



Sakya News

Summer 2007 Edition

Sakya Monastery of Tibetan Buddhism, Seattle, WA - A spiritual and cultural center led by the renowned lamas from Tibet

H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Sakya Teaching

Translated by Dr. Jeffrey Schoening

Transcribed by Jessica Baird

April 13, 2003, Chenrezi Meditation at Sakya Monastery



We have gathered here to do wholesome practices related to Buddha's teachings and avoid unwholesome activities. There are many benefits if we avoid unwholesome practices. It benefits other beings and we will avoid rebirth in the lower realms. In general, these unwholesome practices are worldly teachings, activities, or conditions [as opposed to the Buddha's teaching]. We take up pure Dharma, or correct (perfect) Dharma. What is most important is that one must have a good and pure motivation.

As Buddhists we take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, or Three Jewels (the objects of refuge). The Buddha is the teacher who shows the path to liberation. The Dharma is his teaching, which is described in various ways. There are 84,000 teachings consisting of different components. The Buddha's first teaching, which began the First Turning of the Wheel of Dharma, consisted of teachings on the Four Noble Truths: the existence of suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering. The Sangha includes followers of the Buddha: bodhisattva emanations, lamas, reincarnate lamas, monks, nuns, and so on. These are all objects of refuge.

Buddha gave teachings that can be divided into sutric (public) teachings and tantric (esoteric) teachings. When we come here, we are followers of the Buddha. We are practitioners of what is called Mahayana, the great vehicle. Within the Mahayana, there's the Vajrayana, which is the esoteric kind. We are practitioners of both of these. Dagchen Rinpoche will explain today some of the circumstances around these practices.

In the Praise of Buddha it says "Homage to you, who having quickly gazed upon beings with compassion at such places as Varanasi, turned the wheel of Dharma, establishing disciples in the three vehicles." He will explain what it means to establish disciples in the three vehicles. In the Vajrayana (esoteric) teaching, the other object of refuge and the main object, is the Lama, who includes within him or herself the other objects of refuge including the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, protector deities, wealth deities and so on.

In the tantric tradition, empowerments are very important. The lama bestows the empowerment, the students request the empowerments, and there is much meaning in requesting including sacred commitments. The teacher should have certain qualifications to give an empowerment.

In this issue...

H.H. J.D. Sakya Teaching	1-2
Sakya Tenshug By Laura Ellis	3-4
Dhungsey Avikritar Rinpoche	5
H.H. Dalai Lama Birthday	6
Eight Indian Masters Series: History of Gunaprabha By Amy Farrington	7
The Great Debater, Dharmakirti By Sherry Stenberg	8-9
Our New Artist, Migmar Tsering	9
Volunteer Profile By Nadine Selden	10

(Continued on page 2)

There are certain things a lama must do to become a lama including empowerments, transmissions, and so on. There are three conditions needed in an empowerment including the unbroken lineage and no deterioration of the transmission of the explanations. The second is the wang (empowerment), which must be given completely in three parts with preliminary, middle, and concluding practices. The last quality is that when one receives an empowerment, one must have devotion and respect for the lama. One must view the lama as inseparable from the objects of refuge. One must always keep respect for the lama.

An empowerment can be compared to the planting of a seed, which must be tended to carefully in order for good qualities to develop. There is preparation the lama must do before an empowerment such as arranging ritual items, offerings, prayers, and meditation. It is important these things are done in the correct and proper manner, and not in a sloppy way. Once that is done one moves to the main part. There are things both the teachers and students must do for the main part of the empowerment.

For preparation, the lama must also meditate including taking refuge, arousing the thought of enlightenment, visualizing himself in the form of the deity and making blessings for the rituals. There are specific activities the student must also do throughout the empowerment that are very important. The student should have a good attitude, and always have faith and devotion toward the lama. There are three levels of faith including simple (pure), aspiring, and faith of conviction (the best and most difficult); if one does not have faith of conviction, one should have the other two levels of faith. During the course of empowerment, the students request the empowerment of a meditation deity (a yidam) to protect the mind and remove mental delusions.

