

Namgyal Monastery Institute of Buddhist Studies is a non-profit organization serving as the North American Seat of the Personal Monastery of H.H. The Dalai Lama.

Namgyal Monastery offers both a full and part-time curriculum in practical and philosophical Buddhist studies and language with a choice of one or three year tracks, as well as weekend teachings and summer retreats.

Namgyal Monastery 2005 Summer Retreats

JULY 31—AUGUST 7 GET ACQUAINTED WITH NAMGYAL RETREAT
AUGUST 7—AUGUST 14 MEDICINE BUDDHA RETREAT

Both retreats will be held at Cornell University's Arnot Forest.
Cost: \$695 per retreat, includes all food, lodging, and study materials.
Discount: register for both retreats and pay only \$1,300.

Visit www.namgyal.org for complete details.

Wish List

If you would like to help sponsor an aspect of life at Namgyal Monastery in Ithaca, please consider the following:

- **Monks monthly food bill** (\$800/month)
- **Monks health insurance** (\$285/month for each of the five monks - \$1425 total/month)
- **New computer for office** (\$2,000)

Donations for these expenses will help us move closer to our goal of providing the dharma for free to anyone who wishes to hear it. Please make checks payable to Namgyal Monastery.

Prayers & Consecrations

Tibetans traditionally ask monks to say special prayers for the ill and deceased, to bless marriages and the birth of a child, and to consecrate statues for altars. (For statues, the base is removed and the statue is filled with incense and small rolls of written prayers.)

The resident Namgyal monks will be happy to offer appropriate prayers, for which donations are greatly appreciated.

Fees for consecrations vary and depend upon the statue figure and size. Please contact the monastery with any questions.

Namgyal India

Please help us support our parent monastery, the Namgyal Monastery in Dharamsala, India, by making donations payable to Namgyal Tantric College.

Please specify if you would like your donation to be targeted to the General Fund, or any of the following areas of need: Health Care Fund, Food & Lodging, Education Fund, or Pilgrimage Site at Kushinagar branch.



FOR CREDIT CARDS DONATIONS, USE THE PAYPAL LINK ON OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.NAMGYAL.ORG

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NAMGYAL MONASTERY

INSTITUTE OF BUDDHIST STUDIES

The North American Seat of the Personal Monastery of H.H. the Dalai Lama

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Summer 2005

An Interview with Geshe Thupten Kunkhen

Tsokyi: Geshe la Tashi Delek! We are very pleased to have you here in Ithaca and especially at the Namgyal Monastery. Please tell me something about yourself and your education background.

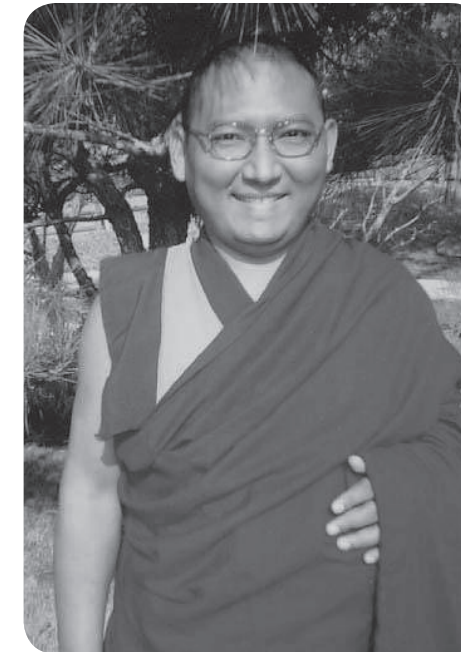
Geshe la: Thank you for having me and giving me an opportunity to speak for the Namgyal newsletter. I am very grateful. We all have to work in according to the words and beliefs of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. It is also important to work for the welfare of six million Tibetans. As disciples of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, we have a huge responsibility to bring peace and harmony in the world. I came to U.S on behalf of the religious institute so I must work for them and for the betterment of world peace.

