May the radiant flower of Tibetan Tradition be preserved for the benefit of all beings.

H.E. Avikrita Vajra Sakya and H.E. Dagmo Kusho Sakya
at the “Wish-Fulfilling Wheel” Weekend
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February 7, 2020

The book talk took place at Third Place Books in Lake Forest Park. It was informative and inspirational, outlining an innovate and practical way of becoming aware of global problems, with viable, attainable solutions and responses, by means of Mahayana Buddhist Practice in everyday life.

As reflected in the title of the book, Avikrita Vajra Sakya discussed the importance of “what matters” as the nature of looking at the “inside”: our values, aspirations, and actions in daily life, and the need to be responsive rather than reactive to problems and towards solutions. He also explained this includes the need for social responsibility and compassion-based leadership, on both an individual basis as well as in group practice.

He feels strongly this will lead us to a path of greater peace, equanimity, and compassion in not only our everyday lives, but the lives of others as well.

A few themes were highlighted, including the importance of:

Mindfulness daily practice, including meditation, Dharma study, and daily experiences

Personal integrity and pure motivation, trusting others in loving, inclusive and compassionate ways

Focus on and instilling good thoughts, for one’s self and towards others, a manner of being with our emotional expressions

Bringing more love and understanding to global problems, including climate change, humanitarian needs, as well as interpersonal relationships

His Eminence personally expressed his strong belief and great hope in a better future, one that filled with compassion, kindness, and a healthy environment and world.
The audience at the Book Talk Summary & Signing

The Sakya Monastery Lamas at the Book Talk Summary & Signing
Available at the Sakya Monastery Shop and at: Shambala, Amazon, Indiebound, Barnes&Noble, Bookdepository
February 9th, 2020

The Parnashavari Prayer and Puja was led by H.E. Khöndung Avikrita Rinpoche on February 9th at Sakya Monastery, in Seattle WA. The puja is for protecting all sentient beings from disease, as well as pacifying fears and other negative emotions, circumstances, and entities. It is recommended to practice the prayer regularly, particularly during a period of concern or major global problem. Chenrezi practice and the supplemental prayer by the Mahasiddha Thangtong Gyalpo, “The Prayer that Saved Sakya from an Epidemic” are also very effective, as is Tara practice.

Due to its broad nature and assistance during challenging times, the prayer was chosen to be practiced during the global pandemic. You are invited and encouraged to practice the prayer on your own, as often as you like throughout the day, especially during the pandemic. The Dharani of Parnashavari was translated by H.E. Khöndung Abaya Rinpoche and is available for download on the Sakya Monastery website.

Below is an excerpt from the transcript of H.E. Avikrita Rinpoche’s talk, which he gave prior to the Parnashavari puja on February 9th:

So today we’re doing the puja of Parnashavari for healing, specifically focused on the novel coronavirus pandemic that has caused a lot of suffering and has a lot of people scared.

Parnashavari was given here just two years back as the first of the Four Awakening Activities for pacifying. So many members already know how to do the regular sadhana as well as the slightly extended version that has the words of the Sutra Entering Vaishali added in and the esoteric oral instructions for doing the optimum healing of Parnashavari.

So Parnashavari isn’t just for epidemics but for the healing of all the negative effects of illness, malevolent forces and obstacles, bringing about blissful peace, which is why we call her activity “pacifying.” Parnashavari is especially effective for this and we’ve relied on her a lot in the Sakya tradition since the very founding of our headquarters in Tibet. Her name means something like “the goddess of the dangerous wilderness who wears leaves for clothing”.

Parnashavari
She is beautiful but in the form of a carnivorous pixie, dwelling in dangerous jungles because she can go where others cannot go, dealing with the pain and sickness and obstacles that are hard to deal with. She wears the leaves of miraculous medicinal plants because her very nature is to bring ultimate healing.

Of course, the ultimate healing the world needs is the cure for the afflictions that are the source of all physical and mental suffering. And the only cure is the Dharma. Therefore, having the deep, heartfelt motivation to participate in this special puja so that we may be able to bring regular AND spiritual healing to the world, we can be sure that our combined bodhicitta will bring Guru Parnashavari’s blessings today.

