
THE WIND HORSE



NEWSLETTER OF CHAGDUD GONPA

SPRING 2004

Remembering Our Precious Teacher

A Letter from Jigme Tromge Rinpoche



Chagdud Rinpoche feeding birds at Boudhanath Stupa in Nepal

Dear Sangha,

It is said that in the Tromge lineage to which His Eminence Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche was born, every generation has a Tara mahasiddha. Chagdud Rinpoche was the great Tara practitioner of his generation. Throughout his life, Rinpoche exhibited the conduct of a master in the lineage of mahasiddhas and bodhisattvas. He completely dedicated his body, speech, and mind to the benefit of all beings, without regard for his own achievements, without attachment to people or place. He upheld the teachings of his own revered lamas, including Tromge Tulku Arik, renowned as an accomplished master and one of the main lamas of Tromge monastery in Kham, eastern Tibet. For many years, Tromge

Arik remained in retreat, moving from cave to cave, always working to benefit those who had the good fortune to be near him. A free spirit, he was not tied to his lineage monastery. Likewise, our teacher, Chagdud Rinpoche, traveled extensively—in the end to the other side of the world. He always moved on when his work in a place was complete.

From Tibet to India to Nepal, and then to the Americas, as a lama responsible for many groups and centers, Rinpoche helped thousands of people develop their spiritual practice. He supported Tibetans at home and in exile, Nepalese Buddhists, and later other Asian and Western students. Everywhere he went, he provided whatever was needed, creating conditions that allowed for both present and future success. Along his path, he met Chagdud Khadro, who facilitated the expansion of his activities and today continues to carry out Rinpoche's wishes with utmost faith and devotion.

Rinpoche's significance in establishing the Nyingma tradition in North America cannot be underestimated. Many lamas consider him a regent of Padmasambhava in the West. In this respect, he was fulfilling the prophecy Tara made to him in central Tibet that his activity would flourish in the West.

Knowing Rinpoche's desire to bring dharma to as many beings as possible, I had often wondered while he was living in California what his next move would be. One day,

while this question was acutely present in my mind, Rinpoche called me to say that he was moving to Brazil. Although I had not imagined such a move, I did not doubt that in South America, as everywhere, Rinpoche would fully display his qualities as a mahasiddha. And so in just a few years, Rinpoche created the unique, extraordinarily beautiful complex of buildings and trained the entire community that is Khadro Ling, the mother center of all the Chagdud Gonpa centers in South America. Even then, Rinpoche was not ready to rest. In his last few years, he spoke of building a temple and retreat cabin in Uruguay and living there.

The boundless love for sentient beings that motivated Rinpoche all his life did not end when he passed away. At the final p'howa retreat he led at Khadro Ling, Rinpoche masterfully demonstrated the teachings of impermanence, cutting through his students' belief in the permanence of phenomena, when his own physical body came to an end. He knew exactly when he would go and how he wanted things to continue after his death, down to precise details concerning Katok Ritro, the retreat center in Pharping, Nepal, where his death ceremonies would be held. Some years back, when Rinpoche was planning Katok Ritro, I told him that I felt some ideas needed amending. But in the last year, it has become clear to me that with the center, as with everything, Rinpoche's vision went far beyond what we could imagine. The final activity of his *kudung* (sacred remains) was to gather sangha from all over the world to practice and reflect together during his death ceremonies. These sangha members have since returned home with the blessings of those days, as well as the interdependence they created by visiting many of the sacred sites nearby. Those who stayed home but nevertheless practiced with devotion shared the power of those blessings.

After a great master's cremation, some students ask about relics. Although relics are a sign of a master's accomplishment, not all highly realized masters leave them behind. Owing to Rinpoche's great compassion, however, he did leave many relics. Just as his brilliant activity took many forms throughout time and space, his relics are of richly varied shapes and colors. I will distribute some of these to various centers as appropriate.

Since Rinpoche's passing, and again since the cremation, many of his students have told me that their practice has become stronger or that long-standing obstacles have been overcome. Several people who had never met Rinpoche, but somehow made a connection with his sangha, speak of how he touched their lives. All of these experiences are reminders that, while Rinpoche is abiding in the pure land of Padmasambhava, he is as close as ever to anyone who prays to him with genuine devotion.

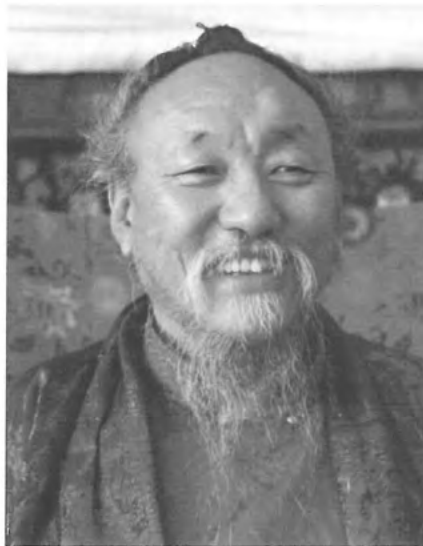
Following in His Footsteps

I have seen many students demonstrate their faith and devotion to Chagdud Rinpoche; this has touched me and brought me great joy. As we all know, Rinpoche was a highly realized being; his teachings were like nectar. Remembering how Rinpoche showed us the force of impermanence and how death can come to us at any moment, we who received teachings directly from him must apply them as he instructed. We should rejoice in having met such rare and precious teachings, and fully integrate them into our lives and intentions. We must maintain their purity, never polluting them with worldly actions or attitudes.

Although some students did not meet Rinpoche personally, they have been able to receive certain teachings from his qualified lamas. Thus it is as if they knew Rinpoche directly, because these lamas hold Rinpoche's teachings in their hearts. We may not realize all the ways in which his blessings can manifest; only later might we see the fruits of the hundreds of teachings and empowerments Rinpoche gave over the years. In many cases, the seeds he planted have not yet fully ripened. In order for them to do so, and for the practices to be as helpful as Rinpoche intended, it is crucial for students to go into retreat as often as possible, even for short periods of time, and to ceaselessly practice guru yoga.

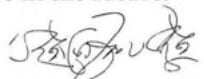
It is my sincere hope that our Chagdud Gonpa sanghas everywhere in the world will stay united and never forget their commitment to benefit countless beings. We should also take care not to align or identify ourselves with a particular Chagdud Gonpa center as though it were separate from all the others, thinking, "Oh, I'm from Ati Ling" or "I'm from this-or-that center." That is not dharma. We are all Rinpoche's sangha, so we should all think, "I am part of the Chagdud Gonpa sangha."

Chagdud Gonpa lamas can help to instill a sense of unity within the sangha and among centers, which will be extremely beneficial in the long run. If we go down an individualistic path, the flow of Rinpoche's blessings will run dry. We have much more strength when we understand ourselves to be collectively Rinpoche's sangha. We can then draw on that strength in our work. While Khadro Ling is certainly the mother center in South America and Rigdzin Ling the mother center in North America, we should treat sangha members from all Chagdud Gonpa centers—as well as any newcomers—with equal love, care, and respect. It is the senior students at these centers whom others look to for support; the gonpas provide a refuge that we can all safely turn to. If sangha members seem obnoxious, unfriendly, or unhelpful, then where is our refuge?