My parents are from Kyidrong Dra-Choeling located in the southern part of Tibet. They fled to Shimla, India in 1960 after the Chinese occupation of Tibet. I was born in a very poor family. My parents worked as road constructors in Shimla. When I was two years old, my family moved to Dharamsala. I became a monk at the age of 9, and at 12 I moved down to Drepung Loseling in southern India. There I received my monastic education and became a Geshe.

There are various forms of Geshe with different examination. I went through the toughest one-Gelugpa examination which takes place in front of scholars from three different houses from Drepung, Sera and Ganden and it took six years. I am expected to stay at Namgyal Monastery for three years and while I am here, I will be doing my best for the spread of Dharma and world peace.

Tsokyi: How do you feel about being in Ithaca with Tibetans and students of Namgyal Monastery?

Geshe la: Frankly, I am shocked to see the Ithaca's severe winter. I have never seen so much snow in my life. For local Ithacans, it might be normal but I am bit shocked. I am glad to be part of the Namgyal Monastery which



is a special Monastery being associated with H. H. the Dalai Lama. I find the students very sincere and dedicated. Some are very regular in their dedication which I believe is extremely wonderful. I am very happy to see their sincere dedication to the religious practice.

When I first came to Ithaca, I didn't know about the Tibetans living here. Gradually I came to know about them. I am glad to be warmly received by the Tibetan families and especially by the President of the Tibetan Association. There is a very strong and warm relationship between Namgyal Monastery and Tibetan Association. It is really good. Every month they get together for second Saturday. It is very heart warming. I heard that it began with a simple gathering at the start and gradually became more elaborate. Host families serve delicious dinners. I am also pleased to see the Sunday Tibetan language class being held at the Monastery for the young Tibetan kids. It is very encouraging to see the parents and teacher work hard for them.

Before coming to Ithaca, I was at one of the religious centers at Charlottesville. Even though there were Tibetans who are very friendly, they don't meet frequently like here. They gather only on special occasions. I was requested by the venerables and board members to stay for three years in Ithaca. I will be doing my best for the Namgyal Monastery. Even though I am not a great scholar, if there is a need I will be happy to talk to the Tibetan community.

Tsokyi: What do you hope you will be doing here? Do you have any special plans?

Geshe la: There are many different religious institutions but Namgyal Monastery is a very special monastery being a North American Seat of H.H. the Dalai Lama. Therefore we have a huge responsibility to follow his directions. It is also important to let the world understand the true meaning of Tibetan Buddhism. Namgyal Ithaca has high qualified teachers sent from India. Its curriculum is carefully designed for the students. I am going to follow this curriculum sincerely. I am not in a position to make any changes nor is it appropriate to do so.

Tsokyi: Geshe la, you must be aware of the Tsunami disaster in South East Asia. How should a Buddhist view such disaster?

Geshe la: It is human characteristic that we want happiness and dislike sufferings. We have to find the path to achieve happiness and get rid of the sufferings. In doing so sometime we come across such sufferings without any warning. When we face such sufferings, we take it as an accident and not being caused by the human beings. It shouldn't be like that. We have to understand why it happened and be careful in the future. Sufferings can be of many types. We can view Tsunami as a major suffering, and illness due to cold and fever as minor suffering. It is very important to accept the suffering. Only then we can find some solutions to the sufferings. If we face it bravely and think that it is caused by our actions then it will not be that bad feeling.

Upcoming Retreats & Events

We've been very busy over the past few months, with recent visits from Khamtrul Rinpoche, Geshe Lobsang Tenzin, Prof. James Blumenthal, Lama Pema Wangdak, Thangka painter Kelsang Oshoe, and there is more to come!