The yidams belong to different tantric classes. There are four different classes of tantra. There's the activity tantra, the conduct tantra, the yoga tantra, and the highest yoga tantra. The meditational deity is in one of these tantras. When the initiation is given, it is given for the deity in one of these particular tantras. There's a tradition, a way of giving the tantra, and a way of doing the practices that are associated and connected with a particular class of tantra. One should keep consistent with the class of tantric empowerment and level of practice.

In receiving an empowerment, one's motivation is very important. Motivation is cultivated through the four thoughts that turn the mind toward the Dharma. One should be motivated by the preciousness of human birth, the difficulty obtaining this birth, and what one can do with a human rebirth. There are contemplations on death and impermanence, cause and result (karma), and the contemplations of the faults of samsara, which forms proper motivation for practicing the Dharma.

Next week Dagchen Rinpoche will be giving two empowerments*. On Saturday he will give a Mahakala empowerment. This is for removing obstacles to Dharma practice. On Sunday he will give a Dzambhala empowerment, a wealth deity, which removes the sufferings of poverty. These initiations are different, and there are different practices associated with them. Sometimes people take the empowerments for their own personal protection and obstacles, but it doesn't work like that. These are Dharma protectors for obstacles to your practice. Likewise, for the wealth deities, people think it will protect them from poverty, but it's not effective unless you are doing it for others. It is not effective if one does it for only selfish reasons. One must pray that the practice will enable us to remove the poverty of all beings. There are commitments as part of the empowerment and one must observe those commitments in order to have good results.

**editor's note: these empowerments were given in April, 2003.*



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Sakya Tenshug for H.H. Dalai Lama

By Laura Ellis



In March 2007 H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Sakya and retinue traveled to Dharamsala, India to perform special long life prayers (tenshug) for H.H. the Dalai Lama. This year, the year of the Fire Pig, is the Dalai Lama's obstacle year according to Tibetan astrology. The prayers went very well with Sakyapa lamas, abbots, monks, nuns, and lay people attending from all over India, Nepal, Bhutan, and the wider world. Representatives from both the Sakya Dolma Phodrang and the Sakya Phuntsok Phodrang were present as well as from the Ngorpa and Tsarpa traditions. Long life prayers will be performed by each of the 4 schools of Tibetan Buddhism throughout the year. The Sakyapa prayers began on March 15th with 60 monks who had all finished the retreat for the Three Long Life Deity puja. The puja was performed 1000 times with each puja lasting over an hour, and 1,500,000 mantras counted.

This historic event marked the first time that seven Khon lineage holders have been together in the same room all wearing the ceremonial attire. On the 15th day offerings were given to H.H. Dalai Lama. H.H. Sakya Trizin offered a long life arrow with five colors. H.H. Dagchen Sakya offered the long life vase. Khenpo Kunga Wangchuk offered nectar and long life pills, Dhungsey Ratna Rinpoche of the Dolma Phodrang, Sakya Trizin's eldest son, offered a mandala. Dhungsey Gyana Rinpoche, Sakya Trizin's youngest ordained son, offered a special Sakya hat, monk's staff, and monk clothes set. Dhungsey Sadu Rinpoche of the Phuntsok Phodrang and Dagchen Rinpoche's fifth son, offered the 8 Auspicious Symbols (Tashi Tagye). Dagchen Rinpoche's grandsons, Dhungsey Avikritar Rinpoche and Dhungsey Asanga Rinpoche, offered 8 Auspicious Substances (Tashi Zedey) for longevity according to Buddha Shakyamuni and 7 Precious Royal Emblems (Gyasin Na Dun), all made of sterling silver. Also presented, were 200 books on the Sakyapa history in its entirety. There was a tsok with offerings piled like a mountain. The Dagmos from the two palaces presented katags to His Holiness.

While wearing his Sakya hat (sashu), His Holiness gave a long talk about the historical importance of Sakya as a major carrier of the Buddhist teachings and their preservation. His Holiness thanked everyone for the offering and explained that he is able to wear this hat because he has received Hevajra Teachings from the late Chogye Trichin and also from the late Khenpo Sangye Tenzin and Khenpo Kunga Wangchuk at Sakya Ghoom Monastery. His Holiness practices Hevajra every day. He emphasized to the young Sakya lamas how important it is to practice and study.

Thanks to Dagyum Jamyang Sakya for providing the information in this article.

