

Sakya Monastery of Tibetan Buddhism

An Introductory Guide

Table of Contents

BACKGROUND ON SAKYA MONASTERY	2
BACKGROUND ON H.H. JIGDAL DAGCHEN SAKYA.....	6
BACKGROUND ON TIBETAN BUDDHISM.....	13
GUIDE TO THE MAIN SHRINE ROOM.....	18
Orientations and Tours.....	22
Monastery Etiquette.....	23
BECOMING A BUDDHIST.....	24
MEDITATION PRACTICES AT SAKYA MONASTERY	26
Chenrezi.....	26
SPECIAL TIBETAN BUDDHIST CEREMONIES.....	29
CHILDREN'S DHARMA SCHOOL	32
VIRUPA EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE.....	33
MEMBERSHIP AT SAKYA MONASTERY	34
TARA MEDITATION CENTER.....	36

Background on Sakya Monastery

Introduction

Sakya Monastery of Tibetan Buddhism

Sakya Monastery provides access to the Buddha's teachings and guidance in a community of practitioners. Sakya Monastery is a place to learn from highly qualified and spiritual Tibetan Lamas in a beautiful traditional setting.

Sakya Monastery occupies a beautiful renovated building, which houses a pristine example of a Tibetan Buddhist shrine that is one of only a few in North America. It is located at 108 NW 83rd Street in Seattle's Greenwood district, a few blocks from the intersection of Greenwood Avenue North and North 85th Street. While called a monastery, it is primarily a community of lay practitioners, with various levels of experience in the Buddhist tradition. It is led by its founder, His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen Sakya (called Dagchen Rinpoche, meaning "Precious One" in Tibetan). He is a head lama of the Sakya School of Tibetan Buddhism, one of Tibetan Buddhism's four main Schools.

The term "Sakya" derives from Dagchen Rinpoche's family name and spiritual lineage, and ultimately from the original Sakya Monastery in Sakya, Tibet, built by one of Dagchen Rinpoche's ancestors in 1073. It received the name Sakya because it was constructed on a patch of earth (sa) that was pale (kya). Sakya Monastery in Seattle is a seat of the Sakya School of Tibetan Buddhism in North America. It is also a non-sectarian religious center, and hosts visits and teaching from leading lamas of all four Schools of Tibetan Buddhism. The Virupa Educational Institute (VEI) was founded by the Monastery, and is its educational branch.

Purpose

The purpose of Sakya Monastery is to share and preserve Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan culture. It does this through teaching and practicing traditional Tibetan Buddhism and by upholding Tibetan customs and traditions. Since the purpose of the Buddha's teaching, as practiced in Tibet, is to develop loving-kindness and compassion, the main meditation practices at Sakya Monastery focus on the cultivation of these qualities. In keeping with the emphasis in Buddhism (and especially in

the Sakya School) on education and learning, Sakya Monastery and VEI offer a variety of educational programs to foster a better understanding of the teachings of the Buddha.

The Building

Sakya Monastery's building was initially erected in 1928 as the First Presbyterian Church. Over the years, different Christian denominations have owned the building. In 1984, a Baptist group sold it to Sakya Tegchen Choling center (Sakya Monastery's predecessor). Since its founding in 1974, this center had successively outgrown accommodations in the Ravenna-Bryant, Capitol Hill, Wallingford, and University districts. When it moved to the Greenwood area, the center reorganized under H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Sakya, and adopted the name Sakya Monastery of Tibetan Buddhism.

Buying the large structure in Greenwood was a big step for the small center. A remarkable event helped catalyze the purchase of the building. While the search was being conducted for the center's new home, Dagchen Rinpoche had a dream in which he saw the destined building. Upon waking, he had architectural plans drawn for the building as revealed to him in his vision. Amazingly, the Baptist Church was an exact match for these vision-based plans, and the decision was made to acquire the 108 building (Tibetan Buddhism prayer beads have 108 beads, hence, 108 is a sacred number in Tibetan Buddhism).

Since the purchase, many years of hard work and renovation by dedicated volunteers have brought the building to its present form and grace. At various stages of the renovation, the highest-ranking lamas in Tibetan Buddhism, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama, have consecrated Sakya Monastery's building and its contents, imbuing them with the enlightened spirit of the Buddha and transforming the building into a North American home for the Buddha's teaching. In addition, Sakya Monastery contains many holy objects from India, Tibet, and Nepal.

Following the first year of renovation, the downstairs cultural hall began to be used as an interim location for Sakya Monastery's religious services. For the next twelve years, the main worship hall (the shrine room) underwent remodeling. Numerous Buddhist artworks were donated by Sakya Monastery members, friends, as well as by professional artists and Dagchen Rinpoche's family. Extensive murals were painted on site. During this period, Bernardo Bertolucci shot scenes for the film *Little Buddha* at Sakya Monastery. This venture helped pay for the wood parquet floor in the

shrine room. Outside the building, in keeping with the style of traditional Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, a portico was added over the front entrance. By 1997, the remodeling was sufficiently finished so that the main shrine room could be used for meditations.

In 1998, the outside of Sakya Monastery's building was painted in traditional Tibetan colors and a memorial stupa was erected to H.E. Deshung Rinpoche (the lama who co-founded the original Sakya Tegchen Choling center). The bell shaped stupa is located in front of the Monastery and symbolizes the Buddha's enlightened mind. In 2001, a library addition capable of holding at least 5,000 volumes was finished and opened.

Two Levels of Religious Training

In Tibetan Buddhism, a religious community traditionally needs both a monastery and a retreat center. A monastery maintains and preserves the teaching of the Buddha through teaching, training, and practice. It houses monks who are trained in the intellectual, moral and ritual teachings of the Buddha and is a focal point for religious activities of the lay community. Nowadays, with the rapid changes taking place in Tibet, the monastery is also a place where Tibetans endeavor to preserve their unique Tibetan identity and culture.

The bustle of activity at a monastery means that it is not always conducive to developing profound meditative experiences. For that, an isolated retreat center is necessary. In the year 2000, a Sakya Monastery student made available a house and 72 acres of forest and ponds located on Whidbey Island for use as a place for spiritual retreats. Thus, with teaching facilities in Seattle and the Tara Meditation Center at Earth Sanctuary on Whidbey Island, Sakya Monastery provides a complete array of traditional methods of Tibetan religious training for the lay community as well as monks and nuns.

Programs and Administration

Sakya Monastery offers a variety of activities for its members and friends. Foremost are the public meditations: Chenrezi meditations for developing loving-kindness and compassion are held on Sunday morning at 10:00 am and Thursday evenings at 8:00 pm during daylight savings time (spring/summer) and 7:30 pm during standard time (fall/winter). This is the main communal

practice of Sakya Monastery. Calm Abiding meditations, which are useful for the development of concentration and mental stability, are held on Friday nights at 7:00 pm.

Numerous other ceremonies and meditations are held at the Monastery:

- Buddhist holy days – such as the birth of the Buddha and memorials to special lamas.
- Refuge ceremonies are regularly scheduled for people who wish to formally join the community of Buddhist practitioners and become a Buddhist.
- Initiation ceremonies are bestowed by Dagchen Rinpoche and other lamas upon request. These initiations are required as a basis for special meditation practices involving meditational deities such as Chenrezi (the embodiment of compassion) or Green Tara (the grantor of protection).
- Monthly meditations are also held that have specific requirements for attending, such as being a Buddhist, or having received a specific empowerment or level of empowerment.