Although we don’t have time to do the initiation and teaching again as well as the full puja, in support of our collective practice, the reading transmission for the root dharani that my brother, Kyabje Abhaya Vajra Rinpoche, translated will be bestowed. The reading transmission for the Chenrezi prayer for curing epidemics will also be given when the Chenrezi initiation is bestowed before Losar, so for anyone who didn’t receive the Parnashavari initiation before, the dharani text is available and one can practice that effectively, so everyone can participate today in one way or another, and everyone can receive the blessed healing and protection water at the end too.

So, with confident and uninhibited bodhicitta shining in our hearts like the golden light of Parnashavari that extends to the furthest extent of the sky, we can begin.
H.E. Khondung Avikrita Rinpoche bestows
Vajrapani Bhutadamara Initiation

By Alyssa McFarland

H.E. Avikrita Vajra Rinpoche bestowed the Vajrapani Bhutadamara initiation on February 22, 2020 at Sakya Monastery. What follows is a brief summary of some of the key points of the teaching he gave before the initiation.

Vajrapani is known as the Lord of Mysteries because he is the patron deity of the tantras, and is also one of the Lords of the Three Races: Manjushri who represents the Buddha of wisdom, Chenrezi who represents the Buddha of compassion, and Vajrapani who represents the Buddha of powerful abilities. Compassion, wisdom and power are linked. The practice of Vajrapani is helpful for all practitioners for clearing obstacles and benefitting beings.

The specific version of Vajrapani bestowed on February 22nd is the four-armed wrathful Vajrapani Bhutadamara, subduer of elementals. Elementals refer to the way our afflicting emotions materialize in the mind and are reflected as outer appearance to our mind. Beings suffer because of misknowing; Vajrapani can clear this misknowing. We can use the blazing power of the five primordial wisdoms (mirror-like, individual discrimination, equality, all-accomplishing and dharmadhatu) to clear this suffering.

Avikrita Rinpoche told us that what determines whether or not something bears fruit depends on our motivation. A selfish motivation will not do. It is also very important to see our guru purely, and take our commitments seriously. The motivation of bodhicitta – attaining the awakened state of a complete Buddha, for the sake of all sentient beings – helps us aspire to attain the state of a Buddha, and bodhicitta should be integrated in every moment of our lives. To awaken all the abilities and obstacle-clearing power of Vajrapani, we need compassion for all beings, who suffer due to misknowing.
H.E. Khöndung Avikrita Rinpoche Bestows Chenrezi Initiation

By Alyssa McFarland

H.E. Avikrita Vajra Rinpoche bestowed the Chenrezi initiation on February 23, 2020 at Sakya Monastery. He gave a brief teaching before the initiation in order to provide support for the Chenrezi practices at Sakya Monastery. Through the meditation on Chenrezi, one develops loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta.

Chenrezi, in the Mahayana tradition is the bodhisattva of compassion, but in the Vajrayana tradition, he is a complete Buddha, the Buddha of compassion. He appears in different forms according to the needs of different beings. There have been many emanations of Chenrezi including the founder of Sakya Monastery in Tibet, Khön Konchok Gyalpo; his son and the first of the five founders of the Sakya tradition, Sachen Kunga Nyingpo; and the founder of Sakya Monastery in Seattle, His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen Dorje Chang.

Avikrita Rinpoche reminded us that after establishing Chenrezi as the main practice of Sakya Monastery, His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen Dorje Chang was committed to coming every Sunday to Sakya Monastery for the Chenrezi practice and thought it very important that we all come together on Sundays for it. In their final days together, Dagchen Dorje Chang told His Holiness the Sakya Trichen (formerly the 41st Sakya Trizin) that one thing he felt so glad about from his time in America was that he was able to introduce so many students to Chenrezi.