Long live H.H. the Dalai Lama!

Back row from left: Dhungsey Avikritar Rinpoche, H.E. Kamtrul Rinpoche, Dhungsey Asanga Rinpoche, H.H. Dagchen Rinpoche, H.H. Sakya Trizin, Dhungsey Sadu Rinpoche, Dhungsey Ratna Rinpoche, Dhungsey Gyana Rinpoche., Front row from left: Adrienne Chan, Gyayum Kusho, Dagyum Jamyang Sakya, Dagmo Pema Sakya.



*Sakya Tenshug for H.H. Dalai Lama, Dharamasala, India
March, 2007*



Above from left: Dhungsey Avikritar Rinpoche, Dagyum Jamyang Sakya, H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Sakya, Dagmo Pema Sakya, H.H. Dalai Lama, Dhungsey Sadu Rinpoche, Yangsi Lama Kangtsao, Dhungsey Asanga Rinpoche (front).



H.H. Sakya Trizin (center right), H.H. Dagchen Sakya Rinpoche (center left), Gyalyum Kusho (left), Dagyum Jamyang Sakya (right).



H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Sakya and family were hosted in Dharamsala, by H.E. Kamtrul Rinpoche and family. H.E. Kamtrul Rinpoche (to the right of Dagchen Rinpoche) is the maternal grandfather of Dhungsey Asanga Rinpoche (far right).

Dhungsey Avikritar Rinpoche

Summer Studies at Sakya Monastery, Ghoom

During the summer months when it is very hot in Delhi, Dhungsey Avikritar Rinpoche, grandson of H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Sakya, and son of Dhungsey Zaya Sakya and Dagmo Lhanze Sakya, travels to Sakya Monastery in Ghoom where he continues his studies in ritual. Avikritar Rinpoche turned 14 years old in May 2007. He is normally based in Delhi at the Phuntsok Phodrang Sakya Heritage Society. Every year during the summer, Avikritar Rinpoche together with his teacher/attendant and Yangsi Lama Kangtsao (also studying at the Phuntsok Phodrang Sakya Heritage Society) travel to Ghoom, Darjeeling in northern India. There are over one hundred monks at the monastery, many of whom came from the main Sakya Monastery in Tibet. Avikritar Rinpoche studies rituals, mainly hand mudras connected with the prayers, under the guidance of Venerable Kunsang Gyatso who has been teaching him for the past year and will continue to do so until he has completed his ritual studies.

Right: Phuntsok Phodrang Sakya Heritage Society. Dhungsey Avi Rinpoche (center left), Dhungsey Abhaya Rinpoche (center right), teachers and monks. New Delhi, India.

Below right: Dhungsey Sadu Rinpoche, Dagmo Pema, and Yangsi Lama Kangtsao with Phuntsok Phodrang monks. New Delhi, India.

Below: Dhungsey Avikritar Rinpoche, Dhungsey Asanga Rinpoche, and Dagyum Jamyang Sakya in Dharamsala, India.



H.H. Dalai Lama's Birthday Celebration

Sakya Monastery, Seattle WA, July 8, 2007



Above: H.H. Dalai Lama's throne. Mandala and katag offering for H.H. Dalai Lama's long life.

Right: H.H Jigdal Dagchen Sakya (seated at left) .

Below left Dagyum Jamyang Sakya.

Below right: Offering birthday cake to H.H. Dalai Lama .



Eight Indian Masters Series

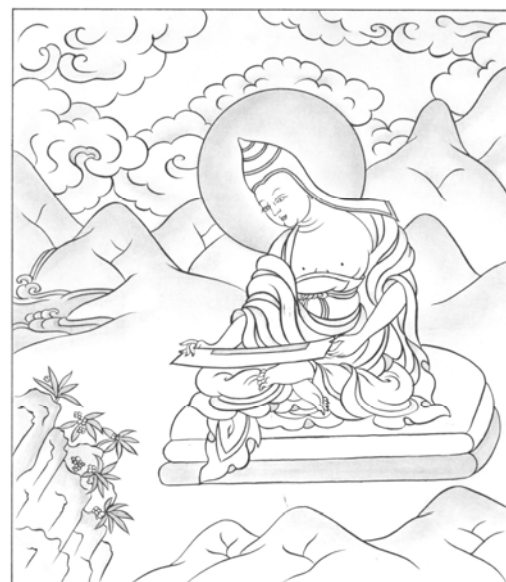
Beginning in April 2000, Sakya News has featured a series of articles on the life stories of the Eight Indian Masters, or the Six Ornaments and the Two Supreme ones. These outstanding Buddhist leaders are painted over the windows in the shrine room. Nagarjuna and Asanga are referred to as the “Two Supreme Ones”, while Aryadeva, Vasubandhu, Dignaga, Sakyaprabha, Dharmakirti and Gunaprabha are known as the “Six Ornaments”. During the development of Buddhism in India, the influence of these eight masters was unparalleled. The articles on Gunaprabha and Dharmakirti are sixth and seventh in the series.

