

First Shedra inspires practitioners

Like Pearls on a String

A short biography of His Eminence Dzigar Kongtrül Rinpoche



"In the endeavor to destroy ego, there has to be a dance that makes it playful to look at ego's tricks — and its ways of sneaking up on you! Before you had the Buddha's words, you were vulnerable and gullible. Now, you have the upper hand. You can see the irony of trying to be happy and free from suffering, on the one hand, and on the other, engagement in a bad marriage with ego!"

— *His Eminence Dzigar Kongtrül Rinpoche*

Meeting the Buddha Within

VKR presents the *Uttaratantra*



"Stop worrying about probabilities and possibilities for your own tathagatagarba experience. These will only become obstacles. When one attains enlightenment there are no more worries about how it should be used or to whom it should be directed. The worry is the ego which has not yet allowed the realization of tathagatagarba essence to occur."

— *Venerable Khandro Rinpoche*

Also in this issue:

Letter to the sangha from Khandro Rinpoche
 Remaining Like a Log: Memories of Shedra 2006
 Stand-Up-Sit-Down-Zen! Kyudo comes to Lotus Garden
 Turning the Wheel of Dharma: Annual Retreat is just ahead
 Tibetan Lesson: Bodhicitta

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Letter to the Sangha from Rinpoche

22 July, 2006

Dear Everyone,

Greetings! As summer sets in, we hope everyone is well, and that your practice continues to be steady and strong.

Jetsunla and I returned after a two and a half month long teaching schedule in Europe, after having attended the wonderful Shedra at LG in the spring, and will be back on the road again tomorrow. We are delighted and truly appreciative of the tremendous hard work our administrative staff, residents and sangha members accomplished this year. It resulted in a superb and successful spring program.

The LG sangha was honoured and blessed by the presence of His Eminence Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche. It can only be the blessing and fruition of all our virtues, to have the good fortune of receiving such precious teachings as we did. Words cannot fully express the depth of the gratitude we all feel, for the ceaseless stream of dharma and heartfelt advice that were showered upon us by Rinpoche.

The Shedra program was delightful. The sangha practiced a lot, and accumulated one million Vajrakilaya mantras, while studying the dharma, receiving teachings, and meditating with great diligence.

Besides the practice and study curriculum, LG has always aspired to create an environment and experience in community living, in the west. This year our senior practitioners, led by the Lopöns and the board of directors, spearheaded a new service. They contributed their cooking skills in the kitchen! Senior practitioners and sangha members, who came for the shedra, joined together on the cooking rota and prepared meals each day for over a hundred people. While continuing to fulfil their already many responsibilities, they joyfully stepped in to cook in the kitchen. We had Lopön cooks, a President cook, a VP cook, a drubpön cook, director cooks, participant cooks, chopön cooks and umdze cooks.

By doing so they set an example for others in understanding the immense importance of living life with flexibility, generosity, grace and dignity – in every activity. So often, I have often come across practitioners, particularly in the west, who become distant from shouldering any responsibility within a sangha. They attend teachings during a program, and live in a community as if they are attending a conference at a hotel. There is almost the sense, "that having paid I should get every cent's worth of an enlightened weekend!" At the same time those who do have or are given responsibilities during a program, can become very concentrated within their respective area and be fixated on a "role" and "place," and there are some who allow the vision of sangha service to be lost, by becoming engrossed in the pursuit of playing the part of a Buddhist bureaucrat. Sadly, not looking beyond their own work and ideas, they lose touch with the greater vision.

For a long time I have wanted our sangha members to understand what some of our masters and also the great Zen masters have always emphasized: "Training to tame the mind begins by learning to use the broom well." or "The practice of mindfulness begins in the kitchen."

When I was a child, His Holiness Mindrolling Trichen always made us sweep and scrub, saying, "The way you clean shows the level of diligence and awareness you have cultivated."

I would like to see all our sangha members understand the importance of seeing spiritual practice as how one lives one's life within the view of dharma and with the paramitas integrated in all aspects of one's life. This will bring suppleness of body, speech and mind into every activity, and culminate in a life that truly becomes a wish-fulfilling jewel for others.

I would like to thank all our Lopons, directors, residents, sangha members, the fantastic house staff and Dr. T for your wonderful effort and sincerity.

Jetsunla and I look forward to seeing many of you again for the Annual Retreat. I hope this will be the year when our senior Vajrayana practitioners will begin studying the traditional three-year retreat curriculum, and begin to prepare for extended solitary retreats. This involves receiving the required abhishekas and traditional practices, and learning them, and it includes concentrating further on many of the topics we have studied for several years.

As we continue our journey, I am sure that many new lessons will be learned by all of us along the way. I am happy to be traveling with you. I send everyone my love and prayers, and look forward joyfully to our meeting again.

