body for meditation. A more energetic afternoon yoga practice will be offered, combining fluid movements of asanas with an emphasis on pranayama. All levels welcome.

Diane has studied and practiced yoga for 28 years and is the Director of Yoga Source in Nashville, Tennessee. She has an extensive background in Ashtanga yoga and has studied with the Khenpos since 1987.

Suggested Donation: PBC members \$198; \$47/day
Nonmembers \$248; \$62/day

Nyungne Retreat
October 7–9 • Padma Samye Ling

The Nyungne practice of Avalokiteshvara (Chenrezig), the Buddha of compassion, is a purification achieved through silence and fasting. This profound teaching on eleven-faced Avalokiteshvara was transmitted through the stainless lineage of the great female master, Gelongma Palmo. Practicing it with great devotion will increase peace, happiness, and fortune and fulfill all wishes in this life. In the next life it will bring rebirth in Dewachen, the pure land of great bliss.

Suggested Donation: PBC members \$130; \$46/day
Nonmembers \$158; \$52/day

preregistration

In order to facilitate planning and preparations, pre-registration is requested for all events at Padma Samye Ling. Unless otherwise noted, a 10% discount for retreat contributions will be applied to all deposits received one month prior to events.

When possible, please send a 25% deposit made payable to "PBC" to:

Padma Samye Ling
618 Buddha Hwy.
Sidney Center, NY 13839
ATTN: Retreat Coordinators
telephone: (607) 865-8068
e-mail: jowozegyal@catskill.net

Preregistration involves letting us know the following:

- 1) Your name and contact information
- 2) If you are currently an active PBC member*
- 3) Date of arrival
- 4) Date of departure
- 5) Accommodations request (spaces are reserved on a first-come basis as deposits are received.)
- 6) A 25% deposit. Thank you!

***MEMBER DISCOUNT** Please note that the member donation applies to those who have committed to monthly or yearly membership at any of the Padmasambhava Buddhist Centers. Membership is essential to the functioning of the centers and PBC International. Suggested membership is a minimum of \$25 per month; this enables us to maintain and improve the monastery as well as send information and newsletters regarding the programs. We encourage all to join as members to support the growth of the Buddhadharmas and the Ven. Rinpoches' work.

MEALS: Vegetarian meals are served three times a day with the main meal at midday. Following the monastic tradition of Tibet, Padma Samye Ling provides a dhana of food to those attending program schedules and teaching seminars. For other times, or extra days, meal contributions are \$15 per day or \$5 per meal.

ACCOMMODATIONS are available on a first-come, first-served basis as deposits are received. A deposit of 25% of the retreat fee is required to hold a place. Please bring towels and bedding. Local lodging is available; call or e-mail for details.

2006 ACCOMMODATIONS RATES

Dormitory: \$34/night
Single Dormitory: \$40/night
Patrons' Deluxe Apartments
1) Single: \$58/night
2) Double: \$96/night
3) Triple: \$132/night

Please note: Due to increases in operating expenses we have had to increase our rates for accommodations (effective January 1, 2006).

May the Teachings Auspiciously Remain

by Ruth E. McMahon (*Pema Yanu Gha*)

I often think about the causes and conditions that brought me to the dharma. I began asking questions about religion when I was very young, but I did not receive answers that resonated with my being. The first book I purchased with money earned at my first job as a teenager was a book about the world's great religions. As an adult, I sampled a variety of spiritual traditions, but nothing seemed to fit. I had been attracted to Buddhist thought for years but had not found a teacher.

Then, I met Lama Chimed. Even though he was sitting on a cushion in his darkened room, his presence transformed that room into a bright space filled with indescribable love, compassion, and wisdom. As I came out of Lama's room, I thought, "If this very special being is the father, I must meet his sons!" Within two months, I met the Venerable Khenpos and attended my first winter retreat. I had found my teachers!

Over the years, I have witnessed the growth of Padmasambhava Buddhist Center. Padma Samye Ling has grown from a campground to a beautifully landscaped monastery and retreat center with a Sangha House, a stately Gonpa, a dormitory, and a residence for the Khenpos. In India, monks and nuns are able to study and practice at Padma Samye Chökhör Ling Monastery and Orgyen Samye Chökhör Ling Nunnery in Sarnath close to Deer Park. In Shravasti, Padma Samye Jetavan Miracle Stupa rises as a monument to Buddha's enlightened activities.