History of Gunaprabha

by Amy Farrington

Gunaprabha, who was born in the 7th Century to a Brahman family in Mathura, is one of the Indian masters depicted on the Sakya Monastery walls of the shrine room. If you look up, along the sides you will see lovely artwork depicting the masters, illuminated by light, as a testimony to their greatness.

During Gunaprabha's youth, as he studied the Vedas, the oldest scriptural texts of Hinduism, he distinguished himself by his brilliance. When he reached maturity, he developed a deep understanding of the Buddhist Dharma and received full monastic ordination. As one of the four main disciples of Acarya Vasubandhu, he possessed great knowledge of both the Hinayana and the sutras of the Mahayana, becoming a scholar in the Vinaya (Discipline). He recited from memory the *Collection of a Hundred Thousand Vinayas* daily.



Gunaprabha

Becoming a great teacher, he resided at a monastery in Mathura, along with 5,000 other monks who are said to have kept their monastic vows perfectly. Many of them were vastly learned in the Abhidharma, and about 500 of them could recite the *Collection of a Hundred Thousand Vinayas* by heart. Aside from the monks, there were many great masters who were disciples of Gunaprabha including Dharmamitra of Tukharistan, who became a master in the Vinaya, and Gunamati, who attained proficiency in the Abhidharma and transmitted the Vinaya lineage to generations of disciples.

Gunaprabha also became an inspiration to a warrior king who was born in Maru and conquered all the kingdoms of the Western region. One time, the king had the eyes of his minister gouged out as a royal punishment, but the blind minister regained his sight through a combination of Gunaprabha's prayers, pure moral conduct, and healing medicinal abilities. After witnessing this miracle, the king accepted Gunaprabha as his preceptor, appointed him as his Guru and gave him wealth and numerous offerings. Gunaprabha dedicated all of his offerings from the king and the laity to the merit of all sentient beings, and distributed the gifts to the needy. It is stated that he spent his riches for virtuous purposes and never allowed himself to fall from the humble practices of a monk.

Gunaprabha wrote many great texts, such as: the *One Hundred Actions*, a *Commentary on the Chapter on Morality of the Bodhisattvabhumi*, and the *Basic teachings of the Discipline Code*, most famously known as the *Mula Vinaya Sutra*.

Resources for this article included:

1. Taranatha's *History of Buddhism In India* (translated from Tibetan by Lama Chimpa, Alaka Chattopadhyaya; edited by Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya)
2. *The History of Buddhism In India and Tibet* by Bu-ston, one of 4 disciples of Vasubandhu, (translated from Tibetan by Dr. E. Obermiller)
3. *Indian Buddhist Pandits* from *The Jewel Garland of Buddhist History* (translated from Tibetan by Lobsang Norbu Tsonawa)
4. *Crystal Mirror, Vol. 5*

Many thanks to H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Sakya, Dr. Jeffrey Schoening, Professor Tom Yarnell and Sakya Monastery Librarians for providing the information resources which made this article possible.