Additionally, the Monastery offers a variety of other programs and resources:

- The Children’s Dharma School for children ages 5 and up is available on Sundays during Chenrezi practice.
- The Sakya Monastery library, available to members and visiting scholars, houses 2,500 books on Buddhism, Tibet, and comparative religion, as well as audiotapes of teachings in Tibetan by noted lamas. The library has a connection with the Tibetan Works & Archives in Dharamsala, India (home of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile).
- The Virupa Educational Institute administers and organizes numerous classes, talks, book groups, discussions, and video showings held at the Monastery. These programs are open to the public and are widely attended.

Following Tibetan tradition and “corporation sole” status of Washington State, its Head Lama H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Sakya is the administrative and spiritual leader of the non-profit Sakya Monastery. He is the “CEO” and makes all decisions. He consults regularly with a fourteen-member Advisory Board. Ten of the Board’s members are elected by the members of the Monastery; the other four are the Head Lama, the Tibetan Cultural Advisor, the Executive Director, and an appointee drawn from the Sakya family.

Background on H.H. Jigdal Sakya

Introduction

His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen Sakya was born in 1929 in Sakya, Tibet. He was educated to be the head of the Sakya School of Tibetan Buddhism as well as the successor to the throne of Sakya, the third most important political position in Tibet in earlier times. The Communist Chinese occupation of Tibet, and the peril that ensued, precipitated his departure from the world his family had known for generations, and led him to a new role as a leader in the transmission of Tibetan Buddhism in the West.

Dagchen Sakya's immigration in 1960 makes him one of the first Tibetans-in-exile in North America. He is the first Head of the Sakya Order of Tibetan Buddhism to live in the United States. From the Sakya Monastery of Tibetan Buddhism in Seattle, Washington, and its precursor (which he co-founded in 1974), he has taught and preserved Tibetan culture and religion. Because he is also a non-sectarian master within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, he has defined Sakya Monastery as a non-denominational and ecumenical center for teachings about Tibetan Buddhism. His work has also included the founding of Tibetan Buddhist communities overseas in India, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Nepal, Bhutan and Southeast Asia, and teaching at Buddhist centers around the world. He is truly a pioneer among religious leaders.

His formal title of "His Holiness" indicates the high degree of esteem with which the Tibetan Buddhist community holds him. Dagchen is a title meaning "Lineage Holder." Among his followers he is known as Dagchen Rinpoche, or simply as Rinpoche ("Precious One").

His Revered Ancestors

Lineage is all-important in Tibetan Buddhist tradition, and Dagchen Rinpoche's lineage is noble and revered for its holiness. It extends back for over a thousand years.

His father was Trichen ("Great Throne-holder") Nawang Tutop Wangchuk, the last great throne-holder of the Sakya Order of Tibetan Buddhism in Tibet, and his mother was Gyalum ("Mother of the Khön Children") Dechen Drolma.

Dagchen Rinpoche's family lineage is thought of as divine because family records and Tibetan histories state that his family is descended from celestial beings from the realm of heavenly clear light. Five generations of these celestial beings are said to have lived in Tibet. A famous ancestor of his from the late eighth century was Khön Lu'i Wangpo (Nagendrarakshita), one of the first seven Tibetans ordained as a Buddhist monk, a noted translator and a personal disciple of Padmasambhava (who erected the very first Tibetan Buddhist monastery called Samye). Since the 11th century, the Sakya male progenies are also regarded as emanations of Manjushri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, Avalokiteshvara, Bodhisattva of Compassion, or Vajrapani, Bodhisattva of Power.

The Sakya Name

In 1042, Atisha, the great Indian Buddhist master who helped revive Buddhism in Tibet, was traveling in Tibet spreading the Buddha's teachings. At the side of a mountain where there was "pale earth," he foresaw the emanations of three bodhisattvas whom he knew would spread the Buddhist doctrine in Tibet: Avalokiteshvara (the embodiment of compassion), Manjushri (the embodiment of infinite wisdom), and Vajrapani (the embodiment of infinite power).

It was at the same site of pale earth some thirty years later, in 1073, that Khön Gönchok Gyalpo (1034-1102), ancestor of Dagchen Rinpoche, built the first Sakya Monastery. The monastery took its name from the pale earth (in Tibetan "sa-kya") where the monastery was founded. Subsequently, the town that arose there, the family of the monastery's founder (the Khön lineage), and the school of Tibetan Buddhism also took the name of the monastery: Sakya. Additionally, the Sakya name is renowned for having lamas as rulers of Tibet. The Sakya patriarch, Chogyal Pakpa (1235 – 1280) was given temporal authority over Tibet through the patronage of the Mongol rulers of China. Subsequently, the Sakya lamas governed Tibet for over 90 years.

The Sakya School is one of the four great Schools of Tibetan Buddhism. The Sakya masters developed a tradition that emphasized study and meditation in equal measure.

A Special Kind of Tibetan Buddhist Lama

In Tibetan Buddhism there are several ways to become a lama (a spiritual teacher and guide). Some lamas are recognized as rebirths of former lamas and are called Tulkus. Some of these are also

considered to be emanations of bodhisattvas. The Fourteenth Dalai Lama is a good example, being the thirteenth reincarnation of the first Dalai Lama, Gendun Drup, as well as an emanation of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. Some, through their spiritual development in this life, are deemed to become lamas, but are not regarded as rebirths of previous lamas.

Finally, in some special families, all family members with blood relations to the father are considered to be lamas. The Sakya-Khön lineage, Dagchen Rinpoche's lineage, is just such a family. In each generation of the Sakya-Khön lineage, in order to preserve the family line, one of the males must keep the custom of the Lineage-holder (ngachang) – a white-robed, married lama. This tradition is distinct from the more common ordained (rapchung) – red-robed monk-lama tradition prevalent in some of the other Tibetan Buddhist schools. Thus, in each generation, some Sakya-Khön lineage lamas are not monks, but married lamas who continue the spiritual lineage.

In accordance with the prophecy of the great Atisha, these Sakya lamas are regarded as emanations of Avalokiteshvara (the embodiment of compassion), Vajrapani (the embodiment of Buddha's power), or especially Manjushri (the embodiment of Buddha's wisdom).

Dagchen Rinpoche is in the twenty-sixth generation of the Sakya-Khön lineage descended from Khön Gönchok Gyalpo. Dagchen Rinpoche is regarded as an emanation of Manjushri as well as the rebirth of a Sakya Abbot from the Ngor sub-school, Ewam Luding Khenchen (The Great Abbot from the Luding family) Gyase Chökyi Nyima.

A Family of Supernormal Abilities

Throughout its history, Dagchen Rinpoche's family has produced adepts with supernormal skills. In the Tibetan tradition, psychic powers and what appear to be magical feats are accepted as a sign of one's spiritual accomplishment. Some of Dagchen Rinpoche's earliest ancestors are said to have been able to fly, others to hang their robes on sunbeams.

The five founding lamas of the Sakya School of Tibetan Buddhism, in addition to being masters of the esoteric and exoteric teachings of the Buddha, were all child prodigies and performed numerous miracles. For example, when he was twelve years old and on a long retreat, Sachen Kunga Nyingpo (1092-1158) received in a vision a teaching from the Bodhisattva Manjushri.

Sachen's son, Teaching Master Sönam Tsemo (1142-1182), accomplished the incredible feat of memorizing the Chakrasamvara Tantra and other esoteric teachings before he was five years old, and passed away without leaving his body behind, and took his puppy with him!

Sönam's brother, Reverend Drakpa Gyaltzen (1147-1216), recited the Hevajra Tantra from memory when he was twelve years old. Much later in life, when he experienced a surprise visit by the Kashmir Pandita Shakyashribhadra, the Reverend caused his ritual implements to float in the air. The Reverend's nephew was Sakya Pandita (1182-1251), who knew Sanskrit as a child without being taught. As a teenager he had a dream that he slept in front of a large stupa. Following that Sakya Pandita was able to recall the teachings of the Abhidharmakosha from a previous lifetime without having been taught them in his present life. When Sakya Pandita was at the court of Godan Khan, the Khan's sorcerers tested him by creating a magic, illusory temple on an island on a lake. Sakya Pandita blessed it and made it into a real temple.