Yours in the dharma,
KR

Like Pearls on a String

A short biography of HE Dzigar Kongtrül Rinpoche

During the Inaugural Celebration last September, Khandro Rinpoche announced to the sangha that she had invited His Eminence Dzigar Kongtrül Rinpoche to join her in the creation and direction of the new Shedra program at Lotus Garden. It is all our good fortune that Rinpoche accepted her offer. We are most grateful for his profound presentation of the 'Bodhisattvacaryavatara' at our very first Shedra and supplicate him to return and give many teachings at Lotus Garden in the years to come.

The task of describing our lineage and the masters who have held it is a daunting one, because words quite simply do not do justice to these masters, who have each in their turn sought out great masters, studied under them (in the course of which they underwent great hardships), and attained realization, and have done so not just once, but again and again, in a succession of lifetimes like pearls on a string.

In this short article, I will do my best to describe one of these masters, His Eminence Dzigar Kongtrül Rinpoche. But first, in order to do so, I will try to provide a bit of background of the lineage.

An illustrious lineage

Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye, also known as Jamgön Kongtrül the Great, was one of the most influential teachers of the Rimé movement of Tibetan Buddhism. Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye was an emanation of many great learned and accomplished masters of India and Tibet, including Buddha Sakyamuni's attendant Ananda, the great translator Vairotsana, Tsele Natsok Rangdrol, and the founder of Mindrolling Monastery, Rigdzin Gyurme Dorje.



He was born in eastern Tibet on the 2nd of December, 1813 into the Khyung family of accomplished masters, and showed remarkable signs from an early age. He quickly mastered reading and writing, the ten common sciences (medicine, grammar, astrology, and so forth) and the whole range of the Buddha's teachings, having studied widely, particularly at the monasteries of Shechen (a Nyingma monastery) & Palpung (a Karma Kagyu monastery). In total, he is said to have studied under more than fifty teachers, studying the teachings of all the different lineages of the eight great chariots, the eight practice lineages of the buddhas' teachings which flourished in Tibet. Foremost among these teachers were Ta'i Situ Pema Nyinje Wangpo, a Karma Kagyu master with whom Jamgön Lodrö Thaye studied at Palpung Monastery, and Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, who was the combined emanation of Vimalamitra and King Trisong Deutsen, a great Sakya teacher, and the last of the five great tertön kings.

A third master who had a great influence in the life of Jamgön Kongtrül was the renowned tertön Chokgyur Lingpa. Known as “the universal monarch of all tertöns” because of the incredible completeness of his terma, he is sometimes counted as the last of the one hundred tertöns of major significance. Although Chokgyur Lingpa had not gone through any formal studies, he was incredibly learned and eloquent as a result of his practice and realisation.

The three great masters Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, Chokgyur Lingpa, and Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye all acted as both each others teachers and disciples, so that the lineages of each of their teachings and terma were held by the other two masters. These three great teachers became renowned throughout Tibet, and eventually the entire world, as masters whose incomparable realisation and activity was without bias, sectarian or otherwise, and have thus been of immeasurable benefit and inspiration.



There is no way to describe the incredible kindness of this master.... He dedicated the whole of his life to teaching and propagating the dharma...

The tireless activity of Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye

Having studied extensively, Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye began to compose and compile teachings. His collected works total more than ninety volumes, foremost amongst which are the Five Great Treasuries:

- *The Treasury of Encyclopedic Knowledge* (shes bya kun la khyab pa'i mdzod), which reveals the ground, path and fruition for the whole of sutra and mantra, from the paths of the common sciences all the way up to dzogchen atiyoga.
- *The Treasury of Precious Instructions* (gdams ngag rin po che'i mdzod), which is a compilation of the most profound maturing empowerments and liberating instructions belonging to the eight great chariots of the practice lineage.

- *The Treasury of Kagyü Mantras* (bka' brgyud sngags kyi mdzod), which is a compendium of mandala rituals, maturing empowerments and liberating instructions, such as Yangdak, Vajrakilaya and Yamantaka from the Nyingma kama, and the tantra cycles from the new translation lineages of Marpa and Ngok.
- *The Treasury of Precious Termas* (rin chen gter mdzod), which distills the quintessence of an ocean of profound termas within the Nyingma school.
- *The Uncommon Treasury* (thun mong ma yin pa'i mdzod), which contains Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye's own profound terma revelations.
- *The Treasury of Extensive Teachings* (rgya chen bka' mdzod), which includes various related works, such as praises and advice, as well as compositions on medicine, science and so on.

There is no way to describe the incredible kindness of this master as he tirelessly sought out teachings (the lineages of some of which were becoming incredibly scarce), tirelessly practiced and accomplished these teachings, indefatigably composed new teachings, brought forth collections of treasure teachings, collected all of these into a single body of work, and then transmitted these teachings to following generations of practitioners. He dedicated the whole of his life to teaching and propagating the dharma by giving empowerments, instructions, advice, and reading transmissions for both sutra and mantra, kama and terma, from all of the old and new translation schools, without any sectarian bias.

Jamgon Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye passed into parinirvana on 28 December, 1899 at the age of 87.