For as long as the lamas and sangha of Chagdud Gonpa support and respect one another, and remain united in upholding their enlightened master's teachings and intentions, Rinpoche's activity will continue to flourish. As vajra brothers and sisters, the lamas appointed by Rinpoche should maintain their samaya, keep Rinpoche's teachings in their hearts, blend the teachings with their minds, and dedicate their lives to benefiting beings as Rinpoche did. Just as different deities manifest different qualities, the lamas appointed will engage in different activities according to their own karma, understanding, and abilities. They will work for their centers and sangha in different ways, all equally beneficial, to meet the huge variety of needs of countless beings. Then, when the lamas teach with perfect motivation, their words can become a teaching for themselves, helping them to reestablish their positive intention, bringing deeper understanding and joy to their path, and facilitating their retreats. In this way, the seeds Rinpoche planted in his lamas' hearts and minds will blossom into the beautiful flowers he envisioned.

I feel that the practice and understanding of Chagdud Rinpoche's students are most inspiring, and even somewhat unique in the West. Looking at our sanghas in both North and South America, what they do and what they represent as practitioners is very impressive and touching—for example, in terms of their training in Vajrayana ritual. As a humble student and son of Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche, this gives me great hope for and confidence in the future.



JIGME TROMGE RINPOCHE

The Padmasambhava Peace Institute

I would like to take this opportunity to explain a little about the background and aims of a project that I have launched in California, the Padmasambhava Peace Institute (PPI). The institute, conceived as an educational organization and registered as such in the state of California, came about after discussions I'd had with Chagdud Rinpoche about the need to broaden dharma activity on the West Coast of the United States.

Since childhood, it has been my dream to build a great statue of Guru Rinpoche, perhaps because I had heard so many stories about him. As some of you know, Chagdud Rinpoche and I had originally planned to construct such a statue on land we bought in Nepal, near the sacred Yangleshod Cave; for a number of reasons, however, we gradually changed our minds. We felt it would be extremely beneficial to instead build such a statue in the United States, so that many who are not yet familiar with Guru Rinpoche would be able to make an auspicious connection with him. Rinpoche thought that if Americans went

through very difficult times owing to the depletion of their country's merit, a Guru Rinpoche statue could offer significant blessings. Besides, because the United States is such a powerful country, whatever seeds are planted here will eventually affect the whole world.

Rinpoche felt that by having only a statue on the land, we would miss an opportunity to develop other areas of activity—he was always considering ways to extend his dharma activities in a variety of directions.

For these reasons, I have decided that PPI's work will cover two main areas. First, it will provide training in traditional Tibetan Buddhist subjects such as art, astrology, language, and philosophy. These will be taught in a *shedra*, a school providing the intellectual foundation for Buddhist practice through the intensive study of classical texts and commentaries. I would like to encourage in-depth study of these treasures and to develop a new pool of students able to explore firsthand the enormous range of Tibetan texts that have yet to be translated into English. Practitioners who truly immerse themselves in the Tibetan language with the intention of becoming translators will bring immeasurable benefit to their spiritual community. At the same time, however, translators who know only the language but have no grounding in proper practice have never tasted the essence of the teachings. Therefore, it is important that at PPI we combine the two elements—language and traditional learning, and practice. To achieve this, I plan to bring a number of teachers from Tibet, Nepal, and India to the institute.

Second, PPI will offer a number of personal development, health, and cultural programs appropriate to the needs of the local community, in keeping with our overall intent to promote peace and well-being. These will include courses on mediation and meditation skills for at-risk youth and adults, stress-reduction programs, and hospice-care training that draws on traditional Tibetan concepts of death and dying. We will also provide the space and facilities for group or individual retreats.

All of these activities will take place on the extensive, beautiful grounds of the Black Mountain Preserve near Santa Rosa. In less than a year, we raised more than \$2.2 million to purchase the land and its many buildings. Currently, however, we still need \$400,000 to remodel and upgrade the existing facilities, so that we can open our doors as soon as possible and initiate our programs. We also need volunteers to help with various projects on the property. If you can support the Padmasambhava Peace Institute financially, or by offering your time and energy, we would appreciate hearing from you. Any offering, no matter how small, will help us reach our goal. May all beings benefit! For more information, visit us at www.padmapeace.org or call us at (707) 523-8427.

—Jigme Tromge Rinpoche



Akshobhya Practice in Brazil

At Khadro Ling, January opened with an eight-day Akshobhya Buddha retreat in which practitioners diligently recited the long *dhyani* mantra beginning at 4:30 a.m. and continuing in four sessions until 9:00 p.m. The atmosphere of the retreat was both serious and serene, as practitioners felt deeply connected to the person on whom their practice was focused and to the unwavering compassion of Akshobhya.

Akshobhya is the meditational (*dhyani*) buddha of the eastern realm of Manifest Joy and lord of the vajra family. In the sutra *Praising Buddha Akshobhya's Merits*, the Buddha Shakyamuni extolled the qualities of Akshobhya's extraordinary perseverance: "Shariputra, in wearing the armor of vigor, Bodhisattva Akshobhya had no peer among countless thousands of other bodhisattvas." Akshobhya attained enlightenment by steadfastly maintaining great vows, including the vow to bear not the slightest malice toward anyone. The interdependence of this vow is so powerful that repeating his mantra cuts through the flow of obscurations and the momentum of karma—even karma that would bring immediate and severe consequences at the moment of death.

Because H.E. Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche established such magnificent interdependence in creating the impressive Akshobhya statue, Chagdud Gonpa Brasil received a steady stream of requests from sponsors. For more than a year, these were fulfilled by one full-time retreatant, who was often able to accomplish a hundred thousand recitations in ten days. Now several experienced practitioners fulfill the commitments, but few people can complete the recitations in fewer than twenty to thirty full days. In Brazil, the \$138 sponsorship fee does not cover the retreat costs to the same extent that \$80 does in Tibet. So the January retreat was an experiment. Sponsored participants practiced diligently at Khadro Ling for eight days, and are committed to finishing the balance of the recitations on their own time. These practitioners don't regret their commitment; the practice is beautiful and inspiring, and unfolds over time. Moreover,

the possibility of actually releasing someone from a lower realm of existence is tremendously motivating.

To generate enough merit to free someone from an unfortunate rebirth, we not only recite mantra, but also sponsor the creation of an image of Akshobhya. In Brazil, Rinpoche instructed us to install one thousand Akshobhya tiles (in the form of *tsa-tsas*) behind the statue's throne. Lama Pema Dorje has commissioned a renowned Tibetan artist who works in Taiwan to create the master tile. The Odsal Ling sangha in São Paulo has developed extremely fine techniques to produce *tsa-tsas*, which for Akshobhya will

be lapis lazuli blue. We also can create excellent reproductions of Akshobhya statues under the direction of Lama Rigdzin. These images will grace a garden being developed around the Akshobhya statue.

To sponsor Akshobhya practice in Brazil, contact Lama Thubten or Pamela Johnston at the Mahakaruna Foundation, P.O. Box 344, Junction City, CA 96048-0344.



Akshobhya statue at Khadro Ling

"...the possibility of actually releasing someone from a lower realm of existence is tremendously motivating."

Echoes of Rinpoche

Since Chagdud Rinpoche's parinirvana, going through the Chagdud Gonpa tape archives has taken on a different meaning. Wishing for something more to remind us of his presence, we at Padma Publishing turned to

the various recordings of his singing that have been saved over the years. We found some remarkable material, filled with inspiration and vitality.