His nephew, Chögyal Pakpa (King of Religion, the Noble One) (1235-1280), as a young man, greatly impressed Kublai Khan, future emperor of China, by cutting off his own head and limbs, making a bloody mess. He then transformed his severed head and limbs into the five celestial Buddhas before making himself whole again.

Dagchen Rinpoche's own father was known to have performed miracles. When he beat a drum during a monthly protection ritual, the drum would emit flames. Once when his father needed to cross a roaring river, he caused the water to subside so his party could cross without mishap. Another time, the Tibetan government asked him to restore a Padmasambhava stupa (memorial shrine) on a mountain. When his party climbed to the stupa, they found no water. He scratched some syllables on the ground and told everyone to leave the area alone until morning. When morning came, the party found a pool of water on the spot where the syllables had been drawn. They were then able to rebuild the memorial shrine.

Education and Early Adulthood

As imminent successor to the throne of Sakya, Dagchen Rinpoche was first tutored by the abbot of the South Monastery of Sakya and by the Secretary of the Sakya Government. With these two

teachers, Dagchen Rinpoche studied the Tibetan alphabet, composition, classical literature, philosophy, and the Four Classes of Tantra (esoteric Buddhism). He also received teachings on the Sakya meditation deities. From Pönlop Sakya of the North Monastery, Dagchen Rinpoche learned the fundamental esoteric religious rites of the Sakya tradition: religious music, mandala offering, dancing, and ritual hand gestures.

After having successfully completed this training, Dagchen Rinpoche received from his father the unbroken Sakya-Khön lineage transmission of Vajrakilaya (a meditational deity whose name means the “Dagger of Indestructible Reality”), and the complete Lamdre Tsokshey (The Path and Its Fruit in its more exoteric form), which is the main teaching of the Sakya tradition. Thus, Dagchen Rinpoche’s first root lama (his primary spiritual teacher) was his father, His Holiness Trichen Nawang Thutop Wangchuk, who is well remembered for his kindly leadership, clairvoyance, and miraculous deeds.

In 1950, at age 21, Dagchen Rinpoche took a bride: Sonam Tsezom, who descends from a family of lamas and doctors of East Tibet (Kham). She is the niece of His Eminence Deshung Rinpoche. When she married, her name became Jamyang and her title Dagmo Kusho.

Later that year Dagchen Rinpoche’s father passed away. Dagchen Rinpoche suddenly became the interim Throne-holder. Concurrently, Communist Chinese invaders were threatening Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism. After a short reign as the head of the Sakya sect, during which Dagchen Rinpoche’s right to hold the Sakya throne was put into question, he took a leave of absence as ruler of Sakya in order to travel to East Tibet to complete his religious education.

In East Tibet, Dagchen Rinpoche received teachings from fourteen lamas. Among them were his root lamas, Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche, Jamyang Chökyi Lodrö, and Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. Both were renowned non-sectarian lamas, of the Sakya and Nyingma traditions respectively. From Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche, Dagchen Rinpoche received initiations and teachings of the Sakya School’s most valued teaching, the seven-volume Lamdre Lopshey (The Path and Its Fruit in its more esoteric form) and the fourteen-volume Druptap Kundu (Collection of Methods of Realization). From Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, Dagchen Rinpoche received teachings on the thirteen-volume Damngak Dzö (Treasury of Esoteric Instructions), a non-sectarian compilation by

Jamgön Kongtrul, a great non-sectarian master of Tibetan Buddhism from the Gagyü School. Additionally, twelve other Sakya lamas gave him the teachings from the thirty-one volume Gyude Kundu.

Emigration to the United States

In 1959, owing to the violent changes taking place in Tibet, Dagchen Rinpoche and his family (including his younger brother H.H. Trinly Rinpoche and his wife's uncle Deshung Rinpoche) fled to Bhutan and then to India. Professor Turrell V. Wylie from the Tibetan Studies Program at the University of Washington, the first such program in the country, invited Dagchen Rinpoche to participate in a research project on Tibet sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation. This enabled Dagchen Rinpoche to bring his family to Seattle, Washington, in 1960. The research project funding lasted for three years. Following that, over the next decade Dagchen Rinpoche had several positions at the University of Washington, including working in the Anthropology Department and at the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture.

A Non-Sectarian Seattle Lama

In 1974, Dagchen Rinpoche co-founded with Deshung Rinpoche the original Sakya Dharma Center called Sakya Tegchen Choling. In 1984, the group reorganized under Dagchen Rinpoche, and adopted the name of Sakya Monastery of Tibetan Buddhism.

For the purpose of the preservation of Tibetan culture and religion, Dagchen Rinpoche has overseen the religious activities and administration of the Sakya Dharma Center up to the present-day Sakya Monastery. His spiritual leadership takes various forms: leading meditations, giving teachings and empowerments (spiritual initiations), conducting refuge ceremonies in which people formally become Buddhists, and holding special services upon request, either in Sakya Monastery or at peoples' homes. He can perform such services as house blessings, shrine blessings, consecrating religious objects, marriages, baby blessings, divination, and healing to subdue negativity.

Now that Sakya Monastery is largely completed, Dagchen Rinpoche is placing greater emphasis on education. In 1997, he founded the Virupa Ecumenical Institute. Its name has recently been changed to Virupa Educational Institute. The Institute is devoted to the study of Tibetan Buddhism, and Buddhism in general. Non-sectarianism and education are major components to Dagchen

Rinpoche's teaching, in keeping with the beliefs of his root lamas. Sakya Monastery in Seattle has hosted visits from leading lamas of the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism, including H. H. the Dalai Lama.

Dagchen Rinpoche's interest in ecumenism stems from his training as a non-sectarian master, and his experience as an immigrant who came to this country seeking religious freedom, as well as being a Buddhist in a predominantly Judeo-Christian culture. Like His Holiness The Fourteenth Dalai Lama, he encourages inter-religious and interdisciplinary meetings and encounters for Tibetan Buddhists. He regularly travels to teach in Asia, Europe, Canada, and throughout the United States.

Background on Tibetan Buddhism

Introduction

Tibetan Buddhism, the teaching of the Buddha as practiced and taught in Tibet, is at last becoming known to the world. Because of Tibet's secluded location, the Buddhist tradition developed there for fourteen centuries in relative isolation, unknown or sometimes misunderstood by the outside world. A turning point came in the late 1950s, when the Communist Chinese takeover precipitated the migration of many Tibetan teachers to India and Nepal. Since then, Tibetan Buddhist teachers have traveled further abroad and have established teaching centers that are now flourishing in Japan, Southeast Asia, Australia, Europe, and North and South America. For the first time in history, people from all over the world are able to learn directly from authentic sources about how Tibetan Buddhism was practiced in Tibet. The Tibetan migration has found a particularly receptive audience in the United States – which is, after all, a country of immigrants. Buddhism is now one of the fastest growing religions in the United States – not least because of the rise in popularity of its Tibetan denomination.

Life of the Buddha

The historical Buddha (named Siddhartha at birth and commonly known as Shakyamuni Buddha) lived in northern India approximately five centuries before Christ. He was a prince who renounced a privileged royal life in order to search for ultimate peace and the highest good. He realized the highest level of enlightenment at the age of thirty-five. Through arduous practices, concentrated meditation, and deep reflection he became a fully awakened being – a Buddha. He then taught the path of spiritual liberation to numerous disciples for over forty years, until his passing at the age of eighty. Afterward the communities of monks and nuns that he founded dedicated themselves to preserving and upholding his teachings, thereby laying the foundations for what has become known as Buddhism.