Through his great compassion, Avikrita Rinpoche has empowered us to expediently realize Bodhi and save all sentient beings from suffering by practicing Chenrezi.
On May 21, 2020, H.E. Khöndung Abhaya Vajra Sakya Rinpoche introduced us to the framework of advanced academic studies and research taught in Buddhist universities like Dzongsar Institute, explicating a detailed outline of the four tenet systems, their pioneers, and their great philosophical writings regarding the nature of reality and ultimate truth. Exploring the reasoning and logic supporting each tenet systems definition of ultimate truth, Abhaya Rinpoche lays out the characteristics of each tenet system that reveal the strengths and weaknesses of each. Abhaya Rinpoche describes how the fourth tenet system, the Madhyamika, demonstrates the greatest alignment with the perfect view and thus is the tenet system which the Sakya tradition regards as the most effective way of liberating one’s mind from grasping substantiation.

Studying and analyzing, contemplating and reflecting on the characteristics of the other three tenet systems: Vaibashika, Sautantrika and Chittamatin will help one overcome the misconceptions inherent in those systems which reflect specific assertions of inherent existence for specific phenomenon including the mind. The Madhyamika system rejects the idea of the inherent existence of the mind and all objectified phenomena. Abhaya Rinpoche explains how all these studies relate back to the reflection on the "four philosophical systems" that is recited every Sunday Chenrezi at Sakya Monastery, so is relevant to all who want a deeper understanding of the Sakya tradition's rich academic heritage.
On May 28, 2020, His Eminence Khöndung Asanga Vajra Sakya Rinpoche gave Part 1 detailed explanation on the renowned teaching taught by the first Sakya Sect founder Sachen Kunga Nyingpo (1092-1158). Asanga Rinpoche explained that Sachen Kunga Nyingpo received the teaching “Parting from the Four Attachments” directly from Manjushri.

The profound and concise teaching is as follows:

1. If you are attached to this life, you are not a true spiritual practitioner.
2. If you are attached samsara, you do not have renunciation.
3. If you are attached to your own self-interest, you have no bodhicitta.
4. If there is grasping, you do not have a view.

Asanga Rinpoche explained that the above teaching is classified as a “mind training” teaching. And that it is appropriate and helpful at this time of the COVID-19 crisis/pandemic to understand and practice the teaching. Furthermore, he said that the terse four verses encompass the whole essence of the Perfection Vehicle.

Asanga Rinpoche taught that we should understand the above teaching as mind training in following four ways:

1. By abandoning attachment to this life, one turns toward the Dharma. 
2. By abandoning attachment to cyclic existence, one turns the Dharma into the Path. 
3. By abandoning attachment to one’s own welfare the Path dispels Confusion.
4. By abandoning clinging to the four extremes confusion arises as Wisdom.
Asanga Rinpoche then turned to training in the abandonment of attachment to this life, cyclic existence, and one’s own welfare. We should do this by taking refuge, then generating the mind of enlightenment and then meditating on the “Rarity of Human Birth”. Similarly, we can meditate on “Impermanence or the certainty of death” by taking refuge, generating the mind of enlightenment, and then meditating on impermanence or the certainty of death. We can furthermore train our minds by taking refuge, generating the mind of enlightenment, and meditating on the “Law of Cause and Effect/Karma”.

Regarding karma, Asanga Rinpoche shared a story of a great sage who kept track of his good and bad thoughts by gathering white rocks for his good thoughts and dark rocks for his negative thoughts. At the beginning the sage accumulated more dark rocks than white rocks eventually the more he practiced the white rocks replaced all the dark rocks. Asanga Rinpoche said we too can watch our minds or keep track of our thought and then at bedtime we can review our day.

Asanga Rinpoche stated that we should strive to adopt good deeds in our life. Then Asanga Rinpoche announced that there would be a Part 2 to the “Parting from the Four Attachments” teaching and that we should stay safe and follow the advice of our leaders and health care providers.
On March 4, 2020, due to the news about the raging increase of Covid-19 patients in Seattle, Washington, H.E. Avikrita Rinpoche, and H.E. Dagmo Kusho decided that Sakya Monastery should be closed temporarily to the public for the health and safety of our Lamas, members, and the public. Subsequently, Avikrita Rinpoche contacted Dagmo Kusho and the Monastery Lamas and expressed his wish that the Lamas at the Monastery continue all our regular pujas despite being closed to the public. He then requested that the all-important Sunday Chenrezi practice on loving kindness and compassion be livestreamed. Thus, on March 15, 2020, John Connolly set up our audio/visual equipment to livestream the Sunday Chenrezi practice worldwide. On March 23, 2020, Governor Jay Inslee issued a statewide mandate “Stay Home, Stay Healthy” whereby everyone, except for health care and essential workers, were to remain at home for two weeks or more. In response to the lockdown measure, Laura Ellis, who was familiar with Zoom through her work at the University of Washington, suggested that she could lead a Calm Abiding class via Zoom. Hence, on April 10, 2020, our first Zoom class was held.