With the help of Jigme Tromge Rinpoche, we identified and translated a number of songs and compiled them into an audio CD, which will be released this spring. Included will be seven songs of Milarepa and four songs from the stories of the epic hero Gesar of Ling. The CD, *The Yogi's Song*, will be available from Tibetan Treasures.

A new two-disc audio book of both the concise Red Tara practice and *Red Tara Commentary* in English will soon be released in the United States on the Dakini Music label. Entitled *Red Tara: An Open Door to Bliss and Ultimate Awareness*, the audio book will include mantras sung by Chagdud Rinpoche and his students. It is a companion volume to the Brazilian edition, which was recorded by Lama Sherab Drolma and is used widely by the Brazilian sanghas.

Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche's Cremation in Nepal

Early in December, at least two hundred Brazilians and more than a hundred North Americans traveled to Katok Ritro retreat center in Nepal for H.E. Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche's cremation. Some of us hadn't seen each other in years, and coming together for the ceremonies was like reuniting with dear family members—all of us gathering to be with our beloved Rinpoche.

We Westerners stayed either in Pharping, about an hour's drive down the mountain from Katok Ritro, or in Boudhanath, even farther away on the outskirts of Kathmandu. Each morning, we piled into buses and jeeps, which would slowly wend their way up the mountain. Anyone who got off to a late start could see the caravan of buses high above, moving slowly along the switchbacks. The road was extremely narrow and deeply rutted, and on the first day, it became apparent that the buses weren't going to make it to Katok Ritro. A local bus, apparently abandoned on the side of the road long ago, prevented us from making a hairpin turn. Nepal doesn't have towing service, so the only solution, needless to say, was to cut off the overhanging roof of the house across the road. Someone negotiated with the owner of the house, and for 3,000 rupees (about \$42), he agreed to simply tear down as much of the roof as was necessary for the buses to get by. (For that sum, the owner can easily replace the roof and have a lot left over—a rupee goes a long way in Nepal.)

Besides Chagdud Rinpoche's students, many Tibetan monks and lamas attended the practices at Katok Ritro; as a result, not all of us could fit into the temple. Anticipating the large crowd, Jigme Tromge Rinpoche had set up a series of huge colorful tents, in which people could take turns sitting. In these tents, too, we ate breakfast and a gourmet lunch every day and drank sweet tea on every break.

For five days before the cremation, we did a White Vajrasattva practice in the shrineroom, where Rinpoche's embalmed body had remained for a year in an ornamented enclosure. Some people wondered if we were doing the practice for Rinpoche's benefit, but as Jigme Rinpoche explained, we were practicing in order to pu-

rify our own karma. If students want to create the interdependence necessary for the guru to reincarnate as their teacher, their minds as well as their connection and commitment to the guru—their samaya—must be very pure. Their relationship with each other must also be harmonious. To ensure this, students engage in purification practice when their master dies.



Kyabje Moktsa Rinpoche arriving at Katok Ritro

Thanks to Rinpoche's training, we Westerners were able for the most part to keep up with the Vajrasattva sadhana. (We had an English version of it and were somewhat familiar with the practice, having done it for a week the year before.) A lama from Chatral Rinpoche's monastery acted as umdzé, or chant master. The many monks in attendance played musical instruments, served as shrinekeepers, and chanted with great enthusiasm (especially the protector prayers—the monks had a catchy, syncopated way of playing the

drum and chanted with the same zeal as fans at a soccer match).

Presiding at the ceremonies was Kyabje Moktsa Rinpoche, supreme head of Katok Monastery in Tibet. Throughout the practice, he showed a genuine and personal concern for the well-being of Chagdud Rinpoche's students. He greeted each of us in turn with a warm smile as he offered us some *dudtsi*, or consecrated medicine. He was kind, even playful, yet extremely powerful. His face had a luminous quality that made you wonder if his body were actually solid.

Seated next to Moktsa Rinpoche, and the focus of much of his attention, was Chagdud Rinpoche's grandson, Tulku Orgyen. Also present were three tulkus from Tromge Ling (Rinpoche's family monastery in Tibet), one of whom was the incarnation of Tromge Trungpa Rinpoche, a great Tara practitioner and Dzogchen master.

On the day of the cremation, many more people set out for Katok Ritro, including a large number of monks and nuns from monasteries in Boudhanath and Pharping. As soon as the long trail of buses and SUVs made its way past Pharping, everything came to a halt. A truck had broken down, and we were



Cremation fire

told that the road would be impassable for two and a half hours. Rinpoche's cremation was meant to take place at an appointed time—there was an astrologically auspicious moment on this full-moon day—and, in addition, Moktsa Rinpoche had to get back to Boudhanath to begin a three-month-long series of empowerments.

One of the lamas who would be officiating at the cremation, H.E. Chokling Rinpoche (the incarnation of the great treasure discoverer Chok-gyur Lingpa), got out of his car and, gesturing with cell phone in hand, announced that he was going to call the traffic police. "Not to worry," he said. "With this many blessings, there will be obstacles."

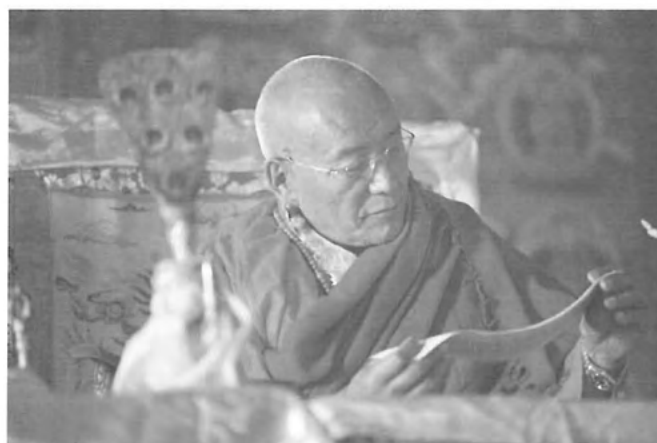
Nonetheless, fearing that the auspicious moment would pass (and a little skeptical about the efficacy of the Nepali traffic police), people poured out of the buses and started climbing the mountain. Some hiked up the road, while others followed monks and nuns along shortcut trails through the valleys and up the mountainside.

By the time the truck was fixed, many people had made it all the way to Katok Ritro; many others were close to having made it. They were exhausted but exhilarated, certain that somehow this had all been part of the plan and gratified to have made the effort to get to the ceremony, even if it meant a grueling walk up the mountain.

Chagdud Khadro, who had also walked, said that Rinpoche would be laughing now. And something I read later gave me an idea of what Rinpoche might have been up to. In his autobiography, *Lord of the Dance*, he described a visit to his guru Tulku Arik after a twenty-year separation. He, Khadro, Jigme Rinpoche, and the rest of the entourage rode their horses only partway to Tulku Arik's mountain retreat hut. Then Rinpoche told everyone to dismount and walk up the final distance to the hut "as a respectful gesture to Tulku Arik and as a method of purification." On this special day, Rinpoche was, as usual, not losing an opportunity for his students to purify their karma and create merit.

By the time everyone arrived at Katok Ritro, Rinpoche's body had been removed from the enclosure. The body was wrapped in cloth, its contours recognizable. A ritual crown had been placed on Rinpoche's head, which was wrapped in red cloth. One by one, we entered the temple and circled the body, paying our respects. Some of us sat for a while with Khadro, crying.