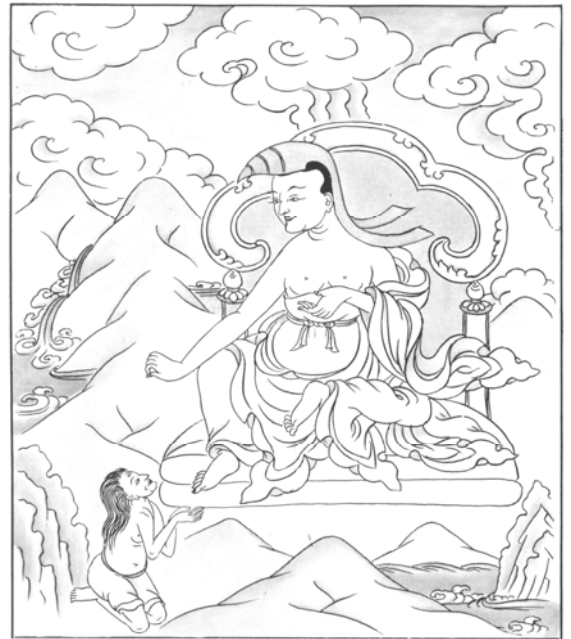
Chös Kyi Gragspa, The Great Debater (Dharmakīrti)

by Sherry Stenberg

Every Sunday morning after the abbreviated Heart Sutra, we recite the Non-Sectarian Prayer by Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo. The Six Ornaments we invoke on page 28 are Nagarjuna, Asanga, Aryadeva, Vasubandhu, Dignaga, and Dharmakīrti.

Dharmakīrti is one of the eight Indian masters painted on the east wall of the Shrine Room, third from the front, with his arms through his mala in a debating gesture.

Born to a Brahman *tirthika*⁽¹⁾ in Cudamani, India, Dharmakīrti (600-660 C.E.) mastered all the non-Buddhist teachings by age 18 and then, realizing errors in the teachings he had been studying, became a Buddhist! Ousted by the non-Buddhist *panditas*⁽²⁾, he studied with Isvarasena during which time he "analyzed and memorized all the sutras" and the 500 *dharanis*⁽³⁾. Next he moved on to the works of Dignaga (480-540 C.E.), "understanding them perfectly after three expositions" (Crystal Mirror, page 80). His most important work is a commentary, *Pramana-Varttika*, which expounds upon all the the thought on Dignaga up until that time.



Dharmakīrti

Sankaracarya, foremost *tirthika* pandita of that time, was defeating in debate the Buddhist *bhiksus*⁽⁴⁾, who were then being forced to accept *tirthika* doctrines. Twenty-five dharma centers were closed and 500 monks were forced to convert. Dharmakīrti worked for Kumaralila, an unrivalled *tirthika*, while disguised as a servant. He absorbed all of the non-Buddhist teachings and now was ready to take on the whole city of Kakaguha in debate!

The Brahman Kanagupta and 500 others responded to Dharmakīrti's challenge posted on the city gate. In three months, Dharmakīrti defeated the *tirthika acharyas*⁽⁵⁾ in debate, converted them and all their students to Buddhism, and established 50 dharma centers.

Sankaracarya relocated to Nalanda, challenging the monks there to debate. They had heard of Dharmakīrti and waited until he could come to defend them. The debate drew a crowd of spectators before the king, with Sankaracarya vowing to jump into the Ganges if he lost, which of course he did. The debates continued for several years, during which time Sankaracarya was reborn, lost the debates and jumped into the Ganges twice more! Finally, in his next incarnation, he converted to Buddhism and the series of debates was brought to an end. No wonder we remember Dharmakīrti still.

Sakya Pandita (1182-1251; seated at Lord Buddha's far left at the altar in the Shrine Room) is responsible for the diffusion of Dharmakīrti's teachings in Tibet during the 13th century. He devoted his life to the teachings and writing commentaries. He came into contact with Dharmakīrti's works through Sakya Sribhadra, a Nalanda pandit who fled from Muslim invaders in India to Tibet.

The first ruler of a unified Tibet under Mongolian domination, Sakya Pandita was the fourth of five great Sakya masters and the one who established Sakya as a major scholarly tradition (Dreyfus, p. 23). He harmonized the prevailing Path and Result (*lam' dras*) Hevajra tantra with Dharmakīrti's monastic perspectives, quoting directly from Dharmakīrti's Commentary in his *Treasure on the Science of Valid Cognition*.

Sakya Pandita's new approach to Dharmakīrti's work became influential at the turn of the 15th century, when the scholar Yak-don revived it. Thus began acceptance of Sakya Pandita's *Treasure* among Tibetan scholars and its inclusion as one of the foundational "18 Texts of Great Renown" among the Sakyas, bringing forth both Dharmakīrti's and Dignaga's teachings from nearly 1000 years earlier.