Mon., March 28th—Thurs., May 5th
Spring Session 2 Classes (6 weeks)

See our web site for complete course listings and descriptions at www.namgyal.org

April 8th—10th **37 Harmonies With Enlightenment Retreat** with Geshe Thupten Kunkhen

April 22nd—May 3rd **Jhado Tulku Rinpoche with Geshe Thupten Tashi**

• **Fri., April 22nd** *The Value of Renunciation & Pure Morality*

• **Sat., April 23rd** *Namgyalma Empowerment*

• **Sat., April 23rd (evening)** *Karma & Rebirth*

• **Sun., April 24th** *Interfaith Alliance for Religion and Culture: The Value of Prayer*

• **Wed., April 27th—Friday, April 29th**
An Ornament for the Throats of the Fortunate

• **Sat., April 30th** *Solitary Vajrasattva: Jenang Empowerment*

May 13th—May 15th **Heart Sutra Weekend Retreat** with Geshe Tsulga of Kurukulla Center

May 23rd **Saka Dawa** (day of Buddha's birth, death and enlightenment)

June 11th—13th **Dependent Arising Weekend Retreat** with Geshe Thupten Kunkhen



June 18th, noon—5:00pm **Buddhism and Science Dialoue Inaugural Event** with Vic Mansfield & Deana Bodnar

July 6th **Birthday of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama**

July 10th **Chokhor Duchen** The first turning of the wheel of Dharma, when Buddha gave teachings in Deer Park in Sarnath, India.

July 15th—17th **Refuge and Nirvana Weekend Retreat** with Geshe Tenzin Sherap

June 20th—July 15th **Summer Session Classes (4 weeks)**

• **The Four Great Seals of Buddhism** with Geshe Thupten Kunkhen

• **Buddhist Refuge Practice** with Venerable Lobsang Gyaltzen

• **Precious Human Rebirth** with Venerable Tenzin Choden

• **Preparing for White Tara Practice** with Venerable Tenzin Thutop

• **Introduction to Meditation** with Venerable Tenzin Gephel

From the Board of Directors

By Ted Arnold, President

Many positive changes have occurred at Namgyal since the end of the annual summer retreats. Foremost of these is the addition to our staff of Geshe Thupten Kunkhen (see enclosed interview). Although initially invited to fill in for only one semester, Namgyal's students requested that Geshe la be asked to stay. To Namgyal's great fortune, he has indeed agreed to stay for a period of three years. This allows the other monks to focus on other projects, and provides Gephel la more time to devote to his Cornell chaplaincy.

As Namgyal is the personal monastery of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, we must do more to help fulfill the goals of His Holiness' variety of missions. To that end, we have instituted two new areas of programs. The Buddhism and Science Dialogue program will continue the Mind-Life dialogues in which His Holiness has engaged with western scientists for many years. Second is the Interfaith Dialogue program, whose members will represent the tolerant attitude of His Holiness to area spiritual communities in an effort to try to bridge divides and dispel misunderstandings of Buddhism. If you are interested in volunteering your time to either of these programs, please contact me at ea26@cornell.edu.

Visitng teachers in the near future will include Venerable Jhado Tulku Rinpoche, who will bestow Namgyalma and Vajrasattva Empowerments (in addition to teaching on Karma & Rebirth and other subjects), Geshe Tsulga of Kurukulla Center, teaching on The Heart Sutra, Geshe Tenzin Sherap, teaching on Refuge and Nirvana, Jay Garfield, teaching on Tsongkha-pa's Ocean of Reasoning, and Geshe Tsultrim Gyeltsen of Dhargye Ling.

And more is simmering on the fire! Please consider giving your time, with concerted effort we can continue to improve Namgyal, not only for the benefit of our own community, but for the benefit of all sentient beings.



Tsokyi: Do you think that our prayers will benefit the victims of Tsunamis?

Geshe la: Yes, I am 100% sure that our prayers will benefit the victims. If you believe in the existence of God and have faith in Dharma then definitely our prayers will help reduce the sufferings of others. It is very important to understand the cause and result of any action. If we plant the seed of rice, rice will grow naturally. Likewise, if we plant the seed of wheat then wheat will grow. Therefore it is definite to have a good result of our prayers if we pray with true faith. One must meditate on compassion and be compassionate of suffering people. We should pray for the good life for those who died and pray to lessen the sufferings of people who are affected by the Tsunami.

by Tenzin Tsokyi,
board of directors member

Illustrations: p.2,4 by Kelsang Oshoe;
p.3 by Robert Beer © Snow Lion

Proper Motivation

Let us reflect upon the importance of proper motivation in our everyday lives, from both Buddhist and secular perspectives.