The grief, and the intensity of it, was unexpected. When Rinpoche died, my initial reaction had been one of grief, but it had quickly given way to an experience of Rinpoche's all-pervasive presence and blessings. Tromge Trungpa had once said to Rinpoche, "When a lama dies, he attains enlightenment. This is the time to pray for blessings, not to cry, for there is great spiritual increase in that moment." And Rinpoche himself had said, "When the teacher passes away, it's rather like the sun setting. It seems that the sun has disappeared, but we've simply lost sight of it from the perspective of where we stand on the earth. Just as the sun passes from our view when the earth turns, when the karma between a teacher and a student changes, we can no longer see the teacher, even though he's not really gone."





For a year after Rinpoche's passing, it really did feel as though he hadn't gone. His presence was stronger than ever; he had never seemed more accessible. But then, seeing his body in the shrineroom, I was overwhelmed by the realization that his *physical* presence, his unique personality, had come to an end. My mind was filled with memories of him and his incomparable qualities as a teacher, and I longed for him to be back among us in his physical form.

After a while, the body was lifted onto a palanquin, and a group of lamas and students carried it outside, circumambulating the temple, then proceeding to the courtyard. There, they lowered Rinpoche's body into a structure (called a *dung-khang*) that had been built specifically for the cremation.

Four lamas, each at a shrine and accompanied by a group of monks, were positioned around the *dung-khang*. They performed four different practices simultaneously, the sounds of drums and horns, bells and conches, and chanting filling the air in every direction. At a certain point, the fire was lit, and each lama performed a fire puja in which traditional substances were offered through small openings on each of the four sides of the *dung-khang*. As the fire burned, our grief intensified—but so did Rinpoche's blessings. Our hearts were raw, but wide open and full of love, and so were our minds.

As each fire puja came to an end, the openings were closed with bricks and mortar and sealed with a paper mandala. The flames turned to smoke, and the courtyard was enveloped in thick, white smoke, lending an ethereal, otherworldly cast to everything. As a friend said, breathing in the smoke was like breathing in Rinpoche himself.

When the ceremonies were over, Jigme Rinpoche, Khadro, and Jigme Rinpoche's mother, Karma Drolma, made offerings to the lamas, monks, and nuns. Then, while the fire blazed with a startling intensity, many of us lingered by the *dung-khang*, offering one last katak to Rinpoche, recalling the incomparable kindness of our guru, and blending our minds with his enlightened mind.

—Lama Tsultrim

PHOTO CAPTIONS, TOP TO BOTTOM

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Moktsa Rinpoche presiding over ceremonies

White Vajrasattva puja in shrineroom

Drusilla Lopez, Ramla Roussel, Peter Moulton, and Marilyn Cohen at ceremony

Sangha members from three continents prepare offerings

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Moktsa Rinpoche and Lama Tsering

Dhughe Tulku Rinpoche (LEFT) and Tromge Trungpa Rinpoche in shrineroom doorway

Lama Padma and Lama Tsultrim during the ceremonies

Offerings being made during the fire pujas

Individual Reflections

By now, many of you will already have seen photos or heard accounts of the cremation ceremonies for His Eminence Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche. For my part, I can only add how much I appreciated the support of our sangha during this extraordinary occasion.

While rituals had been performed throughout the year since the arrival of Rinpoche's *kudun* at the retreat center, these few days were the culmination of all of our offerings



to him. Leading the ceremonies were many great lamas who had long-standing connections with Rinpoche. On the last day, when the ceremonies moved from the shrineroom to the courtyard outside, high lamas accompanied by their monks were seated in each of the four directions. In the east were Kyabjé Moktsa Rinpoche and my son, Sungtrul Orgyen Tromge; in the south were H.E. Chokling Rinpoche and I; in the west was vajra master Tromge Wöntrul Rinpoche (Tsultrim Lodrö, the Tromge throne holder) seated with Tromge Trungpa Rinpoche and Tromge Trinley Ozer Rinpoche; and in the north, H.E. Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche sat with Tulku Kunga and Tulku Dorje Gyaltsen.

Some time ago, H.E. Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche had accepted my request to lead the ceremonies, accompanied by Orgyen Tobgyal Rinpoche. However, in the interim, Gongna Tulku Rinpoche, one of Dzongsar Monastery's head lamas, passed away. Khyentse Rinpoche was then called on to conduct cremation ceremonies for him and so was unable to join us in Pharping. Nonetheless, we remain deeply grateful that his blessings and prayers were with us throughout the ceremonies.

—Jigme Tromge Rinpoche

We came to sit with Rinpoche's body one last time, to pay our respects to the miraculous manifestation of bodhichitta in each of our lives. It was a colorful display, with practitioners from a rich array of countries and historical ties to Rinpoche's long life of teaching and dharma activities. It was a poignant reminder of impermanence and interdependence, and an opportunity to purify and strengthen our sa-

maya with a great master. It was a wide stream of countless moments culminating in fire and smoke, smoke and then more fire, as Rinpoche's body burned.

Where do we go from here? Rinpoche would tell us to keep going. He offered us a huge banquet to nourish us as we make the journey along our own dharma paths. I recall a dream I had some months after Rinpoche passed away. He was leading a group of us in a drubchen ceremony, and I couldn't stop crying with joy at seeing him again. At the end of the session, I went up, still crying, to receive his blessings and told him how happy I was to see him again because I thought he had died. He simply asked, "Really so different?" Now I understand that we need to keep going in our practice until the realization that there is no difference takes root in us.

—Michael McLaughlin

It is the last day of the ceremonies, and we are heading up the hill early to prepare for the cremation. We've had a highly charged week—jet lag, emotional swings, long days, and short nights. The bus begins the slow crawl up the hill out of Pharping; my mind is grinding. We come to a halt. Ahead of us, a line of vehicles, passengers' heads sticking out, necks craned in an effort to see what has interrupted our progress. A one-lane road and a large truck with a broken wheel rim. Two hours to fix. A lot of ideas are put forth, which Lama Sherab cuts. We will walk the road, not the cross-country trail. I am jolted from my self-centered indulgence by the overwhelming sensation of Rinpoche's presence. The day is different from those that preceded. It has gotten warmer earlier, and the sky is less cloudy. I'm filled with joy, and a large grin is planted on my face as all these fortunate beings begin the pilgrimage up the hill.

No longer in buses, we pass the same families and humble farms that we have cloaked in dust for the past week. It is so sweet not having the glass and the metal between us. We are now clearly the pilgrims who have come to pay respect to our beloved teacher: "Just a closer walk with thee." There is no way to express the gratitude for this precious opportunity—only the tears that well up everyday in response to the blessings that he showers on us.

—Lon Hill



Offerings being made during the fire pujas

Kindness of the Mahaguru

From the very heart of compassion,
You came to the borderlands
To tear asunder hope and fear.
From the vault of your vast sky mind,
The blessings of pure dharma
Came, like a sweet rain,
Long awaited.

Due to your great kindness,
The lost sangha assembled
And the holy places arose.
The pinnacle teachings rested firmly
On the foundation of pure motivation,
And you never let us forget impermanence.

Now, without your physical body to
comfort us,
We grieve without tears,
Immersed in the blessing
Of mind beyond all extremes.

A year later we reunited among snow peaks
In homage to the mahaguru,
Amidst a great fire puja
Led by lineage lamas in the four directions.

Clouds of white blessing smoke,
Liberating by sight and smell,
Filled the lungs.
There was no separation.

After the ceremony,
Few remained
To witness the sudden appearance
Of the clear flame, a great butter lamp
offering.

One second a flaming heruka,
One second a fiery snow lion,
One second a fire horse—
The flames leaped into space.