The unintended consequence of the COVID pandemic and its restrictions forced Sakya Monastery to join the new age of Zoom technology. It soon became evident that Zoom could connect the Monastery not only with its local members but also with everyone from around the world, including the Sakya Khöndungs studying in India.

Masked Volunteers at Sakya Monastery, Seattle, WA
Hence, from India the Khöndungs were able to give to us profound Dharma teachings in 2020 via Zoom. For example, on April 29, 2020, H.E. Avikrita Rinpoche gave the first Dharma talk offered by the Khöndungs entitled “Aspiration of Success Prayer.” Subsequently, H.E. Abhya Rinpoche taught on May 21, 2020, “Elucidating the Tenet Systems of Buddhist Philosophy”. On May 28, 2020, H.E. Asanga Rinpoche shared with us Part 1 of the renowned teaching “Parting from the Four Attachments.”

In addition to the Khöndungs teachings from India, H.E. Avikrita Rinpoche arranged for us to receive teachings from Gen Pema Sherpa who lives in India. On July 22, 2020, Gen Pema Sherpa began teaching Shantideva’s “The Way of a Bodhisattva.” The course continued through March 2021.

Another benefit of Zoom technology has been our ability to access out-of-area interpreters. For Ven Khenpo Jampa Tenphel’s 2020 classes, Amalia Ruben who lives in New York became his English interpreter and Zoe Ni who lives in California became his Mandarin interpreter. During 2020, other interpreters for the Khöndungs have been Kunga Lhamo (Mandarin interpreter) and Mario Hevia (Spanish interpreter). We sincerely appreciate interpreters as they help to share the profound Dharma worldwide.

Per Avikrita Rinpoche’s request, the Monastery lamas (Khenpo Jampa Tenphel, Lama Migmar, Lama Kelsang and Gen Tashi Nyima) continued via Zoom our weekly and monthly “open to the public” practices: Thursday Chenrezi; Tsok Kor, Green Tara, Guru Puja, holy and memorial pujas. The Lamas also continued over Zoom the regular monthly Saturday Tibetan Association of Washington prayer service.

The Monastery is “not open” to the public pujas: White Mahakala, White Tara, Vajrayogini, and Black Mahakala were also maintained. Furthermore, H.E. Dagmo Kusho appointed Dennis Oliver to lead our Medicine Buddha practice over Zoom. It began online on October 6, 2020.

Since we were still in lockdown by September 2020, the formerly in-person Sunday morning classes transformed into the virtual Monday Virupa Educational Institute (VEI) classes. All classes, lectures and practices were either livestreamed or on Zoom including the Refuge Ceremony, which was bestowed quarterly by the Khöndungs.
Reflections on The
“Wish-Fulfilling Wheel” Weekend
By Elizabeth Wangmo

Feb 1 & 2, 2020

I recall how light-hearted and excited we all were; that we wore our brightest finery to welcome our Sakya Dhungsey home, and of the fellowship and camaraderie of the sangha… especially at our mid-day potluck meals!

It was a bright and festive weekend and H.E. Sakya Kyabchok Avikrita Vajra Rinpoche unpacked specially prepared offerings for the sangha, in the form of initiations, teachings, transmissions, and empowerments … all to begin with a refuge ceremony. These were all generously given to remove any impediments to receiving the full benefits and protection of practicing the profound and powerful Chimey Phagmai Nyingtik puja. In fact, this “Wish-fulfilling Wheel” weekend of special activities was dedicated especially for the long life of H.E. Dagmo Kusho.