The term “Buddha” means an “awakened” or “enlightened” one who has discovered true wisdom and attained nirvana (the cessation of desire) in this world. It is a descriptive title given to all fully enlightened beings, rather than being the exclusive name of a single individual. There have been Buddhas in the past (for example Kashyapa, Dipangkara, or Shakyamuni – the historical Buddha), and other Buddhas are expected in the future.

Tibetan Buddhism

Tibetan Buddhism teaches that we are all potential Buddhas, because we are essentially pure and luminous at the most basic level of existence. That purity, called Buddha-nature, is typically clouded over by a dense layer of ignorance and negativity, which dominates us and leads to suffering. The Tibetan Buddhist path encourages its practitioners to adopt the traits and characteristics of enlightened beings through the use of special meditation techniques, thereby realizing their innate Buddha-nature.

Buddhist Values

Buddhism is a tolerant religion that places emphasis on practical methods for cultivating spiritual awareness and on the importance of finding the truth for oneself. It treasures loving-kindness, compassion, equanimity, clarity of mind, and wisdom. Its hope is to alleviate suffering and to create healing and transformation so that all beings may experience the highest peace (nirvana). Followers of the Buddha entrust their spiritual growth and well-being to 1) the Buddha as the perfect teacher, 2) his teaching (the Dharma) as the holy path to awakening, and 3) the lamas, tulkus, and the ordained (the Sangha). These three objects of refuge are collectively revered in Buddhism as the “Three Jewels” or the “Triple Gem,” and are the basis for Buddhist spiritual commitment.

The Development of Buddhism

Early in the history of Buddhism numerous denominations developed. The only early denomination that still exists today is Theravada Buddhism. It is the Buddhism still found in Sri Lanka, Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, and Cambodia. Monasticism is the cornerstone of Theravada Buddhism.

Around the first century BCE, a new form of Buddhism developed on the Indian subcontinent. It was called Mahayana (the “Great” or “Universal Vehicle”). The Mahayana movement brought a new religious ideal to Buddhism, that of the bodhisattva, an individual who works for the enlightenment and well-being of all, not just for him or herself. This form of Buddhism spread throughout China, Korea, and Japan.

Several centuries later a third Buddhist denomination emerged in North India. Called Vajrayana (the “Diamond Vehicle”), it spread throughout the Himalayan kingdoms of Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim, and

Bhutan, and northwards into Mongolia. The “diamond” in the name refers to the supreme clarity of its vision and its crystalline hardness and strength.

The Distinctive Character of Tibetan Buddhism

Tibetan Buddhism draws upon the teachings, meditation techniques, and ordination vows of the Theravada, and the philosophy and cosmology of Mahayana. But it was in Tibet that many of the Vajrayana teachings were preserved, and most of the distinctive qualities of Tibetan Buddhism can be found in its Vajrayana heritage.

The Vajrayana path largely follows the Mahayana philosophical teachings, but there are some variations in attitude. Whereas Mahayana seeks to destroy the poisons of craving, aggression, and ignorance, Vajrayana places an emphasis on transmuting them directly into wisdom. This is based in the Tibetan Buddhist belief that the mundane world (samsara) is inseparable from enlightenment. Tibetan Buddhism is distinguished by its many methods and techniques of spiritual development and for its great acceleration of the spiritual journey. Theoretically, the path of the Mahayana practitioner takes three incalculable eons to reach full awakening; by contrast, the path of the Vajrayana practitioner can be as short as one lifetime.

In order to accelerate the process of enlightenment, Vajrayana uses advanced yoga techniques in combination with elaborate meditations. The meditations incorporate visualizations of personified archetypes of enlightenment, frequently referred to as “meditational deities.” These archetypes are often represented in Tibetan religious art in the form of bronze sculptures, or in painted portable scroll icons, known as tangkas. The scriptures containing the esoteric teachings for yogic practices (such as meditative visualizations) are called tantras, and are part of a larger body of Buddhist sacred texts, based on the public teachings of the Buddha, called sutras. (Vajrayana’s use of tantric literature explains why it is sometimes referred to as “Tantric Buddhism.”) Mantras (chanted sacred syllables or phrases), mudras (ritual hand gestures), and mandalas (symbolic representations of enlightened worlds) are all used as part of Tibetan Buddhist meditational practices.

The Importance of the Lama

Tibetan Buddhist tradition places great emphasis on the importance of the lama (the Tibetan equivalent of the Sanskrit term guru). These venerable teachers are often given the honorific title of

Rinpoche (“Precious One”). All lamas complete a long course of study that prepares them for their future role as the bestowers of initiations and esoteric teachings. Qualified lamas introduce students to particular teachings and through “empowerments” bestow spiritual energy so that specific practices can be successfully undertaken by students. Formal and informal face-to-face oral transmissions of spiritual insight and wisdom typically occur between lama and student. The lama is the focus of passionate devotion for the aspirant, and is acknowledged to embody the Three Jewels (the Buddha, his teachings, and the sangha) as well as the qualities of the meditational deities. Tibetan Buddhism innovated the idea of “incarnate lamas,” the belief that the mind of a deceased lama can reappear in the new body of a child. The most famous example of recognizing reincarnated lamas is the centuries-long tradition by which H. H. the Dalai Lama is identified.

The Development of Buddhism in Tibet

Buddhism has a long history in Tibet. During the reign of Tibet’s first emperor, Songsen Gampo (ca. 600-650 CE), when Tibet first established itself as an independent kingdom and empire, the teachings of the Buddha were introduced to Tibet. It was another century before Buddhism began to flourish during the reign of three emperors: Tri Song Detsen (fl. 775), Tri Saynalek (fl. 812), and Tri Ralpachen (fl. 838). During that time great translation projects were undertaken so that Indian texts could be recorded in Tibetan, monasteries were built, and the royalty, nobility, and populace embraced Buddhism.

The last Tibetan emperor (reigned 838-842) was anti-Buddhist. He suppressed the religion, was assassinated as a result, and by the early 840s the royal dynasty collapsed. Tibet had a dark age of nearly two centuries – from 850 to the early 1000s. During this time, there was no central government. Although Buddhism in Tibet survived during this period, there were no monasteries or great translation projects, partly because there were no great patrons to support them.

The Four Schools within Tibetan Buddhism

Tibetan translators going to India and Indian sages coming to Tibet revived Buddhist teaching in Tibet between the late 900s and the 1200s. By the early 1400s, there were four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism. The Nyingma School adhered to the Vajrayana teachings from the earlier royal period. The Kagyu, Sakya, and Geluk Schools all followed later Vajrayana teachings coming into Tibet from India. The schools formed due to individual teaching lineages and the relative emphasis

each group placed on particular esoteric teachings. These schools, which continue to exist to this day, do agree on the essential teachings of Buddhism.

Politics and Religion

Over the centuries, some lamas played increasingly important roles in Tibet, not just as religious figures, but also as political leaders. Often in Tibet's history, a lama led the government. The first lama to do so was the Sakya patriarch Chögyal Pakpa (1235-1280), who was given his temporal authority through the patronage of the Mongol rulers of China. It was also through Mongol patronage that the Dalai Lamas or their representatives have ruled Tibet since 1642 (with one major interruption). They, too, are both religious and temporal leaders.

The last half of the 20th century has brought unparalleled changes to Tibet. The Communist government of China controls Tibet and under its rule Tibet's religion and culture have suffered greatly. Under the guidance of H. H. the Dalai Lama, the spiritual and political leader of Tibet, a government-in-exile has been established in Dharamsala, India. Tibetan exiles have settled mostly in India but also in other countries such as Nepal, Switzerland, Canada, and the United States. H. H. the Dalai Lama has worked hard to bring the plight of Tibet to the world's attention, and in 1989 his efforts gained him the Nobel Peace Prize. Since then, popular sentiment and political activism have increased in support of the restoration of Tibet. Embracing the values of compassion and wisdom, not all exiles view the loss of their homeland with anger and resentment. His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen Sakya, Head Lama of the Sakya Monastery of Tibetan Buddhism in Seattle, says that the changes in Tibet are an example of the true nature of human existence: all is impermanent, and everything changes.