The eyes of Rinpoche's vast vision,
The tongue of Rinpoche's continuous
dharma teachings,
And the heart of Rinpoche's boundless
compassion
Remain with us.

—Lama Norbu



Really, I couldn't take it in. There was one moment when everything stopped and I found sky mind and knew certainly Rinpoche was there. Brilliantly.

—Chagdud Khadro



Students watching the flames

To demonstrate that what is compounded
is impermanent,
you have departed for a time to the pinnacle
realm of Lotus Light,
but may the full moon of your nirmanakaya
emanation rise again swiftly,
dispelling the sorrow and darkness of those
you will guide.

—Excerpt from *Supplication for the Swift Rebirth
of Chagdud Rinpoche* by Kyabjé Getsé Tulku

Interview with Khentrul Lodrö Thaye Rinpoche

Khentrul Rinpoche has been in the United States for more than a year, traveling and teaching at Chagdud Gonpa centers and other places throughout the country. Lama Dorje and Lama Trinley interviewed him for the Wind Horse in Cottage Grove last November with Paloma Lopez translating.

Wind Horse: What first brought you to the United States?

Khentrul Rinpoche: I had been away from Tibet for more than five years, studying and teaching at Kyabjé Penor Rinpoche's monastery in India. On my way back to Tibet, I received a phone call from H.E. Chagdud Rinpoche, who asked me to come to the United States to teach at his centers and help him start a *shedra*, or dharma school. He had requested that Kyabjé Moktsa Rinpoche and Kyabjé Dri-med Zhingkyong, both of Katok Monastery, find him a khenpo (professor of Buddhism) who met his criterion—someone from the Katok lineage who could teach anything. He said that Moktsa Rinpoche had then referred him to me.

I didn't want to be away from my monastery, Katok Mardo Tashi Choling in Tibet, any longer. I felt a responsibility toward the monks and lamas there. So I told Chagdud Rinpoche that I needed to go back to check on them; if it seemed as though I could leave, I would consider coming to Rigdzin Ling.

When I returned to Mardo Tashi Choling, the lamas and monks were so happy to see me. Although Moktsa Rinpoche had already told them that I was going to America, they begged me not to leave again. I then went to visit Moktsa Rinpoche, who said, "It is wonderful you came. It is nice to see you. Now you have to go to America." I told him how much my monks relied on me as a teacher. He replied, "That's no problem. I can give them fifteen teachers if you want." Then he wrote a long letter of explanation to my monastery.

Moktsa Rinpoche had cared for me since I was a very young child, and I am very grateful to him. Moreover, he is the head of all of the Katok monasteries, and I have received from him transmissions of the kama and terma traditions, as well as all the empowerments of the Katok lineage. So I agreed to go.

Chagdud Rinpoche passed away soon after I arrived in the United States; I was extremely disappointed, because I had met him only twice. Despite Rinpoche's passing, a *shedra* was convened last summer, taking place for more than

a month at Rigdzin Ling. The Chagdud Gonpa sanghas that I have visited are very enthusiastic about the teachings, and I aspire to do my best to help them. When I spoke with Moktsa Rinpoche recently, his instructions to me were very clear: "Now that Chagdud Rinpoche has died, you will not return to Tibet. You have to help the centers in America." So that is what I'm doing.

WH: What is a *shedra*?

KR: A *shedra* is a dharma school that emphasizes study and contemplation. In Tibet we study many different texts over many years, but in America I think we can focus on the essentials—just enough contemplation and study to learn how to practice. These essentials include such texts as *The Thirty-Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva* and Shantideva's *The Way of the Bodhisattva*, as well as teachings on the six perfections, emptiness, and buddha nature, and some teachings on tantra.

WH: Rinpoche, you have mentioned that Westerners tend to have strong intellects and sharp minds but maybe not so much faith.

KR: Often when they begin to study dharma, Westerners don't have so much faith. But slowly, through reasoning, confident faith arises. That is the best kind of faith; it can't be lost, because it is based

on knowing. In America you are well educated. When I teach calm abiding practice here, even those who haven't received many teachings understand. If I were to teach this to new people in Tibet, they wouldn't grasp it because most people haven't learned how to study.

WH: In the last few years of his life, it seemed that Chagdud Rinpoche's connection with the Katok lineage was very important to him.

KR: In the Katok lineage is a cycle called *Triyik Norbu Melong*, or *The Jeweled Mirror of Advice*, which includes everything from the preliminary practices to the Great Perfection. Compiled by Getsé Pandita, it comprises all the works of the Katok lineage. There are five Golden Throne holders of Katok and one of them, Getsé Rinpoche, is a reincarnation of Getsé Pandita. Moktsa Rinpoche gave the transmission of this cycle privately to Chagdud Rinpoche at Katok Bero Gonpa in Nepal. There are about two hundred branch monasteries of Katok; Chagdud Rinpoche's monas-



Khentrul Lodrö Thaye Rinpoche

tery in Kham and Katok Mardo Choling are two of the larger ones. So we have those connections. Another is that my monastery was Dudjom Lingpa's first residence—he lived there for about sixteen years. Dudjom Lingpa's tulku, Kyabjé Dudjom Rinpoche, was one of Chagdud Rinpoche's root teachers. In addition, there were two great tertons at Katok: Rigdzin Duddul Dorje and Rigdzin Longsal Nyingpo. Rigdzin Duddul Dorje's fifth emanation was Dudjom Rinpoche. In these ways, the interdependent connections between Katok, Chagdud Rinpoche, and my monastery are very good.

WH: At this time, what do you think is most important for us to focus on in our practice?

KR: We need to pray that the identity of Chagdud Rinpoche's tulku is unquestionable. Doubt about it can create many obstacles to the dharma. For this reason, everyone should focus on the aspiration that Rinpoche's indisputable tulku return. The interdependence of such aspirations and prayers at this time is crucial. Because his tulku hasn't yet taken rebirth, there isn't a specific child to focus on. Once the tulku is born and recognized, we will have someone to rely on.

WH: How do we know if a teacher is someone we can rely on?

KR: To practice dharma, we need to rely on a qualified teacher. When we do, all of our negativity—anger, attachment, and ignorance—begins to decrease; at the same time, our positive qualities increase like the waxing moon. They say that when we rely on a teacher, we take on all of his or her positive qualities in the same way that clay pressed into a tsa-tsa mold reflects the contours of the mold.

But we have to make sure that the teacher is authentic. That doesn't necessarily mean that he or she sits on a high throne, is famous, or is wealthy—a teacher's authenticity isn't determined by outer appearance. The teachings say, "Don't rely on the individual, rely on the dharma." It is the dharma in the teacher's mind and heart that we rely on. That someone can teach the dharma doesn't mean that he or she is truly practicing or has developed positive qualities. The most important thing is that a teacher's motivation be that of bodhichitta, that the teacher teach and act in harmony with the dharma. It takes time to know whether a teacher has these qualities. If you find a teacher who has them, then you have found someone you can rely on.

When I was a young monk, I had a teacher who was a very unassuming and helpful khenpo. At the time, I did not recognize his qualities. It was only later, when I began to travel, that I came to understand how excellent a teacher he was. Subsequently, I returned and was able to receive the most profound transmissions from him. Although he has since passed away, I will always remember him as a teacher with the right qualities.