In Buddhism, cultivating proper motivation is essential before we engage in religious practices, take lessons or teach lessons. Traditionally, Buddhists recite at least one short prayer to cultivate proper motivation before meditating or listening to a teaching.

We can learn Buddhist teachings by studying; but, to gain the full benefit of a teaching one must study and listen in a way that avoids the three faults and strengthens the three mental qualities. The first fault, inattentiveness, is analogous to an overturned pot. However much we might try to put something into that pot, nothing will go into it. In relation to inattentiveness, I like would like to share a story. Once there was a Tibetan Cabinet member who fell asleep at every meeting and slept through whole sessions. Even though he was asleep, for those issues that he really cared about, he would suddenly jump into the conversation. He demonstrated selective attentiveness. To take information in, we need to be attentive all of the time, like a deer. The deer may be occupied while eating, but, even then it is on the alert for enemies. The second fault, forgetfulness, is like a pot with a hole in its bottom. Nothing will stay inside the mind no matter how much we have learned or heard. This idea is captured in the expression "in one ear and out the other." The third fault, improper motivation, is analogous to a dirty pot, contaminating any good food we might put into it. Avoiding these three faults enables us to maintain attentiveness, to sustain the knowledge that we have gained and to cultivate a good attitude.

We Buddhists believe that Buddha's teachings, known as Dharma in Sanskrit, are like medicine. These teachings help us not only to overcome suffering but also to bring, at the same time, a true sense of happiness. We firmly believe that although Dharma is like medicine, if we approach it with impure motivation, it can have a negative impact. In this case the medicine turns into poison just as ordinary medicine, if taken improperly, can sometimes turn into poison. When the day comes that people lose their proper motivation, they will have turned the Dharma into poison, which signifies for us the end of the world, the end of any possibility for happiness.

Eliminating unwholesome attitudes by cultivating a positive mental outlook is not just a

religious matter. Establishing proper motivation can be a great source of happiness and help anyone to overcome suffering. Therefore, whatever we ordinary citizens say and do must be rooted in proper motivation.

How do we get it? Proper motivation is rooted in love, respect for others, and honesty. These qualities are essential not only in religion, but also in our secular lives: in the fields of politics, economics, business, science, law, medicine ... in all areas of human endeavor. In the words of the Dalai Lama, "With proper motivation science and technology can help humanity... Without good motivation, science and technology, instead of helping, can bring more fear and threaten global destruction. Compassionate thought is very important for humankind."

We often criticize national politicians and talk about dirty politics, but I think politicians and politics themselves are not inherently dirty. The actual role of politicians is something great. Their commitment is to work for the benefit of their own society, and at the highest level, for all countries of the world. If the motivation of politicians is not good, then the politics become dirty. As the Dalai Lama said, "Dangerous consequences will follow when politicians and rulers forget moral principles." Unfortunately, good motivation is often lacking in our societies. In addition to our own survival, we need to work for the benefit of others and for the planet on which we live. Dirty politics arise when the politician has grown up in a society that does not promote the welfare of all living creatures. Dirty politics and poor motivation go hand in hand.

Honesty, respect and compassion are what guide proper motivation. Whether one is a believer or non-believer in Buddhism, proper motivation is the key for the betterment of all our lives.

by Venerable Tenzin Gephel,
Resident Namgyal Monk and Cornell
University Buddhist Chaplin

Sand Mandalas

The Namgyal monks have been very busy, traveling throughout US and abroad creating sand mandalas. Please phone the Monastery at 607 273-0739, or e-mail namgyal@lightlink.com for details and pricing regarding mandala contracts.