In the states, PBC West Palm Beach outgrew Mandarava House and moved into the Palm Beach Dharma Center. The dharma center in Puerto Rico is thriving and there are now two centers in Tennessee: a new urban center in Nashville and a

rural retreat center, Padma Gochen Ling, two hours away. We started PBC-West Florida when I moved from West Palm Beach. Now more centers are being founded and other centers continue to grow, including those in the former Soviet Union. This growth has been made possible through the generosity of students who love and respect the Khenpos and the teachings and wisdom they share with us.

The Khenpos have a vision of perpetuating the precious teachings and are personally involved in the education and training of young monks and nuns. The establishment of new centers, the Shedra, long and short retreats, and weekend teachings are also helping to perpetuate the teachings.

When I reflect on how I met my teachers, I'm so glad that the lineage was preserved through them so that I could find it in this lifetime. I marvel at how our mandala has grown. And I pray it may continue, unbroken and strong, long into the future. ■

Ruth E. McMahon is an attorney licensed to practice in Florida, Michigan, and Colorado and her office is in Sarasota, Florida. She is Board Certified in Wills, Trusts & Estates by the Board of Legal Specialization of The Florida Bar. Ruth became a student of the Ven. Khenpos when she lived in West Palm Beach and established the Padmasambhava Buddhist Center of West Florida with the Khenpos when she moved to Sarasota-Bradenton more than six years ago.

Editor's Note: Fellow dharma students often ask Ruth for technical advice on charitable contributions. She has kindly written a guide for those who are interested, which is now posted on the PBC website, <http://www.padmasambhava.org>.



Padma Samye Ling Monastery and Retreat Center



Padma Samye Chökhör Ling Monastery, India



Orgyen Samye Chökhör Ling Nunnery, India

Snow Lion Publishes *Opening to Our Primordial Nature*

Snow Lion Publications, the renowned publisher of books on Tibetan Buddhism, is publishing its first title by the Venerable Khenpos, *Opening to Our Primordial Nature*. Originally published as *The Light of the Dharma* from teachings given by the Khenpos in Tennessee in the late 1980s, the book was expanded and published in 1998 as *The Light of the Three Jewels* by Dharma Samudra. This book presents a delightful and comprehensive teaching on the foundation, view, path, and meditation practices of the Vajrayana according to the Nyingma lineage.

A capsule review in the Spring 2006 issue of the quarterly *Buddhadharma* states, "The clarity and efficiency of the book's structure and the detailed meditation instructions in the latter sections make *Opening to Our Primordial Nature* a very practical guide to the Dzogchen path."

The book will be available in April 2006 and is featured in Snow Lion's Winter 2006 newsletter. PBC's bookstore, Chiso, will have the book in stock as soon as it comes off the press. For ordering information, contact chiso@padmasambhava.org. ■



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The Mandala of the Five Buddha Families

The beautiful mandala featured in the Spring/ Summer 2005 issue of *Pema Mandala* was provided courtesy of Maha Siddha Nyingmapa Center. High-quality prints of this and other mandalas and posters may be purchased online at <http://mahasiddha.org/store>.

Tashi Delek

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Expanding the Mandala of Blessings

The “Dixie Dharma Tour” of Florida & Georgia

by Denise Wickell (Pema Mandron), Juno Beach, FL and Alan Pope (Pema Dondrup), Carrollton, GA

FOR THREE WEEKS IN JANUARY 2006, THE VENERABLE KHENPOS MADE A SOUTHERN TOUR—GIVING TEACHINGS, TOUCHING LIVES, ESTABLISHING SANGHAS, AND PROVIDING A SNAPSHOT OF JOYFUL EFFORT IN ACTION.

During a bright, warm week in January 2006, West Palm Beach was once again honored to host the Venerable Khenpos and the annual winter Dzogchen retreat. One of the largest sangha gatherings ever in Florida, devoted students and newcomers alike searched for the last remaining seats in the jam-packed sanctuary of Unity in the Pines Unitarian Church.

The Khenpos bestowed the empowerment of Yamantaka, the wrathful emanation of Manjushri, and it was a rich and powerful ceremony to behold and be a part of. Extraordinary love and attention were given to every detail of the preparations. Custom-made Yamantaka thangkas hung alongside the colorful altar. Blossoming roses and pink bleeding hearts adorned the vases on the shrine, as if set in a timeless realm. The tsok table was brimming with offerings both sweet and savory for the dakas and dakinis. The Rinpoches’ chiming bells and rhythmic damarus greeted all who entered the consecrated space, bringing to life the sacred rituals of Kham and Tibet. The empowerment itself was intensely rich and powerful. The Khenpos gave a description and transmission of all eighty-four thousand teachings and everyone felt the presence of the deity after this enormous initiation.