Whether we meet a good teacher completely depends on our merit. If a teacher is truly a Great Perfection master, it will be reflected in the teacher's conduct—he or she won't be like ordinary people. Some lamas say that you don't need to practice the preliminaries to accumulate merit or purify obscurations. This kind of thinking can create obstacles to the dharma. When the dharma first came to Tibet, some teachers told people that they didn't need to study, engage in virtuous activities, gather the accumulations, or refine away obscurations; rather they could just

focus on the Great Perfection. To rectify this, *panditas* (accomplished scholars) were invited from India to clarify the teachings. They taught in the traditional way, presenting the dharma step-by-step. That dharma has flourished in Tibet is due in part to these masters' great kindness.

There are two kinds of individuals, with differing capacities. The first, a sudden (or spontaneous) realizer, is someone who has accumulated merit and refined away obscurations to the extent that he or she is ready for the highest practices. The second is a gradual realizer, someone who trains his or her mind step-by-step, gradually traversing the stages of the path toward realization. Sudden realizers don't have to follow all the steps of working with their minds because theirs have already changed. They can become completely liberated with just one teaching or empowerment.

In my travels, I have met students who thought for years that Great Perfection practice was all they needed to do. But now they realize that their minds haven't changed. They lack enthusiasm for virtuous activities, and their faith, compassion, and loving kindness have not increased. Nor have their negative emotions lessened. They want to start from the beginning, training their minds step-by-step.

We each need to be our own mind's witness. There is a saying that if we are honest with ourselves and do our very best to develop kind heart and work with our mind, even were we to meet Guru Rinpoche today, there would be no need for embarrassment.



Lha khang at Katok Mardo Tashi Choling in Tibet

Sangha News

South America

The sangha in South America has had great cause for rejoicing, as Jigme Tromge Rinpoche gave Great Perfection, or Dzogchen, teachings during Khadro Ling's annual January retreat. Approximately seventy people who had completed their preliminary practices, or ngondro, including 500,000 Vajra Guru mantra recitations, attended the retreat. The teachings were extraordinary, not only because of Jigme Rinpoche's grace and capacity as vajra master, but because of the powerful continuity of the Dzogchen lineage received from our father guru, H.E. Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche.

An Akshobhya retreat took place in the first week of January, before Jigme Rinpoche's arrival. A number of practitioners—again, those who had completed their ngondro—have made the commitment to recite a hundred thousand Akshobhya mantras, dedicating the merit of their practice to the specific individuals for whom these recitations have been sponsored. The pristine clarity that is the fruit of Akshobhya meditation and the potential of the practice to liberate beings suffering in the lower realms have become apparent to many sangha members in Brazil. Lama Yeshe and Lama Rigdzin organized a weekend Akshobhya ceremony for the Curitiba sangha at a beautiful shrineroom in the seaside city of Matinhos; Lama Tsering has similar plans for the São Paulo sangha.

Also in January, sangha members from all over Brazil and Uruguay came to Khadro Ling to practice their ngondro. Lama Tsering and Lama Yeshe gave teachings, while Chagdud Khadro bestowed the two necessary empowerments.

These inspiring January retreats followed an intense period that had started with the conclusion of the three-year retreat on December 4. Lama Sonam Tsering presided over this very moving event, in which sangha and family members received six three-year and two eighteen-month retreatants in the shrineroom. Later that day, Lama Gyatso arrived from Los Angeles to join Lama Sonam for fire pujas like those that had been performed at Chagdud Rinpoche's cremation in Nepal. Although these ceremonies were closed and attended by only a few practitioners, the entire sangha experienced a powerful sense of healing and blessings while they were taking place.

Lama Gyatso and Lama Sonam also performed consecration ceremonies for the Padmasambhava Palace. The ceremonies demanded relentless but joyous effort, during which the lamas deeply inspired the sangha with their knowledge, guru devotion, energy, and attention to detail. We all look forward to their return.

They, as well as Jigme Rinpoche, were delighted by the progress of the Padmasambhava Palace and offered useful suggestions. The stuccowork has been expertly completed for all three stories, and the building awaits its ornamental roofs and elaborate exterior artwork, which is now being created by Lama Chimed (from Katok Gonpa in Tibet), Lama Rigdzin, and a crew of artisans. Meanwhile, the structure, stark and elegant

against the Brazilian sky, manifests radiant hues ranging from pearl white to midnight blue to deep rose. Much of our outer practice focuses on inviting Guru Padmasambhava and his splendid retinue to take up residence in the palace; our inner practice involves the realization that all of this has never been separate from Guru Padmasambhava's enlightened form.

One of the most successful developments in recent months has been a series of grief support groups organized through Casa Amitabha (Khadro Ling's hospice) for residents of the small towns nearby. Participants, while tentative at first, have become quite committed. In addition, a ten-day training on spiritual care for the dying took place at Casa Amitabha. The training included p'howa, as well as talks on bioethics in hospitals, medical directives (living wills), and the Brazilian laws concerning the dying process. We are working with a legislator in Brasilia to provide a legal basis for medical directives.

In October, the Tara ceremony of a hundred thousand tsok offerings was held in Santa Maria, a city in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. The small sangha of Chagdud Gonpa Chimed Ling took on the challenge wholeheartedly and fulfilled it beautifully. Chagdud Khadro and Lamas Norbu, Sherab, Chimed, Yeshe, and Rigdzin were present; Lama Tsering presided as vajra master.

Other Chagdud Gonpa projects that are progressing quickly are the construction of a retreat facility in Uruguay, where we have a large piece of land, and the development of a strong practice group in Chile. A new organization, Chagdud Gonpa Hispanoamerica, has been formed for the Spanish-speaking countries, and several texts will be published in Spanish. Many of these developments are described on the redesigned web site, www.chagdud.org.



Padmasambhava Palace under construction at Khadro Ling

Rigdzin Ling

In August 2003, Rigdzin Ling was happy to host Khentrul Lodrö Thaye Rinpoche's first U.S. shedra, with more than thirty students attending the month-long program. Khentrul Rinpoche taught Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way* and Shantideva's *The Way of the Bodhisattva*. David Curtis, Oliver Boldizar, Paloma Lopez, and Dieter Schindler taught classical and colloquial Tibetan to a rambunctious crew, whose ages ranged from fourteen to sixty. The event was inspiring, illuminating, and fun.

For those who gathered to practice together during Rinpoche's cremation ceremonies, it was perhaps impossible not to have felt his immense blessings; this was certainly true at Rigdzin Ling. With Lama Drimed leading the pujas, almost a hundred of us did White Vajrasattva and Red Tara practice. In the future, Rigdzin Ling will hold three days of White Vajrasattva and a day of Red Tara practice on each anniversary of Rinpoche's paranirvana.

Losar marked the completion of our audio archive project. After nine months of working in shifts from early morning into night, Inger Dybvig and Joanna Smiley, with technical engineering by Jean-Paul Riva, completed the transfer of all 3,500 audio tapes of Rinpoche's teachings to DVD, at the same time creating two complete archival sets to be kept at Odsal Ling and Khadro Ling in Brazil. In addition, 1,500 tapes by other Chagdud Gonpa lamas and guest teachers were transferred to DVD, completing the archive. This archive will be recopied every seven to ten years so that Rinpoche's precious teachings will be preserved for as long as possible. In the coming months, approximately 200 videotapes will also be transferred to DVD.