Predicting the birth of Dzigar Kongtrül

After he passed away, five emanations appeared. The first Dzigar Kongtrül was one of these. He was the younger brother of Dzigar Chogtrül, who was a great lama from the Drukpa Kagyü school and lived in Kham Derge. The name Dzigar comes in part from the valley where Dzigar Chogtrül's monastery was situated. The valley looks like the white marking found on the forehead of some animals. This marking is called a dzi in Tibetan. Gar, which means "tent," comes from the tradition of Khamtrül Rinpoche, who was the root teacher of the first Dzigar Chogtrül. The first two Khamtrül Rinpoches always traveled around Tibet in tent encampments, never building a monastery.

The first Dzigar Kongtrül, Lodrö Rabpel, was recognized by the 15th Karmapa, Khakyab Dorje and was brought up and enthroned at Palpung. Two Kongtrül emanations were discovered at Palpung – Karse Kongtrül (Jamgön Palden Khyentse Özer), the son of the 15th Karmapa, and Dzigar Kongtrül.

Dzigar Kongtrül was very close with the 2nd Chokling of Neten, so at some point he left Palpung and established his own monastery near Neten Gön. There was a lovely lake close by and so his monastery became known as Tsokar.

Before Chokling Rinpoche left Tibet, Dzigar Kongtrül Rinpoche invited him to Tsokar for a visit. The night before Chokling Rinpoche was to return to his own monastery, Kongtrül told him that he would come back as his own son. He also told him that he must leave for India immediately. That following morning at dawn, Dzigar Kongtrül passed into nirvana without any signs of illness. After Chokling Rinpoche performed the cremation rituals, he returned to Chokling Gompa and arranged to leave for India as Kongtrül Rinpoche had asked.

The present Dzigar Kongtrül, Jigme Namgyel, was born in Northern India, just before his father established the Tibetan community settlement of Bir. When Rinpoche was nine years old, his father Chokling Rinpoche passed away. Soon after this His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche recognized him as an emanation of Jamgön Kongtrül the Great and His Holiness the 16th Karmapa confirmed this. He was soon enthroned at Chokling Gompa in Bir.

Education and empowerments

Rinpoche's first teacher was his own mother, Chokling Mayum. She disciplined him, teaching him reading and writing, as well as prayers and rituals. At thirteen Rinpoche began to formally study under and serve his root teacher His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche.



From him Rinpoche received:

- Nyingma Kama – the oral transmissions of the Nyingma lineage.
- Rinchen Terdzö – the treasure cycle of the Nyingma lineage.
- Dam Ngag Dzö – teachings on the Eight Lineages of Vajrayana Buddhism.
- Dzöd Dün – Longchenpa's *Seven Treasures*.
- All the works of Longchenpa.
- All the works of Jigme Lingpa, with particular emphasis on the Longchen Nyingthik cycle.
- All the treasures of Chokgyür Lingpa.
- All the treasures of Ratna Lingpa, Padma Lingpa, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, Jamgön Kongtrül, as well as many others.
- In particular, guided meditation on the Dzogchen path.

This is a short list of the main teachings and empowerments that Rinpoche received from his root teacher.

In addition, his philosophy teacher was Khenpo Rinchen, whom Rinpoche followed all over India in order to complete his own shedra studies. From him Rinpoche received

extensive teachings on madhyamika, prajnaparamita, the *Abhisamaya-alankara* and the *Uttaratantra Shastra*.



Later on, after His Holiness Khyentse Rinpoche passed away, Rinpoche received many empowerments and guided meditation on the Dzogchen path from Nyoshul Khen Rinpoche. He also studied under Tulku Ugyen Rinpoche's guidance for many years in Nepal.

Rinpoche's activities in the West

Currently, Rinpoche studies with and receives empowerments from Trulshik Rinpoche, Penor Rinpoche and, of course, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, from whom he has received the Kalachakra empowerment three times, as well as many sutrayana teachings. Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche moved to the United States in 1989 with his family and began a five-year tenure as a professor of Buddhist philosophy at Naropa University (then Institute) in 1990. Not long after arriving in the United States, Rinpoche founded Mangala Shri Bhuti, an organization established to further the practice of the Longchen Nyingtik lineage. He established a mountain retreat center, Longchen Jigme Samten Ling, in southern Colorado, where he spends much of his time in retreat and guides students in long-term retreat practice. When not in retreat, Rinpoche travels widely throughout the world teaching and furthering his own education.