Guide to the Main Shrine Room

The shrine room was established in 1984 by His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen Sakya.

Consecrations

Sakya Monastery has been consecrated by many lamas including His Holiness The Fourteenth Dalai Lama, His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen Sakya, and His Holiness Sakya Trizin.

Monastery Remodeling

Under the direction of His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen Sakya, the remodeling of Sakya Monastery began when the building was purchased in 1984. The work has been accomplished thanks to donations from faithful patrons, Monastery members, and the Head Lama's family members. Every Saturday, members and friends volunteer to assist with the upkeep of the monastery and any current projects.

The Main Shrine

Upon entering the Shrine Room, see before you the triple life-size statue of **Shakyamuni Buddha**. His right hand touches the earth in the “Demon Vanquishing” or “Earth Touching” *mudra* and his left hand in the meditation position holds his alms bowl.

To the Buddha's far right is the life-size statue of **Sachen Kunga Nyingpo** (1092-1158), founder of the Sakya School of Tibetan Buddhism and progenitor of the Sakya-Khön lineage of lamas. His right hand is in the “Giving” *mudra*, his left holds the stem of the lotus, symbolizing compassion and the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara.

On the Buddha's far left is **Sakya Pandita** (1182-1251), grandson of Sachen Kunga Nyingpo, a monk, the most learned of Sakya lamas, and the most learned Tibetan of his time. His hands are in the “Bestowing the Wheel of Dharma” *mudra*, the right holding the stem of a lotus upon which rests the flaming sword symbolizing discriminating insight and the Bodhisattva Mañjushri; the text of the Perfection of Discriminating Insight rests upon the lotus held in his left hand. He wears the hat of an Indian pandit.

The statues are hollow, made of clay mixed with various herbs and sculpted on wood and wire frames by master artists Sonam Wangchuk Oshoe and Kalsang Lodoe Oshoe from Dharamsala from October 1994 to April 1995. The Buddha's aureole is made of lightweight plastic based on an original in clay made by the two master artists. The statues and backdrop are covered in gold leaf and paint.

To Sachen's right is a glass case containing the **Kanjur**, the "Translated Word" of the Buddha, and to Sakya Pandita's left is a case containing the **Tanjur**, the "Translated Treatises". These two collections of block prints, constituting the Tibetan Buddhist scriptures, were recently printed from blocks carved in the 1730's and kept at Derge in Eastern Tibet. Above the Kanjur is a painting of **Hevajra**, and above the Tanjur is a painting of **Vajrayogini**, both from Nepal.

Between the Buddha and Sachen is a statue of **White Tara** and along the east wall is a **Green Tara** statue. Both are gifts of Dagmo Kusho Jamyang Sakya and were made in Nepal. Between the Buddha and Sakya Pandita is a statue of **Padmasambhava** dedicated to the memory of H.H. Trinly Sakyapa.

The rosewood offering tables are the donation of devout patrons from overseas. The **garuda** over the main Shrine was made in Nepal and painted by Sakya Monastery members.

Ceiling Art

Before any of the walls or ceiling could be painted, the leaks in the ceiling had to be repaired and a special canvas wallpaper applied. Once the canvas was in place, the "**Seattle sky**" was painted on the ceiling by local painters. The depiction of the sky is based on descriptions in religious texts.

On the ceiling are the four **mandalas** of the four Hevajra transmissions. Hevajra is the most important deity in the Sakya School's main practice, the Lamdre. These mandalas are based upon copies found in a picture book of the Ngor Monastery mandalas and scanned into a computer. John Vichorek restored them using a computer (the colors in the photos were faded or had been sullied with smoke and some parts of the mandalas had been destroyed) and had them printed on photographic paper much the way billboards are made. In this way, traditional Tibetan art was restored using modern technology. The mandalas were put in place on the ceiling in June 1995.

Over the windows are the paintings of the Indian leaders known as the **Six Ornaments and the Two Supreme Ones**. Over the west side windows, beginning with the painting closest to the shrine, are

- (1) **Arya Nagarjuna**, Middle Way proponent and retriever of the Perfection of Wisdom sutras,
- (2) **Arya Asanga**, retriever and commentator upon the Five Treatises of Maitreya,
- (3) **Dignaga**, the great logician and author, and
- (4) **Shakyaprabha**, an upholder of the Vinaya tradition.

Over the windows on the east side are:

- (1) **Aryadeva**, follower of the Nagarjuna in the Middle Way and author of the *Four Hundred Verses*,
- (2) **Vasubandhu**, younger brother of Asanga and Yogacara exponent,
- (3) **Dharmakirti**, logician and author, and
- (4) **Gunaprabha**, Vinaya master.

Artist Dhawa Dhondup from Dharamsala, India, painted them in the Winter and Spring of 1994.

Art on the Entrance Wall of the Shrine Room

The Four Great Kings are at eye level in the entrance wall of the Shrine Room. The Eastern King is **Dhritarashtra** in white holding a guitar, the Southern King is **Virudhaka** in blue holding a sword, the Western King is **Virupaksha** in red holding a stupa, and the Northern King is **Vaishravana** in yellow holding a jewel-spitting mongoose. These paintings were created by artist Dhawa Dhondup.

Above the Four Great Kings is the **Lamdre Lama** Lineage of His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen Sakya, Head Lama of the Sakya Order, and His Holiness Trinly Sakyapa, Associate Head Lama. The Lamdre is the central teaching of the Sakya School and has been on this earth since the great siddha Virupa, c. 7th century. The Lineage, containing 48 figures, begins in the center of the painting with the **Buddha Vajradhara** in blue. Next is his consort **Nairatmya** in flames in the upper left. Next to her is **Virupa**, the first human to receive the teaching. On the far right of the top row is **Sachen Kunga Nyingpo**. The Lama Lineage continues from left the right until the bottom row, where the final three lamas in the lineage are portrayed in the center of the row with reworked photographs:

H. H. Trichen Ngawang Tudop Wangchuk is in the very center flanked by both his sons: **H. H. Jigdal Dagchen Sakya** to his right and **H. H. Trinly N. Sakyapa** to his left. These paintings were created by artist Dhawa Dhondup.

The **Wheel of Life**, on the left side of the wall, is a pictorial representation of core Buddhist teachings. This was also created by Dhawa Dhondup.

Art on the Eastern Wall

The **Buddha and the Sixteen Elders** (or Arhats) is the last major art work by Tibetan artist Pema Wangyal, d. 1992. The Buddha has his two main disciples, Shariputra and Maudgalyayana, at his sides and is surrounded by the Sixteen Elders and their two companions.

Protector Shrines

The large Protector Shrine (Tibetan: Gön Kang) on the west wall and the smaller Protector Shrine on the east wall were finished in 2007.

The Floor

The parquet floor was purchased with the proceeds from the rental of the Monastery for the filming of *The Little Buddha* by Bernardo Bertolucci. Previously, before any remodeling could be done in the Shrine Room, the original floor (and the ceiling to the temporary Shrine Room below) had to be taken out because it sloped from the level of the entrance way down to the level of exits by the Main Shrine, and the floor had to be level in keeping with tradition.

Donations

In Tibetan tradition, any donations given for the activities and ongoing maintenance of a monastery are believed to bring great benefit to the donor, both in present and future lives.