Two new projects will begin this spring: The first involves extending the shrineroom to create an alcove for a six-foot-high stupa that will contain some of the relics from Rinpoche's cremation. The copper stupa will be built in Nepal this spring under the guidance of Lama Pema Dorje. Anyone interested in contributing to the stupa can contact Kim. The second is an ambitious prayer wheel project being carried out in conjunction with Iron Knot Ranch. Slated for construction are fifteen wheels at Rigdzin Ling under an open pavilion, and sixteen wheels at Iron Knot placed in pavilions in each of the four directions. Each wheel will be four feet in diameter and more than ten feet high—similar to the wheels at Khadro Ling. In all, 2,000 miles of paper will be used! Moreover, a disk of microfilm will top each wheel, greatly increasing the total number of mantras. The three Vajra Guru mantra wheels alone, at Iron Knot and Rigdzin Ling, will contain a total of almost one trillion mantras.

Ati Ling

Ati Ling held its third annual Kurukulle retreat last November with Jigme Tromge Rinpoche as vajra master. The retreat was scheduled so that the last day would coincide with the anniversary of Chagdud Rinpoche's passing. We now

plan to hold the Kurukulle retreat every year so that the last day will be on the anniversary of Rinpoche's parinirvana. Some sangha members flew to Nepal to participate in the cremation ceremonies in Pharping. During the cremation ceremony, a Red Tara tsok was offered by the sangha at Ati Ling. After Rinpoche's cremation, five of Jigme Rinpoche's students from Ati Ling accompanied him on pilgrimage to India. All five aspire to return to Asia with Rinpoche as soon as possible.

We held our seventh annual Vajrakilaya drubchöd during the Martin Luther King weekend. Khentrul Rinpoche was the vajra master, and the umdzé was Lama Jigme. During the retreat, Rinpoche taught "The Four Nails." It wove another golden thread into the brocade of teachings that Khentrul Rinpoche has given at Ati Ling, including a monthly series on *The Way of the Bodhisattva*.

Finally, a word of thanks to all who have helped in so many ways to keep the light of Ati Ling shining and to further our teacher's amazing activity.

Iron Knot

We write this in the midst of a hundred thousand tsok offerings that coincide with Rinpoche's cremation ceremonies in Nepal. As must be the case for his students and centers the world over, it is as if he sits among us, bestowing sublime and tangible blessings. Before him we confess our individual and collective shortcomings, and strongly aspire that all those connected to this great Lord of Dharma perfectly enact his compassionate vision through our practice and labors.

With the resolute help of the extended sangha, we managed to get the roof on the main hall of the new shrineroom that Rinpoche designed and broke ground for during his last visit to Iron Knot Ranch. It was no small task, and our sincere thanks go out to all those who made it possible through their generosity and hard work. The last of the tin went up just in time to host H.E. Namkha Drimed Rinpoche, who consecrated the new space through empowerment and his sublime teachings on the *Flight of the Garuda*.

Shortly thereafter, we were extraordinarily blessed by a weeklong visit by Khentrul Rinpoche, during which he taught *The Thirty-Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva*; in his spare time, he helped us with the building's layout and long-term planning.

Elsewhere on the ranch, construction was completed on a large pavilion sheltering the Guru Rinpoche statue from wind and rain, the butter lamp shrine was modified to accommodate better ventilation, having found that a thousand simultaneous lamp offerings turn it into a veritable oven, and we miraculously managed to get a hot shower up and running (alas, sans roof) in this our fifth year of getting exceedingly dirty. Work continues on our utility systems; water, solar electric, and communications are improved but still in need of tweaking. This spring, work will begin in earnest on an extensive prayer wheel project we are undertaking in concert with Rigdzin Ling.

Our prayers and well wishes go out to the sangha and friends during this time. Through our collective efforts in Rinpoche's vast mandala, may all beings be led to his heart's essence.

T'hondup Ling

The activity level of our precious resident lama, Lama Gyatso Nubpa, is difficult to describe, much less keep pace with! In 2003 this included ngondro and chöd teachings in Switzerland, a weekend teaching in Alaska, a nine-week pilgrimage to Asia, leading numerous fish releases and monthly Shi-tro practices, as well as three other tsok feasts each month.

After months of renovation, in July 2003 the T'hondup Ling house in Los Feliz again became Lama Gyatso's residence. We are grateful to the sangha members who generously offered their homes for our weekly practices during the renovation period. The house was originally purchased in 1997 by Don Delaquil for use as a center for T'hondup Ling. Over the years, many eminent lamas have blessed it with their teachings, practice, and presence. When Don and his family moved to another home nearby, Lama Gyatso and his family moved in. It was Don who requested of Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche that Lama Gyatso become the resident lama for T'hondup Ling. We extend our heartfelt appreciation for his exemplary practice of the six perfections and for his years of selfless service.

In late July, Gonjang Rinpoche, Khenpo Choewang Dorje, and Lama Lhudrup came for a stay of several months. Gonjang Rinpoche served as vajra master for our annual T'hröma drubchöd, held in August at the Philosophical Research Society. Later in the fall, he offered teachings and empowerments in several cities, including Santa Barbara, Chicago, and Kapa'a, Hawaii.

The visiting lamas were an enormous help with the ongoing transformation of a former summer YMCA camp into a dharma retreat center. T'hondup Ling now has a retreat facility in the mountains, 120 miles north of Los Angeles. A gracious benefactor made possible the purchase of 475 pristine acres of secluded forest in the mountains of Tehachapi. This was the first step for Ari Bhöd, the American Foundation for Tibetan Cultural Preservation, a non-profit organization under the direction of Lama Gyatso. The inaugural event was the Yeshe Tsogyal retreat in October, led by Namkha Drimed Rinpoche and attended by a host of lamas. On the day of the descent of blessings, Nam-

kha Rinpoche remarked how happy he was that Lama Gyatso had secured the retreat land, adding how special the assembled galaxy of lamas was and that the retreat had been very beneficial, with many auspicious signs.

Lama T'hogme and Lama Lhudrup will remain at T'hondup Ling for a time, helping in Tehachapi, as well as organizing the statue consecration project and serving as models of diligence, discipline, and good humor.

Orgyan Rigjed Ling

The highlight of our year had to have been the recent visit to Boulder of Namkha Drimed Rinpoche, who taught *The*

Three Words of Garab Dorje during one weekend last September at Marpa House. The teaching, well received by all who attended, drew participants from both coasts of this country and as far north as Alaska. A large contingent from Iron Knot Ranch traveled from the far southwest corner of New Mexico to attend. Just being in Namkha Rinpoche's presence was a teaching in itself, providing inspiration and demonstrating how a true bodhisattva manifests.

In other sangha news, our valued and esteemed coordinator, Nancy Bradley, left us to go into retreat at Rigdzin Ling, and Dennis Kennedy became our new coordinator.

Special thanks go to Dennis, Phil Bossung, and all others who helped with all the behind-the-scenes work that made Namkha Drimed Rinpoche's visit possible. May the merit in the mindstreams of all be manifold.

Dungkar Ling

Dungkar Ling, the newest Chagdud Gonpa center, opened in May 2003. Located on fourteen acres in the rolling hills of Pennsylvania, it is forty-five miles northeast of Philadelphia. The shrineroom is in what had been the living room of a 200-year-old farmhouse and comfortably seats about thirty people. We also have a sitting room, a screened-in dining porch for nice weather, and a bedroom reserved for visiting lamas. There is plenty of space for overnight guests, a large frame barn with a second-floor apartment, and the potential for a larger shrineroom on the ground floor. The yard comprises more than an acre of plantings and large, ancient trees. Fields currently used for horse grazing could be the future site for building projects, including residential space. We are working hard to replace the roof and plumbing of the farmhouse, as well as to widen a doorway for handicap accessibility.