Contributed by: Geoff Picus

Photos: His Eminence teaching at the 2006 Shedra (top); Jamgon Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye (middle); Meeting with a practitioner during an afternoon tea held in his honor (middle); Making offerings to His Eminence at the conclusion of the Shedra (bottom); ©2006 Mindrolling International

Meeting the Buddha Within

VKR's Presentation of the *Uttaratantra*

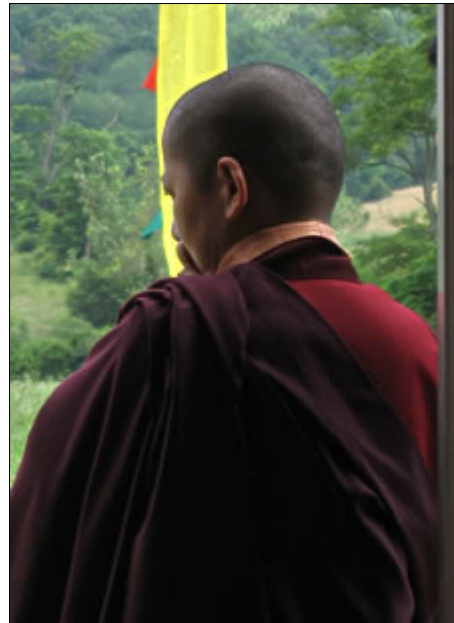
*The jewel treasure contained in the poor man's house
cannot tell him, 'I the precious treasure, am here'
and the man would never know it to be there.*

— Uttaratantra

Our precious teacher, Khandro Rinpoche, launched Lotus Garden's first Shedra by noting the auspiciousness of the program dates, intentionally selected by consulting the Tibetan lunar calendar. Buddha Shakyamuni's birthday was being observed on that very day, Saturday, June 3, and the full-moon on June 11 would mark the anniversary of his enlightenment and parinirvana.

The million-mantra objective

In observance of this most sacred period, Rinpoche instructed the gathered assembly to be especially mindful of body, speech, and mind. Particularly significant was her request that we each do as many recitations of the Vajrakilaya mantra as possible over the course of the week, creating together a powerful boundary of protection around the land and the teachings. Our collective goal was 1,000,000 recitations



Long after we had called it a day, nocturnal beings would certainly have observed our teacher, her own mala in hand, briskly walking the land.

As the days went by, mantra practice seemed to bring increasing focus and depth to our experience of the teachings and one could sense peacefulness settling over the land. Between scheduled activities, relieved of any expectation to make small talk, one could slip away from the crowd and settle into practice. As the habits of chatter and distraction fell away, practitioners could be seen ducking into shady shrine rooms, gazing out over the mountains, cooling their feet in the pond, or waiting quietly in the lunch line, mala beads in hand. Most nights, long after we had called it a day, nocturnal beings would certainly have observed our teacher, her own mala in hand, briskly walking the land. By the end of Shedra it was reported that we were closing in on our million-mantra objective.

What is a 'Shedra'?

On the first day Rinpoche also introduced us to the concept of the Shedra, explaining that the training includes both the development of view and the deepening of one's meditation. Traditionally, this study of classical texts, the accuracy of which have been rigorously maintained for centuries, takes place in a monastic setting with teachers and students working one-on-one. While monks study for nine or ten years in the traditional Shedra, our group of fortunate practitioners received a highly intensive presentation of two great works in nine days — a breathtaking introduction — which left few doubts about the scope and scale of things to come for Lotus Garden.

...as barn swallows soared in and out of the open doors and chattered urgently about nesting options from the rafters above, Rinpoche presented the *Uttaratantra*...

The *Uttaratantra* and its history

Over the course of the week, as barn swallows soared in and out of the open doors and chattered urgently about nesting options from the rafters above, Rinpoche presented the *Uttaratantra*, one of the foundation texts of Buddhist study. Texts may generally be classified as belonging to one of Buddha's three turnings of the wheel of dharma and the *Uttaratantra* belongs to those of the third turning, which illuminates the Buddha's teaching that Buddha-nature is inherent in all beings, as is the potential for its realization.

The Sanskrit title, *Uttaratantra*, literally means "The Highest Continuum". The full title in Tibetan, *Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i bstan bcos*, means "The Greater Vehicle Treatise on the Highest Continuum." The name of the text is usually abbreviated to *rgyud bla ma* or *Uttaratantra*, often translated as "Sublime Continuum of the Mahayana" or "The Peerless Continuum".



Rinpoche led us through the history of the text, which is attributed to Maitreya, the future Buddha.

It is said that the monk, Arya Asanga, had supplicated Maitreya for many years to appear to him, but only when his compassion had strengthened sufficiently was he able to perceive Maitreya, who claimed to have always been right there with him. Transporting Asanga to Tushita Heaven, Maitreya then transmitted to him a collection of texts entitled

The Five Dharmas. For the *Uttaratantra*, the final text of the five, Maitreya is said to have drawn his themes from several of Buddha Shakyamuni's mahayana sutras.

The *Uttaratantra* was then concealed as terma to be discovered later. It is said that Maitripa, the teacher of Marpa, while circumambulating a stupa, saw light shining from a crack and reached in, discovering the texts hidden there. As he attempted to decipher them, Maitreya appeared and gave him a transmission, whereupon Maitripa was able to understand and teach the texts. The transmission of the *Uttaratantra* has thus continued unbroken to this day. Along the way, various commentaries were written by many great masters, most importantly those of the 3rd Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje, and Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thayé's *The Unassailable Lion's Roar*.