Sakya Monastery thanks John Vichorek, Jerry Fabrizio, Carolyn Massey, David Newcomb, David Oskamp, and many other volunteers for their work in completing the monastery remodeling. Architectural assistance was provided by Phil and Mariam Lehn and David Newcomb.

Orientations and Tours

Orientation for prospective members is offered monthly. Refer to the Sakya Monastery calendar for exact dates and time. Attendees are given an overview of Sakya Monastery and the spiritual practices of Sakya Monastery.

Free guided tours (Darshan viewings) of the Monastery's Shrine Room (site of the community's meditation and ritual practices) are offered on the third Sunday of every month at noon. Docents explain the room's rich symbolism, sacred art, and some of the Monastery's meditation practices. Dates may change due to the Monastery's use of the lunar calendar. Tours can also be scheduled by appointment.

To find out about upcoming orientations and tours, call (206) 789-2573 weekday mornings or check the Sakya Monastery website at www.sakya.org.

Monastery Etiquette

Please turn off all cell phones and pagers. Photography is not allowed without the specific permission of the Monastery administrator.

What to Wear:

- Dress in clean, neat clothing and remove shoes before entering (preferably downstairs).
- Please do not wear revealing clothing—knees, legs, and midriffs should be covered.
- Men and boys should wear pants, no shorts. Women and girls should wear pants or a long skirt.
- Please remove hats.

While in the Shrine room:

- Do three prostrations to the altar (optional).
- Respect the ordained persons' (i.e., lamas, monks & nuns) vows and help us have a very spiritual environment for all.
- Be quiet and respectful.
- Be respectful to all religious objects in the Shrine room.
- While sitting in the Shrine Room, do not point the soles of your feet towards the altar.
- As symbolic respect for the Dharma, do not put practice books directly on the floor or cushion. Put them on a bookstand or cloth.
- Treat Lamas with respect and reverence.
- When a lama (i.e., H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Sakya, H.E. Dagmo Kusho, and Tulku Yeshe Gyatso) enters or leaves the Shrine room, stand with your hands in the prayer position at your heart, and bow forward slightly.
- When visiting a lama, offer a white scarf (katag) and a heart-felt offering gift such as flowers, fruit, incense, or money.
- Treat monks and nuns with respect, dignity and courtesy.

Becoming a Buddhist

Why Take Refuge

There are a variety of valid reasons for becoming a Buddhist (traditionally referred to as “taking refuge”). The reasons can be reduced to three motivations:

- The first is fear of being trapped in samsara (the endless round of births and deaths) as well as the fear of ignorance, desire and aversion.
- The second reason is faith or supreme confidence in the Three Jewels: the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.
- The third motivation is compassion, benevolence, and the desire to alleviate all beings’ suffering.

Refuge Through Ritual

One aspect of becoming a Buddhist is to participate in the formal ritual of a refuge ceremony. A qualified teacher such as a lama, monk or nun leads the ritual, which engages the body, speech, and mind of the student in the possibility of enlightenment. Taking refuge is considered the first step toward enlightenment, when you first begin to act on the possibility for yourself.

The Three Jewels

In the refuge ceremony one affirms a commitment to and reliance upon the Three Jewels of Buddhism: the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. These are called the Three Jewels because they are considered spiritual treasures of great worth. Buddha refers to any fully enlightened being, more specifically to the figure of Gautama Buddha, historical discoverer and exemplifier of complete awakening. The Dharma means teachings, truth, practice and realization. The Sangha is the community of Buddhist practitioners who have already taken Refuge. They support each other on the path to spiritual awakening. Through embracing these three spiritual treasures, one is purified, uplifted, and strengthened.

The Refuge Ceremony

During the refuge ceremony the student is positioned in front of a shrine that contains symbols of the Three Jewels: paintings and statues showing the Buddha, books of scripture that represent the Dharma, and members of the community that represent the Sangha. In committing oneself to the

Three Jewels, one repeats three times, “I go for refuge to the Buddha, I go for refuge to the Dharma, I go for refuge to the Sangha.”

As part of the ceremony, a lock of one’s hair is cut off in reference to the Buddha, who shaved his head as a part of his renunciation of worldly life. You will also receive a spiritual Dharma name, which refers to a quality or deity of importance in Buddhist practice. At the conclusion of the refuge ceremony the student performs three prostrations, symbolizing devotion to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.

Refuge Through Empowerments

It is also possible to take refuge during an empowerment ritual. In that case, there is no formal refuge ceremony. Most people who take refuge in this way subsequently go through a formal refuge ceremony, and at that time receive their Dharma name.

The Significance of Refuge

There is a class offered through Sakya Monastery’s Spiritual Education Curriculum called “The Significance of Refuge.” The class includes both a presentation about the Refuge ceremony as well as time for discussion about the ceremony. Please check the website or call the Monastery office weekdays 8:00 am to noon to check on the dates and times of the class.

The Role of Wisdom

Another aspect of being a Buddhist is attaining an understanding of the true nature of reality. This wisdom is reflected in the fundamental Buddhist precepts, called the Four Seals:

- All products are impermanent
- All contaminated objects bring suffering
- All phenomena are selfless
- Nirvana is peace

The profound realization of these four conditions of existence removes delusion, opens one to detachment and renunciation, and ultimately makes possible the experience of Nirvana, the release from limitation of existence.

Buddhist Living

By taking refuge in the Three Jewels, three actions are prescribed and their corresponding opposites are proscribed:

- First, one has respect for the Buddha, the teacher of the path to enlightenment, through being reverential and making offerings. But one does not take refuge in worldly deities.
- Second, one has respect for the Dharma, the path to enlightenment, through not placing religious books or other objects directly on the floor, walking on or over books or other Dharma objects. It is also important to have compassion for all living beings, including those who have made your food possible.
- Third, one has respect for the Sangha, the community of followers of the Buddha's Dharma, through honoring and appreciating lamas, monks, and nuns, as well as not speaking badly of them. One should also avoid evildoers.

Advice from the Lama

Once you have taken refuge, H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Sakya recommends you cultivate six important attitudes and behaviors:

- First, even when death approaches, do not give up refuge in the Three Jewels.
- Second, always remember the Three Jewels and especially their blessings when things go well. When your past actions bring you obstacles, remember the law of karma and don't become discouraged or disillusioned with the Three Jewels.
- Third, keep in mind benevolence, compassion, and the mind of enlightenment (bodhicitta).
- Fourth, help one another and share.
- Fifth, try to help others who you see are suffering.
- Finally, practice wholesome activities and shed the unwholesome.

Meditation Practices at Sakya Monastery

Chenrezi

The Buddha defined compassion as the wish to free another being from suffering. In Tibetan Buddhism, compassion is seen as a core component of the aspiration to attain enlightenment.

Without compassion, it is difficult to make any progress on the spiritual path.

Embodiment of Compassion

The focus of Tibetan Buddhist compassion meditation is on the figure of Chenrezi. Chenrezi is the Tibetan Buddhist name for the Bodhisattva of Compassion. As a Bodhisattva, a being intent on attaining enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings, Chenrezi is regarded as having achieved the highest spiritual level short of full Buddhahood. Chenrezi is a special guardian of Tibet, and many lamas are regarded as his emanations, including H.H. the Dalai Lama, and Sachen Kunga Nyingpo, founder of the Sakya School of Tibetan Buddhism.

Chenrezi is the main spiritual practice of Sakya Monastery. Chenrezi, the Greatly Compassionate One, is a tenth stage Bodhisattva who has vowed to help liberate all sentient beings from the sufferings of all realms and to generate the causes for happiness. Think of Chenrezi as a spiritual being that is the perfect archetypal expression of love, kindness and compassion. His Holiness the Dalai Lama is seen as an emanation of Chenrezi.