Longevity practices are for prosperity, health, a life free of obstacles so that wisdom blooms in the hearts of all sentient beings. Since ancient times, cultures from around the world have engaged in such practices of gratitude, long-life, reverence and purification to close out the passing of one year as preparations to welcome in a new year.

We honor this rich heritage as Tibetan Buddhists when practicing this cherished Chimey Phagmai Nyingtik. It is an especially powerful tantric practice for such spiritual work. There is great merit and benefit by clearing the karmic disturbances in human affairs, thereby purifying, extending the merit field. Worthy work of those who take up the bodhisattva vow!

In the shadow of the pandemic that was shortly to arrive on our shores and wash over the entire world, the emanating light from this weekend of blessings proved to be most timely and auspicious. A very precious beacon… on which to anchor.
Reflections on
“Wish-Fulfilling Wheel” Weekend - Cont’d

Like others, I came to the Sakya Monastery for sanctuary and grounding. Being empathic and having some clarity of view, I had reached that space where one’s past and future collapses simultaneously into the now. What was, was no longer valid, distinctions and definitions no longer seemed to apply, truth didn’t even hold water… all fading before me into a turbulent sea of all-encompassing impermanence, of fluctuating spaciousness… this groundlessness, this samsara.

Although an extremely intimate description, it seems quite an adept one to describe some of the distortions our human family suffered in the wake of the devastation from this pandemic storm. Our world collapsed around us and we have been dislodged. All that we relied on is no longer so.

Truth became suspect. Livelihoods lost, lives lost, the suffering of such unprecedented challenges. Our world altered, our perceptions altered. Living in awareness of such impermanence is why all of us come to Sakya for sanctuary and grounding. We anchor ourselves in their care, our refuge, and ground ourselves in the teachings that help us put some sea legs under us. With the teachings and the gurus abiding within our hearts, we are no longer tossed about. I can personally attest to the light that flows out as a result! I humbly offer my deepest heartfelt gratitude to Avikrita Rinpoche and Dagmo Kusho. I not only gained my sea legs but the protection and blessings gained from the Chimey Phagmai Nyingtik helped to return this old bodhisattva’s body back into the pink! Om Tara!
Reflections on The “Wish-Fulfilling Wheel” Weekend - Cont’d

Worship at the Monastery during the Weekend of the Wish-Fulfilling Wheel

Ritual music accompaniment during the Weekend of the Wish-Fulfilling Wheel
For three days from May 14-16, 2020, Sakya Monastery Lamas and members had an inspiring opportunity to deepen their devotion to their beloved Guru and Founder, Jigdal Dagchen Dorje Chang.

Since Dagchen Dorje Chang introduced the Chenrezi practice on loving kindness and compassion to the west over forty years ago, and since it has continued to be practiced to the Monastery to the present day, the Monastery chose to perform for three days the expanded and profound Chenrezi practice called the Chenrezi Drub Choe. The Chenrezi Drub Choe practice was a meaningful way to honor the legacy of Dagchen Dorje Chang and his Dharma activities.

Venerable Khenpo Jampa Tenphel, Lama Migmar, Lama Kelsang, and Gen Tashi Nyima led students worldwide through the prayers which were livestreamed from 9 a.m. until noon, Seattle time. The Monastery Lamas, however, continued the sacred prayers until 4 p.m.

The Chenrezi Drup Choe practice concluded with a candlelight service. Because of the pandemic and the fact that everyone was at home, students were invited to light a candle at home at 4 p.m. Also, they were asked to contemplate: “May the radiant light of the candle remove obstacles, benefit all those who are suffering from Covid-19, and may wisdom and well-being increase for all.”
Fourth Parinirvana Memorial
of Jigdal Dagchen Sakya - Cont’d

Sakya Monastery Lamas concluded the Chenrezi Drup Choe with candlelight prayers

Offerings for Chenrezi Drup Choe
On April 29, 2020

H.E. Khöndung Avikrita Vajra Sakya Rinpoche gave the first of several teachings to an online audience of students world-wide on the Mahayana prayer, “Aspiration of Success.” H.E. Avikrita Rinpoche explained the meaning of the prayer, “Aspiration of Success”, with success defined as the ripening of the ultimate enlightenment of all sentient beings. Noting that we Buddhist practitioners have the good fortune, owing to our accumulation of incredible merit, to engage with the Dharma now, Avikrita Rinpoche recommends reciting this prayer to make the most of our precious human life, which is subject to unpredictable death and predictable impermanence. For the development of our awakening, Avikrita Rinpoche states that death and impermanence are the most important objects of contemplation on the Buddhist path.