Why the *Uttaratantra* is so important

The very beautiful root text of the *Uttaratantra* is organized into the "seven vajra points" which are Buddha, dharma, sangha, Buddha essence, enlightenment, Buddha qualities, and Buddha activities - each arising one from the other. The text's central theme is the recognition of the absolute primordial awareness or Buddha nature in oneself.

This awareness, one's core nature, does not need to be cultivated since it is always present. Yet not knowing the emptiness of self and other, we instead cultivate and maintain a misperception of reality which allows the wisdom and emotional defilements to gain the upper hand, concealing our own Buddha nature from us. Trapped in this cycle, we continue to create karma and cannot purify ourselves by recognizing our fundamental nature. The study and contemplation of these seven vajra points is intended to uproot all defilements and allow our true nature to arise unimpeded.

Rinpoche urged us to break through our limited concepts and reject ego's demands that it be the one to define the nature of our enlightenment.

A refuge like no other

Rinpoche wasted no time in pointing out that the simplest distillation of the 404-verse *Uttaratantra* is already known by each of us as the refuge prayer we recite each day: "I take refuge in the Buddha. I take refuge in the dharma, I take refuge in the sangha." Holding this simple prayer up to the light, she invited us to contemplate it and analyze it more deeply, to gradually dismantle the words themselves and finally rest within non-referential space and silence.

Urging us to break through our limited concepts and reject ego's demands that it be the one to define the nature of our enlightenment, Rinpoche asked us to contemplate what it really means to take refuge. Could we move from a causal understanding of refuge where Buddha, dharma, and sangha are external and separate from us, to an experience of resultant refuge in which these three are an indivisible recognition of our own

fundamental nature, intrinsic and free from all references? Recognizing this fundamental nature would dismantle our relative understanding of bodhichitta which requires a subject, an object, and an action, and allow it to arise as a natural and spontaneous expression of that fundamental nature. Not surprisingly, the sun is used throughout the *Uttaratantra* as a metaphor for Buddha nature.

Meeting the Buddha within

Rinpoche's commentary on the root text was illustrated by her usual penetrating observations of our hesitations, misperceptions, doubts, and fabrications about meeting the Buddha within. "As Buddha placed the crown on the head of Maitreya, the future buddha," explained Rinpoche, "so must a meditator empower oneself." She challenged us to "find the key, unlock the door, and walk into the house."

Contributed by: Linda Fisher

Photos: Rinpoche spends a quiet moment (top); Maitreya, the future Buddha as he is depicted on the Great Stupa at Mindrolling (bottom); ©2006 Mindrolling International, All rights reserved

Remaining Like a Log

Shedra memoirs

Since the dawn of Lotus Garden, we have come together to practice, to receive teachings, to talk, to meet with old friends – and if you're lucky, catch a glimpse of the famed Lotus Garden talent show rock band, The Underwater Allies. We have always called this gathering a retreat. For the first time, this year we decided to call it a 'Shedra', and we invited the very eminent teacher, Kongtrul Rinpoche, who taught extensively and gave detailed commentaries on *The Way of the Bodhisattva*.



About half way into the retreat I was sure I had poison ivy, or my team was on a losing streak...

Itching and scratching

In order to show us how silly our ego clinging is, Rinpoche told us about the twenty-seven ways or instances where one should remain like a log, the seventy-two itches, and how we should treat other people like our favorite football team and rejoice in their victories. About half way into the retreat I was sure I had poison ivy, or my team was on a losing streak, but it turned out I was just made nervous by Rinpoche's bone stirring teaching and analogies. For me, his analogies were what brought the teachings to life and made them accessible.

So as not to get bogged down by the important stuff – the meat in the sangha sandwich or the teachings, which are reason we all came – I would like to take a more holistic look at our Shedra Program.

...as you entered the side gate Lisa would jump on your back – with lightning quick agility – and strap an apron on you. With a little luck you might get an apron with something floral imprinted on it!

In the enchanted kitchen

When walking around the land, a place one would definitely notice would be the pool house. For this was not just any pool house! At the beginning of the retreat, at the drop of a hat, it was transformed into an enchanted kitchen. It began as a place where people could enjoy the luxury of dipping their toes in the cool waters, while the wind would gently kiss their faces and their worries would be washed away as they contemplated the teachings. But, as you entered the side gate Lisa would jump on your back – with lightning quick agility – and strap an apron on you. With a little luck you might get an apron with something floral imprinted on it! Then she would shake a spatula in your direction with such ferocity that you would take it from her for fear of death. Trust me. I know. She's my sweetie! Before you knew what had happened, you were standing there frying up tofu for about a hundred people. So all in all, this technique worked amazingly well: lure them in with beautiful surroundings and make 'em work.

The kitchen was graced with so many new faces, it was a wondrous sight to behold. As early as six in the morning, one might find a group of senior lopons shucking corn for the day's soup with the sun streaming down and bathing them in the morning light – glorious. As a side note I'd like to thank Thomas for all the sweet tea, and adding the spice of life to our days during this Shedra.

The best ever!