Please relax and make yourself comfortable. Although our surroundings seem formal, we are very friendly and approachable. Each of us understands what it feels like to visit the Monastery for the first time.

In keeping with the practices of the spiritual masters of Asia, we recommend that you maintain a straight yet relaxed spine whether sitting in the lotus position, cross-legged, in a chair or kneeling. If you are uncomfortable on the floor, there are chairs or benches in the back. In the Tibetan tradition, it is respectful not to have the soles of one's feet facing the shrine or the Lama. Please remove your hat when in the Shrine Room. If your knees are uncovered, please ask a greeter for a shawl to cover them.

Dharma books represent the true words and speech of the Buddha and the holy Sangha, ordained followers of Lord Buddha. With this in mind, please keep your Dharma books and handouts on the bookstand or hold them in your hands or lap.

Tips for Newcomers

Please stand when the Head Lama (in Tibetan “Rinpoche”, precious jewel) enters the room. Some people will do three prostrations. Join us in prostrations if you feel comfortable.

Be aware that sometimes we repeat prayers three times, so if you turn the page and are confused, this may be what has occurred.

If you should lose your place in the Dharma books, please ask your neighbor to help you. Follow Dagchen Rinpoche (the Head Lama) and the Oomze (English chant leader) through the yellow and red Dharma books.

We will do either a long or short version of the meditation, depending on the day’s schedule of activities—please check the monthly calendar.

Special Tibetan Buddhist Ceremonies

Overview

In keeping with traditional Tibetan Buddhist practice, Sakya Monastery offers a wide variety of blessings and ceremonies to the public. Rituals are offered with the intention that all beings may be healed, protected from harm, and enjoy inner peace. Many of these rituals are designed to address the experience of daily life including ceremonies for weddings and the birth of babies; the blessing of places or religious objects; the removal of obstacles and aid for the sick; and support for those who have died and are awaiting rebirth. There are also special ceremonies for those who are entering the Buddhist community, seeking Buddhist initiatory empowerments, or going on Buddhist retreats.

All of the spiritual blessings and ceremonies and the recommended donation are described in detail in a notebook available at the Sakya Monastery office entitled *Spiritual Practices, Blessings & Ceremonies*.

Each of the listed rituals is available by request. If you are interested, contact the Monastery, explain which blessing or ceremony you'd like to request, and confer with the appropriate staff about details. Because these are traditional practices, each ritual has its own protocol. The staff will provide you with an information sheet, inform you as to what preparations will need to be done beforehand, what the ritual will consist of, and the suggested donation. No one is turned away for lack of funds.

Weddings

You can arrange a wedding at the Monastery, in which the Lama blesses the couple, and gives the katas (ritual greeting scarves). There is an exchange of rings and auspicious rice and tea offerings are presented to the Shrine, Lama and the couple. After the Food Offering Prayer is recited, the couple ceremonially tosses some rice as an offering and drinks tea. Lastly, the Lama recites happiness and long life dedication prayers over the couple.

Baby Blessings

Having your baby blessed can promote the long life of the child, decrease the obstacles that appear in the child's life, and bring family happiness. The Lama will recite prayers and give the child a sacred blessing cord as well as a long life kata. For the babies of Buddhist practitioners, the ceremony also bestows a Buddhist name of the child and involves the cutting of a few strands of the

child's hair, symbolizing entrance into the Buddhist path.

Property Blessing

You can have your land, home, shrine, business or store blessed or consecrated. The blessing will bring harmonious energy to your property and increase happiness, enjoyment, and long life. It can also reduce sickness. This blessing or consecration can be performed by a lama, monk or nun.

Green Tara Mandala Offering

Tara is the female meditational deity that represents the maternal aspect of compassion. In her green form, she is seen as a protector against all dangers. A Green Tara Mandala Offering with 21 Tara Praises can remove obstacles and negative forces from important events like a business meeting, a trip, or an exam, etc. The Offering can be performed at your home, your office, or at the Monastery by a lama, monk or a nun.

Divination

Important questions can be brought to the Lama, who through the use of *Mo* or *Sungtak* divination techniques, will find a direct “yes” or “no” answer for you. Questions may range from issues surrounding the purchase or sale of a house to business, travel, marriage, or relationship decisions. Any doubt that you may want to resolve can be addressed through divination.

“Book of the Dead” Practice

The complete 49-day spiritual practice described in the “Tibetan Book of the Dead” is called *Sur*. With assistance, this powerful practice can be conducted at your home. Family members can attend and participate in some of the prayers (English translations and transliterations of the prayers are available). *Sur* facilitates the deceased's passage through the *bardo* (the intermediate state between death and rebirth). It will also provide a number of other blessings, including repayment of any karmic indebtedness from past lives; achieving harmony with the spirits of loved ones who have recently passed away; protection of home, the person or land; and the removal of bad luck that comes from energies attached to old or antique objects.

Dedicating Merit

Through focused and intentional prayer, merit can be dedicated to a specific recipient. This practice can direct healing spiritual energy to loved ones (including pets) who are sick or have a serious disease. As a mourning practice, the dedication of merit can also be directed to assist the dead with a quick and successful rebirth. This ceremony can be conducted at the Monastery or offsite. It can also be performed by proxy, at a distance, for those who cannot personally attend.

Becoming a Buddhist

The ceremony of “taking refuge” marks a formal commitment to Buddhist philosophy and practice. It is the traditional way of becoming a Buddhist and indicates that you have begun to act on the possibility of enlightenment for yourself. In the ritual, you affirm your respect for the “Three Jewels”: the Buddha, the Dharma (Buddhist teachings) and the Sangha (the Buddhist community of lamas and the ordained).

Empowerments

Tantric initiatory ceremonies called “empowerments” introduce the practices, techniques, and rituals of deity yoga. An empowerment ritual transmits spiritual power and blessing, authorizing you to perform the meditational practices of specific deities. Empowerments are bestowed by the Lama, upon the acceptance of a request from an individual or a group.

Consecration of Religious Objects

It is essential that religious objects placed on a shrine be blessed. Without such a blessing, an object like a statue, *thangkas* (painting), prayer wheel, *mala* (prayer beads), or *stupa* is spiritually empty.

Consecration ceremonies performed by the Lama make an object sacred. Sacred statues are filled with valued items like secret relics, fragments of special stones, sandalwood, mantras, jewels, grains, medicines, etc. Note: statues that are already consecrated are available for purchase at the Monastery.

Children's Dharma School

The goal of the Children's Dharma School is to introduce and explore age appropriate Buddhist concepts and principles, using creative and varied modalities. Different curricula have been devised for younger and older children so that they are engaged and excited about learning. Included are historical accounts of Shakyamuni Buddha, folktales, and legends traditionally taught in Tibetan Buddhism, as well as more intensive classes for the older children on such topics as the Four Noble Truths, The Six Perfections and other Buddhist principles. There are exercises to help children develop meditation techniques as well as a variety of art activities and a healthy snack offered during each class. Guest speakers are invited to give the children lectures on special topics and there are occasional field trips, as well as opportunities to learn about other spiritual traditions. Parents may leave their child/children with the Dharma School while they attend Sunday Chenrezi meditation, or join the children's classes as assistants or observers.

School Tours

Free guided tours of the Monastery's beautiful Tibetan Buddhist Shrine Room are available to public and private elementary and high schools. Educational hand-outs are provided to visiting groups. To schedule a tour, call the Sakya Monastery office.

Parties, Celebrations and Cultural Events

During the course of the year, the Monastery holds a number of parties and celebrations, which are especially fun for families. These events include: Losar (Tibetan New Year), a 4th of July picnic, a celebration of H.H. the Dalai Lama's Birthday, a Labor Day camping trip, a Halloween party and a Thanksgiving feast.