Dignaga defended Buddhist principles during a time when Indian Brahmins were turning toward logic and epistemology⁽⁶⁾ to rationalize Hinduism. A hundred years later, Dharmakīrti became Dignaga's chief expositor. Their focus was less on metaphysical considerations and more on argumentation on "elaborate theories about the sources and types of knowledge," (Dreyfus, p. 16). Both are considered logicians who validated sacred texts of Buddhism in the historical tradition of Indian philosophy.

Modern Buddhist scholars such as Tharthang Tulku (Crystal Mirror, page 362, note) define Dharmakīrti's *Pramana-Varttika* as reflecting "the Indian predilection for inquiry into the 'valid means of knowing.'"

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Crystal Mirror: Journal of the Tibetan Nyingma Meditation Center: Dharma Pub., Berkeley, CA, 1977.
Dreyfus, Georges, "Recognizing Reality": State U. of N.Y. Press, 1997.
Lopez, Donald S. Jr., Snow Lion Pub., NY, 1987.

Glossary

(from the glossary in *The Words of My Perfect Teacher* by Patrul Rinpoche, or *Webster's New World College Dictionary*, Simon & Schuster/Macmillan, 1997).

- (1) *Tirthika/Tirtika (mu stegs pa)*: A "proponent of extreme philosophical views such as nihilism and eternalism. Often used for the schools of philosophical and religious thought in India that were opposed to Buddhism."
- (2) *Pandita*: A scholar, someone learned in the Five Traditional Sciences (*rig gnas lnga, Skt. pancavidya*): The five branches of learning that a pandita must master: 1. the making of things (*gzo rig gnas, silpavidya*), 2. the repairing of things (includes medicine; *gso ba'i rig gnas, cikitsavidya*), 3. philology* (*sgra' rigs gnas, Sabdavidya*), 4. logic (*gtan tshigs kyi rig gnas, hetuvidya*) and 5. philosophy (*nang don rig gnas, adhyamatvidya*).
*philology: is 1. originally, the love of learning and literature; study; scholarship; 2. the study of written records, esp. literary texts, in order to determine their authenticity, meaning, etc.; 3. old term for linguistics.
- (3) *Dharani (gzungs)*: Mantra blessed by a Buddha or Bodhisattva which has the power to help beings. There are many in the sutras, often quite long.
- (4) *Bhiksu*: Monk or priest of the Mahayana tradition.
- (5) *Acharya/Acarya (slob dpon)*: 1. teacher, 2. equivalent of spiritual master or lama. See vajra master.
Vajra master (rdo rje slob spon, Skt. vajracarya): "The spiritual master who introduces one to a mandala of the Secret Mantrayana and gives the liberating instructions." This definition was cited in *Words of My Perfect Teacher* as being from *The Great Tibetan-Chinese Dictionary*, but it was left out of the Bibliography.
- (6) *Epistemology*: The study or theory of the nature, sources, and limits of knowledge.

Sakya Monastery Welcomes Our New Artist, Migmar Tsering



The next stage of the protector deities statue project is underway. You may have noticed a new Tibetan monk in our sangha. He is Migmar Tsering from Kham, Eastern Tibet, who is here to paint these exquisite statues. The sculptors, Lopen Tumpo and Jigme Tenzin, finished their work in December 2006 and safely returned home to Bhutan. The monastery extends heartfelt thanks for their extraordinary efforts.

Migmar comes to us from Kyegu Monastery, a Sakya monastery in Kham, Tibet. He has received formal training in both sculpture and painting and has worked at many monasteries in Tibet and around the world. Migmar became a monk when he was 14 years old. He took novice vows from Ngawang Chokyi Nyingpo of Ngorpa Kunsang Khenpo Monastery, and later when he was 19 years old he took Getsu and Gelong (Bhiksu) vows from the same lama. He has received many teachings and empowerments from many great lamas including H.H. Dalai Lama, H.H. Sakya Trizin and H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Sakya.