All in all, this years' shedra was pretty much the best one ever. I can't even think of one thing I would change to make it better. So hopefully everyone will be able to come back next year and enjoy Lotus Garden as much as I do.

Contributed by: Chris Jarmon

Stand-Up-Sit-Down-Zen!

Kyudo comes to Lotus Garden

Ken Rawie was frequently seen giving Kyudo instruction at the Shedra Retreat at Lotus Garden in June. Lotus News caught up with him over the phone while he was visiting family in Nebraska. Ken lives in Washington D.C.

Lotus News: How long have you been practicing Kyudo?

Ken Rawie: Well, this is an embarrassment. I am usually asked such a pointed question by my own Kyudo teacher, and then after I've made a mistake!

I started practicing Buddhist meditation in 1973, while in Malaysia in the Peace Corps. Some Thai monks gave me instruction while I was there. When I got back to the U.S., I looked around for a group that was practicing Buddhist meditation and found the precursor to the Washington Shambhala Center, which was then called the Washington Dharmadhatu. In 1982, because of an administrative shuffle at my place of employment, my wife and I went to Japan for a year.

I had read that Trungpa Rinpoche had invited a Japanese Kyudo master to the U.S. named Kanjuro Shibata Sensei XX. The "XX" means he's the twentieth Kyudo master in his family lineage. He is also the third in his lineage who made bows for the Emperor's shrine at Ise, Japan. When I arrived in Kyoto, I looked him up, and have been practicing Kyudo steadily since then.



"...Rinpoche had set up the context for my talk quite well, because Kyudo works with the same things discussed in the text she was commenting on..."

LN: You gave a talk and some individual instruction on Kyudo at the Shedra Retreat at Lotus Garden. I was wondering if you could give our readers some background on Kyudo?

KR: Certainly! But I'm much more comfortable doing Kyudo than talking about it. After one of Rinpoche's talks, she asked me to come up front and give a talk on Kyudo. It was intimidating, with Rinpoche there on the dais behind me, along with three thrones and pictures of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and His Holiness Minling Trichen. It felt like they were all watching.

But Rinpoche had set up the context for my talk quite well, because Kyudo works with the same things discussed in the text she was commenting on, Buddha Nature (Maitreya's *Uttaratantra shastra*).

Sensei likes to call Kyudo "standing zazen," which is a play on words, because zazen literally means "sitting zen" – so Kyudo is "stand-up-sit-down zen!" With this standing zazen you practice mindfulness and awareness, just like in sitting meditation.

One begins by paying attention to your form, so you don't do something awkward, like holding the bow and arrow upside down. Later on, you're haunted by pesky details and bad habits, in addition to the usual discursiveness that is present while sitting.

When it is not so hard to follow the form any more, it's easier to get distracted, just going through the motions. So at that point, Sensei often adds more detail, such as synchronizing your motions with other people. With synchronization, awareness of the environment becomes important.

At another point, Sensei will often ask students to pull a slightly stronger bow and work with their energy, or their prana. But even in the beginning, we are taught to root our legs in the ground, which is the earth quality, and make the heaven quality, which is our erect posture. These two are brought together four fingers below the navel, which is the human quality. When you draw the arrow, you use your legs and stomach as much as your arms, because the prana is concentrated in the navel.

Believe it or not, this technique makes you stronger. At the full draw, you are still increasing your energy, and when you let go, it produces a shock to the system. It blows away our everyday discursive mind, and gives us a chance to get closer to the Buddha Nature, as expressed in the *Uttaratantra shastra*. That is the main point of Kyudo.



"When someone already has a connection with Buddha nature and practices Kyudo, it shows as tremendous dignity and confidence."



LN: How was your experience giving instruction at Lotus Garden?

KR: It was great. We had about 15 people sign up for instruction and about 5 were able to take their first shots. Because of the complexity of the form of Kyudo, it usually takes six to eight hours of instruction before people are ready to take their first shot. At Lotus Garden it took much less time. I think the environment at Lotus Garden is particularly good for Kyudo. People were able to get the point very quickly.

Many of these people made my day! When someone already has a connection with Buddha nature and practices Kyudo, it shows as tremendous dignity and confidence. When you shoot, your connection with Buddha nature blows away your preoccupation with self and other. You are free to stand up straight and be dignified and soft. That really showed with some of the Kyudo students at Lotus Garden.

The practice was also made interesting because the Shedra administrators and I were figuring out how to fit Kyudo into the program as we went. For example, the schedule in any program is always a pretty dynamic thing, often changing by the hour. Still, we managed to make it work, often by having people come during evening chants, or even occasionally after eating during one of the usual meal periods.

"Prana in Kyudo is just a natural thing, like learning how to pick up a suitcase properly. And of course, the point is training the mind. We are not trying to learn magic tricks, accumulate merit badges or even to hit the target."

While I have a chance, I would like to answer one question people often have about Kyudo. People often wonder about how strong the bows are, and the answer is that there are light bows and strong bows. We always start everyone out with a very light bow, so they can stay focused on the form without having to worry so much about managing their energy. As they get more comfortable with the form they can use a stronger bow if they wish.