Virupa Educational Institute

The Virupa Educational Institute (VEI) serves as the education branch of Sakya Monastery of Tibetan Buddhism in Seattle, Washington. His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen Sakya, the Head Lama of Sakya Monastery of Tibetan Buddhism, founded the Virupa Ecumenical Institute in 1998; in 2003, it was renamed the Virupa Educational Institute. VEI was named after Virupa, a great Indian Buddhist master who lived during the eight century.

At VEI, people learn about Tibetan Buddhism, and the specific spiritual practices of Sakya Monastery. VEI offers a range of courses. Introductory teachings for those unfamiliar with Buddhism are offered every Sunday morning at 8:30. Classes for new and experienced practitioners are scheduled throughout the week. A wide range of topics are covered, including ritual technique, Buddhist theory, Tibetan culture and more. Teachers include His Holiness Jigdal Dachen Sakya, Her Eminence Dagmo Jamyang Kusho Sakya, the resident monks of Sakya Monastery (Tulku Yeshe Gyatso and Lama Migmar Tsering), and experienced lay people.

We hope you will join us in learning the Dharma.

Membership at Sakya Monastery

The Community and the Opportunity

Sakya Monastery of Tibetan Buddhism is a spiritual community and cultural center led by renowned lamas from Tibet. It is dedicated to the realization and practice of wisdom, loving-kindness and compassion in order to nurture and bring happiness to all beings. Sakya Monastery has several resident monks, but the *sangha* (community) is largely composed of lay members. *Sangha* members actively embrace patience, kindness, generosity, and peace in their lives.

As a lay member, you enjoy the rare and extraordinary privilege of studying and practicing Tibetan Buddhism directly under the guidance of lamas who were trained in traditional Tibet before the Chinese occupation (1959). H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Sakya (Rinpoche), the founder and leader of the Monastery, is one of the few qualified lamas capable of bestowing the Buddha's most important oral teachings and transmissions. He is the eldest non-sectarian Tibetan Buddhist master living today.

Sakya Monastery is a non-sectarian Buddhist community, supportive of all the various schools within Tibetan Buddhism. It offers opportunities for community meditations on compassion twice a week, observances of Buddhist holy days, monthly tantric rituals, and periodic empowerments to advance one's spiritual practice.

The Four Friends

The Buddhist fable of the Four Friends—the alliance of an elephant, monkey, hare, and partridge who work together in order to reach fruit on a tree—is a delightful reminder of the synergistic nature of community. When harmony, cooperation, and collaboration are present, individuals benefit as well as the community.

Providing financial support to the monastery makes you a member. You are instrumental in building a foundation for the well-being of the community. You can also contribute to the physical and spiritual environment by electing to volunteer your time and skills.

Special Benefits of Membership

In recognition of their commitment to the Monastery, members enjoy:

- Free borrowing privileges at the Monastery's Library, which houses 2,500 books on Buddhism, Tibet and comparative religion.
- Discounted rates for retreat use at Sakya Monastery's Tara Meditation Center located at the beautiful 72-acre Earth Sanctuary on Whidbey Island.
- Discounted rates for programs hosted by the Monastery's educational branch, The Virupa Educational Institute. Its year-round schedule of programs includes the Spiritual Educational curriculum series, lectures, classes and workshops.
- The privilege to elect representatives to Sakya Monastery's Board of Advisors at the annual meeting.
- The opportunity to participate in the life of the Monastery through committee work and program development.

Tara Meditation Center



Overview

Near Freeland, Washington, on the south end of Whidbey Island, is a 72-acre nature reserve with forest wetlands, three ponds, and abundant wildlife: “Earth Sanctuary” (www.earthsanctuary.org). Through the generosity of benefactor Chuck Pettis, meditators may use the Tara Meditation Center located at the southeast corner of the property for spiritual retreats.

The Tara Meditation Center at Earth Sanctuary is designed to support reflection, meditation, personal renewal, and spiritual growth. The house and the grounds surrounding it have been blessed, consecrated, and energetically optimized according to Feng-Shui principles and practices.

The Tara Meditation Center is available to individuals wishing to make meditation retreats of one day or more. The Tara Meditation Center can also accommodate one-day group meditation retreats for 25 people or less.

All Meditators Are Welcome

In the spirit of ecumenism, the Tara Meditation Center is available for use by all meditators. Meditators from all Buddhist sects and denominations are welcome, as well as those of other faiths, such as Christianity and Hinduism. You may practice whatever form of meditation you are comfortable with, and which supports your spiritual growth. All retreats must be approved by H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Sakya.

Tibetan Buddhist Retreats

The Tara Meditation Center provides the Tibetan Buddhist spiritual community with a quiet setting that is free of distractions and is conducive and supportive of special Tibetan Buddhist practices.

Tibetan Buddhist meditation retreats at the Tara Meditation Center are made under the supervision of H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Sakya, Head Lama of Sakya Monastery in Seattle. He approves individual retreat plans and can help guide meditators toward an illuminating experience.

There are three levels of retreat practice for Tibetan Buddhists: beginning retreats (involving simple mind-training meditations—such as the practice of listening intently to natural sounds), intermediate retreats (concentrating on practices such as repeating the vows of refuge, saying the one-hundred syllable mantra, and making mandala offerings), and advanced retreats (involving meditational practices dedicated to one deity).

An Invitation from H.H. Dagchen Sakya Rinpoche:

“This retreat center is a sanctuary for all people. Come and rest your soul from the pressures of your samsaric existence. In this place of peace and in this moment of repose, let your tired spirit come in contact with the soothing realization of the nature of your own self.

In Tibet, hermits spent months and years in solitude high in the mountains. Today, we have this opportunity to go back to nature even in the midst of civilization and yet feel so close to our very basic origins. As sentient beings, we are all interdependent and so to respect the environment in which we live is very essential. May this retreat center serve as an example for the harmonious co-existence between nature and humankind.

It is my prayer and hope that people may enjoy the pristine beauty of this place and take back with them a higher understanding of their purpose in life.”

Setting & Facilities



The proximity of the Tara Meditation Center to the woods and ponds of Earth Sanctuary provides meditators with a special opportunity to commune with nature, while focusing on spiritual practice. Retreatants are welcome to walk the peaceful and beautiful trails around Earth Sanctuary’s three

ponds and through its forest. Sacred spaces, consecrated by H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Sakya and H.E. Dagmo Kusho Sakya are excellent for meditation.

The Tara Meditation Center house has a combination meditation/living room with two Buddhist shrines, meditation pillows, a sofa, easy chair, a wood burning stove, and a variety of spiritual and meditation books. Ten meditation chairs are also available. The house has two bedrooms with single beds for overnight stays, and a bathroom. You are responsible for preparing your own meals in the fully equipped kitchen*. The grounds are carefully landscaped.

To facilitate your retreat, Earth Sanctuary's caretaker, Celia Sullivan, will meet you and orient you to the Tara Meditation Center and Earth Sanctuary's sacred spaces and trails.

Reservations & Rates

All retreatants, including day visitors, must make reservations in advance. Contact the Sakya Monastery office for full details.

Very reasonable rates have been established to encourage meditation practitioners to use the Tara Meditation Center. For fees, please see the Tara Meditation Center Rate Card or visit the Sakya Monastery web site (www.sakya.org).

In Appreciation

H.H. J.D. Sakya, H.E. Dagmo Kusho and members of Sakya Monastery thank Chuck Pettis for his continued support of the Tara Meditation Center. Due to his compassionate and meritorious activities, may this peaceful site endure eternally for the benefit of all beings.

Tara Meditation Center
c/o Sakya Monastery
108 NW 83rd Street
Seattle, WA 98117-3042
Phone: (206) 789-2573
Fax: (206) 789-3994
Email: monastery@sakya.org
Web: www.sakya.org