We had a full house during our first event, a mindful-



Lama Gyatso releasing fish

ness retreat with Lama Zangpo in May. In August we hosted a dream yoga retreat with Lama Tsering and had twenty-two people overnight for the five-day practice. In September, Lama Zangpo returned with an introduction to guru yoga and the Vajrayana tradition, and in November Khentrul Rinpoche gave public talks in Philadelphia and in West Chester, Pennsylvania.

We gather regularly for mindfulness practice on Wednesday nights and a Red Tara puja on Sunday nights. We are slowly evolving into a devoted and dedicated sangha; we feel the blessings of the lamas, joy from the teachings, and the energy from our practice throughout the house and grounds. We have a strong sense that many beings are benefiting and that all will benefit from our aspirations and prayers.

Dechhen Ling

The past year brought our sangha many blessings, all of which seemed to revolve around Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche's passing. In July 2002, Rinpoche asked Lama Dorje and Lama Trinley to move from Rigdzin Ling to Dechhen Ling and serve as resident lamas, indicating that there was some urgency to their doing so. They purchased a home, moved in late October, and only three weeks later received news of his passing in Brazil. The experiences of our sangha at that time were like those of many throughout the world: a sense of shock tempered by openness, spaciousness, memories of Rinpoche, and an unexplainable feeling of peace. On the morning after his passing, the Red Tara statue and shrineroom glowed—not from the butter lamps or the sun but from the inside out; it was as if Rinpoche were everywhere.

We made Guru Rinpoche and Tara tsok offerings during the forty-nine-day period following Rinpoche's parinirvana and have continued to hold daily Red Tara, Vajrakilaya, and protector practices, as well as monthly Red Tara, *Shower of Blessings*, and Tröma tsoks.

Visiting lamas this past year have included Gatsal Lama from Williams, Oregon, who has joined us for several tsoks. Lama Tsering Everest offered the Red Tara empowerment and teachings in August; and Khentrul Rinpoche has come several times, giving teachings on guru yoga, bodhichitta, and shamatha practice. Lama Pema Dorje visited briefly in January and bestowed a Guru Rinpoche empowerment, while Lama Dorje and Lama Trinley have offered several introductory dharma teachings on Sunday mornings.

This year's annual Red Tara tsok was held in December in conjunction with Rinpoche's cremation ceremonies in Nepal. Lama Gyaltsen, Lama Jigme Lode, Gatsal Lama, and sangha members from across Oregon gathered for three days to practice and offer their prayers. At the moment the cremation fire was being lit, it felt as though the entire mandala of Chagdud Rinpoche's students throughout the world had become one, marveling at his kindness to us, while facing the painful task of finally having to say goodbye to his body as we knew it. It seemed appropriate

that in his cremation Rinpoche would again make an offering of his body, this time as a brilliant butter lamp.

Two auspicious events occurred back to back in February. Khentrul Rinpoche taught *The Thirty-Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva* for five days; later, Lama Gyaltsen from Corvallis served as vajra master for three days of Vajrakilaya practice up through Losar.

Vajra North

We have been hosting Chagdud Gonpa lamas about twice a year. Lama Padma and Lama Zangpo have given basic shamatha and vipashyana instruction, outlining how these two approaches are used in the Vajrayana in mantra recitation and deity practice. We feel these teachings have helped us clarify and solidify our practice.

In the past two years, we were fortunate to have a weeklong summer retreat with Lama Zangpo at Cheryl Buchan's comfortable cabin on beautiful Lake Laberge. Teachings and practice were punctuated with saunas, swims, and good food, with interested neighbors attending some teachings. The bluff overlooking the lake, the big sky, and the peaceful setting were all very conducive to meditation. We all treasured the intimacy of the small group, which allowed relaxed, personal, and transformative discussions with the lama. These retreats helped strengthen our sangha's bonds as we strive to support one another in fulfilling our highest aspirations.

This year, Danielle Shula's gentle presence was missed, as she has moved to Rigdzin Ling. Different sangha members have been attending various retreats and drubchens throughout the year, most notably Pamela Shaw and Dave Bruce, who were married by Jigme Tromge Rinpoche at the *Essence of Siddhi* drubchen last fall.

We look forward to another year of precious teachings—a winter weekend retreat with Lama Zangpo and a summer retreat with Lama Padma.

Yeshe Ling

The last time Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche visited Yeshe Ling, he asked us to build a Guru Rinpoche statue on a knoll above the shrineroom. Rinpoche said, "In the infinite interdependence of all phenomena, the very wind that blows over the surface of the statue will carry Guru Rinpoche's sacred essence to the furthest reaches of the universe, blessing beings everywhere." The project is progressing nicely under the capable hands of sculptor Glenn Sandvoss, along with the help of many other sangha members. The finished statue, located in the rolling hills above California's Napa Valley, will stand about fifteen feet high. Later in the spring, Jigme Rinpoche will fill the statue with precious objects and perform the consecration. When the weather warms up, it will be painted by Glenn.

Last summer Jigme Rinpoche and Lama Tsering led retreats here; we expect a visit from Chagdud Khadro when she travels to North America this spring.

PRACTICE BY THE DAYS OF THE MOON

*The phases of the moon correspond to the subtle male and female energies of the body and increase the benefit of practice on certain days of the lunar month. Specific practices shown are done at Chagdud Gonpa centers, but other practices are appropriate as well. Even keeping a mantra commitment on these days generates powerful virtue. (Note: *Eclipse of the sun; practice is multiplied 10,000 times; **eclipse of the moon; practice is multiplied 1,000 times.)*

March

- 6 Full Moon: P'howa
- 13 Last Quarter Moon: Tara Day
- 15 Twenty-fifth Day: Dakini Day
- 20 New Moon: Vajrasattva
- 28 First Quarter Moon: Tara Day
- 30 Tenth Day: Guru Rinpoche Day

April

- 5 Full Moon: P'howa
- 11 Last Quarter Moon: Tara Day
- 13 Twenty-fifth Day: Dakini Day
- 19* New Moon: Vajrasattva
- 27 First Quarter Moon: Tara Day
- 29 Tenth Day: Guru Rinpoche Day

May

- 4** Full Moon: P'howa
- 11 Last Quarter Moon: Tara Day
- 13 Twenty-fifth Day: Dakini Day
- 18 New Moon: Vajrasattva
- 27 First Quarter Moon: Tara Day
- 29 Tenth Day: Guru Rinpoche Day

June

- 2 Full Moon: P'howa
- 9 Last Quarter Moon: Tara Day
- 11 Twenty-fifth Day: Dakini Day
- 17 New Moon: Vajrasattva
- 25 First Quarter Moon: Tara Day
- 27 Tenth Day: Guru Rinpoche Day

July

- 2 Full Moon: P'howa
- 9 Last Quarter Moon: Tara Day
- 11 Twenty-fifth Day: Dakini Day
- 17 New Moon: Vajrasattva
- 24 First Quarter Moon: Tara Day
- 26 Tenth Day: Guru Rinpoche Day
- 31 Full Moon: P'howa

August

- 7 Last Quarter Moon: Tara Day
- 9 Twenty-fifth Day: Dakini Day
- 15 New Moon: Vajrasattva
- 23 First Quarter Moon: Tara Day
- 25 Tenth Day: Guru Rinpoche Day
- 29 Full Moon: P'howa

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