And then there is this prana thing. Working with the prana is not a particularly big deal – it's not like learning tummo. We don't get hot while doing Kyudo. Prana in Kyudo is just a natural thing, like learning how to pick up a suitcase properly. And of course, the point is training the mind. We are not trying to learn magic tricks, accumulate merit badges or even to hit the target. Rather, we learn that when you're completely blown away – and even when you're not – you are simply working with the mind.



LN: I'm not sure what else there is to ask about Kyudo. You've been so generous in clarifying it. Thanks for your time.

KR: You're welcome.

Interview: Alex Ryan

Note: Ken Rawie will continue with Kyudo lessons at subsequent Shedras as part of the ongoing Arts and Sciences component of our Shedra curriculum.

Photos: Ken Rawie prepares his bow (top); Ken takes aim (middle); Ken's students work on their form (middle); Removing the arrow (bottom). ©Mindrolling International, All rights reserved.

Turning the Wheel of Dharma

Looking ahead to the Annual Retreat

Each year since 1996, the Venerable Khandro Rinpoche has offered her western students an intensive practice and study of the Three Yanas. Although the programs can be viewed as annual sequential courses of study, each retreat also offers a complete journey from refuge to realization.

Gateway Program

During the three-day Gateway Program, Rinpoche has offered foundational teachings on the Four Thoughts That Turn the Mind to the Dharma: understanding the preciousness of our human birth, the truth of impermanence, cause and effect, and the limitations of our usual approaches to happiness. Students have had an opportunity to deepen their understanding of the Three Jewels: the Buddha, dharma and sangha, and been offered an opportunity to take the refuge vow.

During this year's Gateway Program, from Thursday August 3 – Sunday August 6, Rinpoche will be deepening our understanding of shamatha and vipashyana through her teaching on the *Ocean of Certainty*, a classic guide to meditation written by the 9th Karmapa. The Gateway Program is an ideal way for newer students to deepen their study and practice of buddhadharma, and for older students to strengthen the foundation of their practice.



Being in the presence of Rinpoche's brilliant teachings, one feels the blessings of the lineage and the strength to go beyond doubt and hesitation.

Mahayana Program

Rinpoche traditionally teaches from classical texts that elucidate the Abhidharma and the progressive stages of contemplation on emptiness. In these teachings, students are encouraged to develop their powers of inquiry and investigate the seeming solidity of their experience. For the past two years, Rinpoche has also been presenting Khenchen

Kunzang Palden's classic commentary on the *Way of the Bodhisattva*. These teachings have provided us with an opportunity to deepen our understanding of the benefits of bodhichitta and the importance of practicing transcendent virtue.

During the Mahayana Program, from Sunday August 6 – Sunday August 13, Rinpoche will be continuing with her commentary on the *Bodhisattvacarya-avatara*, and will also be teaching on *The Aspiration Prayer of Mahamudra* by the 3rd Karmapa. The mahayana portion of the retreat is open to all students with some amount of Buddhist study and practice, and is ideal for those who have taken refuge and wish to deepen their understanding of the mahayana path and the bodhisattva vow.

Vajrayana Program

In the Vajrayana Program, Rinpoche presents teachings on ngöndro, also known as the extraordinary preliminaries, and the creation and completion practices based on the Vajrasattva cycle of teachings discovered as terma by the founder of the Mindrolling lineage, Terdak Lingpa. Each year Rinpoche also presents teachings of the profound view from texts written by such sublime masters as Padmasambhava, Garab Dorje, Jigme Lingpa, Shabkyar, Mingyur Paldrön and Patrul Rinpoche.

During the vajrayana portion from Sunday August 6 – Sunday August 20 students will be presented teachings on *The Aspiration Prayer of Mahamudra*, as well as on the profound view of kadag, or primordial purity. The vajrayana portion of the retreat is open to the vajrayana students of the Venerable Khandro Rinpoche and also to those who have her permission to attend.

Experiencing the blessings of the lineage

The Annual Retreat allows students to enter into the full mandala of the wisdom, compassion and skillful means of a realized master. The rigor of the retreat environment interrupts our usual habitual patterns, thereby creating continual opportunities to be in the moment and to work for the benefit of others. Within this intensified practice environment, students often experience heightened insight and the capacity to go beyond their usual limitations. Being in the presence of Rinpoche's brilliant teachings, one feels the blessings of the lineage and the strength to go beyond doubt and hesitation.

Contributed by: Jann Jackson

Photo: Khadags offered at the Lotus Garden throne of His Holiness Mindrolling Trichen, head of the Mindrolling lineage. ©2006 Mindrolling International, All rights reserved.

Tibetan Lesson: Bodhicitta

བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་



Maitreya



Shantideva



Longchenpa

བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་ (byang chub sems) or བྱང་ལྷན་ཀྱི་སེམས་ (byang chub kyi sems), is the translation of the Sanskrit word ‘bodhicitta’, which is often translated as ‘awakened mind’, ‘awakened heart’, or ‘the mind of enlightenment’ in English.