The weeklong Dzogchen retreat featured instructions of “The Hundred Verses of Advice” by Phadampa Sangye. The Khenpos referred to three translations, one of which was Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche’s commentary of these classic verses that was made available for the retreatants.

During the week, students gathered in the lovely atmosphere of the inner courtyard and garden, talking of dharma while

enjoying the sunshine in-between intervals of teachings and practices. With their engaging, methodical manner, Rinpoches would give a synopsis of the previous day’s teaching every day; thus they would bring us back to the foundation each time before building upon it further. Always encompassing the heart instructions on the Dzogchen view, weaving them into the teachings and deepening their students’ knowledge, they showed us how to develop our understanding of the view and conduct each day of the retreat.

Tuesday was a high point during the week, as it was dedicated to commemorating His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche. Khenchen Palden began the celebration and then introduced Khenpo Tsewang, who bestowed the transmission of his poetic praises to His Holiness. One short excerpt follows:

*“Without expectation of anything in return,
now or in a future life,
Sweet showers are falling everywhere around.
Mountains and valleys glisten like emeralds.
Lord, your blessings are like rain. Again and
again I remember you, kindest father.
I pray with one-pointed yearning, make my
pure perception stable.
Please enable your son to liberate whatever
arises, the instant it arises.
Bless me now to be your equal.”*



ERICSON PROPER

A bound collection of Pema Mandala issues is presented to the Khenpos at the end of the Sarasvati retreat by former Pema Mandala editor Ruth McMahon.

The words of love and devotion that we chanted together prompted sweet tears to spill over our faces. The heartfelt commemoration concluded with a joyful tsok celebration.

At the end of the retreat, Rinpoches presided over the wedding of Florida sangha members Jay and Heike. All the retreatants enjoyed offering their congratulations to the joyous couple.

After a brief rest, the Khenpos, Ani Lorraine, and Saymo, the amazing dharma dog, hit the road for a tour of Florida and Georgia (soon to be known as the “Dixie Dharma Tour”). With Mimi Bailey at the wheel, they traveled west to Bradenton, where PBC-West Florida coordinator Ruth McMahon’s swimming pool was heated up for a Friday evening of relaxation and reconnection.

The next day, with help from students near and far, a charming lakeside hall was transformed into a perfect venue for empowerment and teachings on the female buddha Vajra Sarasvati. Rinpoches said, “Wherever truth and beauty are, there is Vajra Sarasvati,” and her influence was certainly felt that day. The West Florida sangha was overjoyed to see the Khenpos again for the first time in a couple of years and everyone gathered for a potluck dinner on Sunday before giving the entourage a rousing send-off.

Tampa was the next stop, and the schedule was so tight that Rinpoches finished making tormas in the car, and arrived to give the initiation and teachings of Vajrasattva followed by the refuge ceremony. The tour continued to Tallahassee, where a new center is forming. Khenpos gave a public talk and became reacquainted with students whom they hadn’t seen for 15 years or more. These students are now very much involved with the sangha again. It was a lovely time, with both longtime and new students intermingling in the mandala.



ANI LORRAINE

Refuge ceremony in Tampa following the Vajrasattva empowerment and teachings.

Leaving Florida, the Khenpos traveled through the vibrant springlike scenery of Georgia, stopping along the way to collect fresh pecans at a pecan farm. Forty-five miles southwest of Atlanta, the Khenpos were received by Alan Pope, who has started a new PBC center in the university town of Carrollton. Shortly after their arrival, an informal potluck dinner was enjoyed in Alan’s living room with local sangha members, including Mya, who at less than two-years-old delighted everyone with a joyful spontaneity matched only by the Rinpoches themselves.

The next evening, a public talk was held at the Talapoosa Center, a beautifully restored school house converted into a yoga studio. From the moment the Khenpos’ visit had been advertised, the interest expressed was enormous, and an estimated 100 people from Carrollton and Atlanta (one hour away) attended the introductory teaching. The Khenpos spoke on the Vajrayana path, emphasizing bodhicitta, Guru Padmasambhava, and the true nature of mind. Faces beamed in the crowded room and there was a clear sense that something profound and wonderful was happening in Carrollton, GA.