In 1987, when he was 18 years old, Migmar began his training as an artist. His teacher was Lozong Tuji, a sculptor and painter from Kham. After six years of training, Migmar began working at monasteries in Tibet where he mostly performed resoration work and painted thangkas. He later traveled to Nepal, India, and Malaysia where he was commissioned by monasteries to build statues.



Our statue project is expected to reach completion this year. The Mahakala statue is nearly finished. Mahakala's fearsome form is awe-inspiring with the brilliance of the paint and gold leaf. Next Migmar will begin work on the Maksor Gyalmo (Palden Lhamo, a female protector deity) statue. We eagerly await the completion of the statue project at which time the statues will be consecrated and the Mahakala empowerment bestowed by H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Sakya.

Volunteer Profile: *Serving Tea to the Sangha*

By Nadine Selden

The tea served after the Sunday Chenrezi meditations was an outgrowth of the tea services during Tso Kor and other ritual feasts at the monastery. According to Tibetan custom, tea is served first to Rinpoche, then the Sakya family, then the ordained and finally to the Sangha. For Tibetans, tea is a way of extending hospitality. Tea and fellowship is a way for Buddhist people to come together to socialize, exchange ideas and ask questions.



Seline Albee (right) and Mia Juntara (left).

Seline Albee

What others might call coincidences, Seline Albee says are a string of karmic connections leading her to Sakya. As graduation from Roosevelt High approached, Seline was sitting in the now defunct Frederick & Nelson tearoom in downtown Seattle, and her parents wanted to know what she wanted as a graduation gift. She pointed to a painting of a monk dressed in maroon robes, even though at that time she had no knowledge of Buddhism. Years later, when her mother remarried, she moved into a house one block from the place that is now Sakya Monastery. Later, while living on a ranch in Mendocino, California, a houseguest handed her a note with Deshung Rinpoche's address in Seattle.

Returning to Seattle, she joined the group of hippies and academics that surrounded Deshung Rinpoche, Jigdal Dagchen Rinpoche and Dagmola in the early 1970's. She describes it as a time when wildly creative people were trying to develop their consciousness and connect to these exalted beings from Tibet.

Seline left Seattle for a while and explored other spiritual disciplines, but returned to Buddhism. "There's something so incredibly sane about Buddhism, that's why the Dalai Lama is so respected. These are the most open-hearted, tolerant group of people. They provide a place of sanity in our nutty world."

Her life, loves and spiritual explorations have taken her to Berkeley, Aspen, Hawaii and the coastal areas north of San Francisco, but always back to Seattle. After living through the revolutionary times of the sixties, the booms and busts, to the turmoil of these present times, she finds, "The Tibetans have a profound grasp of how to deal with these difficult times and to help us sort out what can be so anxiety provoking."

Seline serves the tea we enjoy during the fellowship that follows Sunday's meditations. During the week, she works as an aesthetician, providing holistic skin care.

Mia Juntara

In 1997, a teenage Radmila Junatara (Mia) accompanied her foster mother to visit Rinpoche at his home. About three years later, she lived at the monastery with her own daughter. Her daughter Josie, now 12, grew up at the monastery and often sat with the monks during ceremonies. She says the monastery has always been kid-friendly. It was in the early years of the monastery, before the shrine room was finished, that Mia immersed herself in activities and practices there. She was secretary to the Board of Advisors, helped Ashley Toney put together the proposal for the Dharma school, and served tea at ritual feasts and festivals.

During this time, she saw Rinpoche every day. She says he has been called the "pincher" lama because what he says can be a surprising insight that keeps you on point. As an excellent trainer, he doesn't keep you in your comfort zone. She says his style of answering a question indirectly may lead some to frustration, but in the process "I began to understand the essence of my own question."

Mia had spent some time away from the monastery, "mingling with pagans and doing other spiritual stuff", when Rinpoche suggested she return to Sakya Monastery and serve tea. For her, serving tea is a way to generate merit and support the Sangha. "Our brothers and sisters of the Sangha reflect different aspects of ourselves and we learn from each other."

Mia has two bachelors degrees from University of Washington (UW) in studio art and experimental psychology, as well as a masters in clinical psychology from Antioch University. She has also studied the formal Urasenke tea ceremony at UW, which can be seen at the Japanese Tea Garden. She currently works as a social worker at Department of Social and Health Services with Native Americans in Seattle.