བྱང་ (byang) is often translated using the words ‘purified’, ‘cleared-away’, ‘cleansed’, or ‘trained’.

ལྷན་ (chub) is often translated using the words ‘to gain consummate mastery’, ‘accomplished’, ‘mastered’, ‘proficient’, and ‘perfected’.

The compound བྱང་ལྷན་ (byang chub) is used to translate the Sanskrit word ‘bodhi’, which means ‘awake’ or ‘enlightened’, and conveys the sense of something that is purified & accomplished..

ཀྱི་ (kyi) is a genitive particle, and is usually translated using the word ‘of’, but can also be translated with the words ‘which’ or ‘whose’.

སེམས་ (sems) is a translation of the Sanskrit word ‘citta’, and is most easily translated using the English word ‘mind’.

Thus, བྱང་ལྷུབ་སེམས་ (byang chub sems) is ‘the mind which is awakened’, or ‘the mind which is purified and accomplished.’

The buddha Maitreya famously defines bodhicitta as follows in the *Abhisamayalamkara* (*The Ornament of Clear Realisation*):

“Arousing bodhicitta is
The longing to attain perfect enlightenment for the benefit of others.”

In the *Bodhisattvacaryavatara*, Shantideva explains that bodhicitta should be understood in two aspects, bodhicitta in aspiration & bodhicitta in application.

“In brief, this bodhicitta
Is known to have two aspects:
The mind that aspires to enlightenment,
And the mind that enters into the conduct of enlightenment.

Just as one understands the distinction between
Desiring to go and actually going,
In the same way the wise ones should understand
The distinction between these two in their successive order.”

བྱང་ལྷུབ་སློན་པའི་སེམས་ (byang chub smon pa'i sems) is ‘the mind which aspires to enlightenment.’ སློན་པ་ (smon pa) is usually translated as ‘to wish’, ‘to desire’, or ‘to aspire’.

བྱང་ལྷུབ་འདུག་པའི་སེམས་ (byang chub ‘jug pa'i sems) is ‘the mind which enters into the conduct of enlightenment.’ འདུག་པ་ (‘jug pa) is usually translated as ‘to enter’ or ‘to undertake’.

These two aspects, bodhicitta in aspiration and bodhicitta, are included within the category of ཀུན་རྫོབ་བྱང་ལྷུབ་ཀྱི་སེམས་ (kun rdzob byang chub kyi sems), or ‘relative bodhicitta.’ ཀུན་ is a word which means ‘all’. རྫོབ་ is a word which means ‘covered’ or ‘concealed’. Thus, ཀུན་རྫོབ་ (kun rdzob) literally means ‘all-veiled’ or ‘concealing’ and

is usually translated using the words ‘relative’ or ‘conventional’. གྲུབ་རྫོབ་ refers to that which is covered by the obscurations: the emotional and the cognitive obscurations, as well as karma and habitual patterns.

However, if there is relative bodhicitta, this implies that we must also have རོན་དམ་བྱང་ལྷུབ་གྱི་སེམས་ (don dam byang chub kyi sems), or absolute bodhicitta. རོན་ (don) is a word which translates the Sanskrit word ‘artha’, and means ‘meaning’, ‘purpose’, ‘goal’ or ‘reason’. དམ་ (dam) is a word which means ‘best’, ‘sublime’, ‘superior’ or ‘excellent’. རོན་དམ་ (don dam) then thus means ‘the superior meaning’ and is often translated as ‘ultimate’, ‘absolute’, or ‘true meaning’.

In this regard, Longchen Rabjam defines bodhicitta in *The Precious Treasury of Dharmadhatu* as follows:

“A dharma which is wondrous, spontaneously present from the very beginning,
Is luminous self-arisen primordial wisdom, bodhicitta,
The treasury from which arises all that appears and exists, the universe and the
beings within it, samsara and nirvana,
Unwavering and free from conceptual elaborations—prostrations to you.”

and:

“Bodhicitta is like the heart of the sun.
It is luminous of its own accord, uncompounded from the beginning.
With nothing to obscure it, it is unimpeded and spontaneously present.
Free from conceptual elaboration, it is the sphere of dharmata beyond thought.”

These quotes refer to absolute bodhicitta, the definitive meaning of the word ‘bodhicitta’.

Contributed by: Geoff Picus

Contributors to this Issue

This issue of Lotus News would not have been possible without the efforts of a remarkable group of contributors. Please join the Lotus News staff in thanking all those correspondents who contributed to this issue of Lotus News: Jann Jackson, Chris Jarmon, Geoff Picus, and Alex Ryan.

Submissions from sangha members are always welcome. If you would like to write for Lotus News, or serve as the LN correspondent for a particular event, please contact Jeannie Pickett at EpicDharma@aol.com for writers' guidelines.

For other inquiries or concerns regarding Lotus News, please send us email at news@lotusgardens.org.

Enjoy!

Jeannie Pickett and Linda Fisher
Lotus News (Summer 2006)