In the space of only three weeks, the “Dixie Dharma Tour” travelled more than 1500 miles and logged more than 26 hours on the road. During this time, 45 new students took refuge, two new sanghas were inaugurated, three empowerments were bestowed, and many hours of precious teachings were given. In-between, Rinpoches and Ani Lorraine were on the phone managing projects and advising students in the United States and India, and even connecting with Gochen Monastery in Tibet. Throughout the tour, the Khenpos’ lightness, grace, and playfulness pervaded amidst all these activities. May their tireless joyful efforts inspire us all. ■

Yeshe Tsogyal House Opens in Nashville

PBC Tennessee is happy to announce the opening of the first Tibetan Buddhist dharma center in Nashville. Named after wisdom dakini Yeshe Tsogyal, the center opened in November 2005.

The Nashville sangha was established 18 years ago by Bill and Joan French, shortly after the Khenpos' first visit to Tennessee. It grew from a handful of practitioners meeting once a week to a large sangha with three different weekly meetings in three locations. Rita Frizzell shared that during her tenure as coordinator the goal was "to build the energy of our activities as if we had a center." The Khenpos encouraged the sangha's wishes for a center in Nashville and in early 2005 they let coordinator Dolly Carlisle know that it was time to start looking.

Dolly and her husband, David Hinton, headed up the search with ongoing guidance from Ani Lorraine and the Khenpos. According to Dolly, "The whole experience leading us to Yeshe Tsogyal House was miraculous. The Khenpos would always have just



HUNTER ARMISTEAD

the right insight at the right time for the next step that needed to be taken." While in Russia last May, they sent a message through Lorraine: "Tell them that when the right property appears, they will need to move quickly."

When the building at 419 East Iris Drive was discovered, Dolly followed the lamas' advice. An offer to purchase was made and accepted the same night. As it turned out, if the decision had been delayed by only one day, another buyer would have snapped it up.

Sangha members joyfully came up with the down payment, but at the last minute the bank asked for even more financial guarantees. Disheartened, Dolly again consulted Khenpo Tsewang, who said, "We think it's going to work out." Emboldened by his confidence,

Dolly made a daring counter proposal to the bank and it was accepted.

As Rita recalls, "The evening after we closed, we held our first practice and instantly felt at home. The sangha was so devoted, so ripe for a center, it was almost as if it had to manifest." The new center contains a shrineroom, social room, kitchen, bookstore, and two offices for massage practitioners, with expansion room in the back.

With the opening of Yeshe Tsogyal House, the sangha now has a beautiful place to practice together and grow, along with the rural retreat center, Padma Gochen Ling. The Tennessee sangha gives thanks to the Khenpos for making it all possible. ■



The Venerable Khenpos with the Puerto Rico Sangha in the shrineroom at Pema Tsokye Dorje Ling.

Puerto Rico Sangha Celebrates Anniversary

The fifteenth anniversary of the dharma coming to Puerto Rico was celebrated this February with two weeks of festivities.

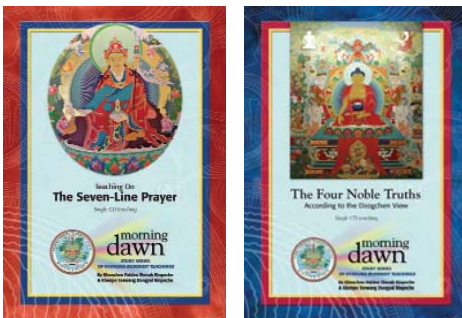
The celebration began with a public talk on loving-kindness, followed by retreat on the eight emanations of Guru Padmasambhava. The next week brought a Losar celebration and a special benefit concert at the Conservatory of Music. The anniversary also heralded the arrival of new Guru Rinpoche and Tara statues at the center, Pema Tsokye Dorje Ling. ■



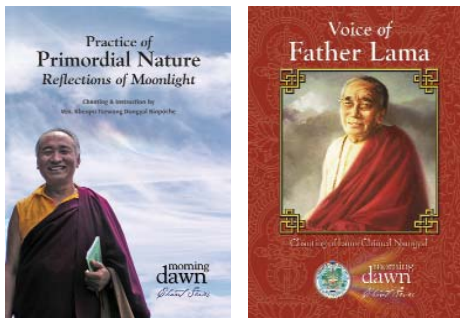
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