Consequently, out of the Four Thoughts that Turn One’s Mind Toward the Dharma, we generate Bodhicitta, the wish to liberate all sentient beings from suffering and actualized by loving kindness and compassion. All of our actions of body, speech, and mind must be motivated by the supreme principle of attaining enlightenment for the sake of all beings in order to save them from the ravages of samsara (suffering, impermanence, and death).

After death, we can take only our karma with us as we pass through the bardos. Avikrita Rinpoche therefore advises us to examine all of our intentions behind our actions, which will generate results now, in the next life, and beyond. Avikrita Rinpoche recommends transforming neutral karma like simple, mentally unfocused walking into mindful walking that incorporates reciting a prayer which is meritorious.
H.E. Khöndung Avikrita Rinpoche Teaches
“The Essence of Mahayana, Part 1”

By David Spiekerman


Inspired from a letter of practical Dharma advice sent by his ancestor and a revered Sakya master, to a disciple in the 14th century, H.E. Avikrita Vajra Rinpoche explores the integration of the essential elements of the Mahayana or “Great Vehicle” to enlightenment in everyday life. In this first of a three-part teaching, Avikrita Rinpoche explains the foundations to living the way of wisdom and compassion. All the Buddha’s 84,000 discourses are condensed into this teaching.

This teaching demonstrates in practical terms how we can skillfully begin the practice of turning the Wheel of Dharma by removing our incessant and habitual desire to feed the misinformed sense of self, which is addicted to the cyclic existence of samsara.

Avikrita Rinpoche explains the value of the practice of offering homage to Manjushri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, in order to emulate him, the importance of listening respectfully and carefully to the teaching, both of which will then lead to the practice of contemplation and meditation on the meaning of the teaching, and will be perfected with an altruistic motivation. Avikrita Rinpoche provides plenty of examples of what does not work in pursuit of enlightenment, especially in relationship to the three root causes of downfall, the three poisons.

Avikrita Rinpoche discusses in detail the relationship between karma and the dimensions of suffering, which are generated by our fixation on external reality.

The teaching reveals the benefits of looking inward at the nature of our own root afflictions and obscurations, of examining the deepest root of all suffering, which is misknowing, and the supreme value of cultivating virtue as the foundation for mindfulness.

Avikrita Rinpoche shows how all forms of desire influence how we act and that most of our choices are conditioned by our karma. Thus it is vital to conjoin merit and wisdom to overcome misknowing. When we have completely transformed our minds through the two accumulations of merit and wisdom, we can attain liberation.
3-DAY MEDICINE BUDDHA DRUB CHOE (GRAND PUJA)

By Adrienne Chan

October 23-25, 2020

At the request of H.E. Avikrita Vajra Rinpoche and H.E. Dagmo Kusho, the Monastery held a 3-day Medicine Buddha Drub Choe (Grand Puja) service from October 23-25, 2020. The puja was held for healing and peace; for the benefit of people worldwide who were being affected by the pandemic, wildfires, and unrest; for those who have passed away; and for abundance.

Dorje Loppon Khenpo Jampa Thenpel led the Grand Puja with participation from Lama Migmar, Lama Kelsang, and Gen Tashi Nyima. The international event was livestreamed worldwide from 2-4 pm Pacific Time on all three days. The names of students’ beloved ones were submitted as part of the holy prayer service. It was a gratifying and sublime event knowing that the one’s prayers could help all those suffering at this chaotic and confused time.
In this brief teaching regarding Avalokiteshvara (Chenrezi in Tibetan), His Eminence Asanga Rinpoche gave an overview of the six-syllable mantra and the popular Mahayana bodhisattva. In speaking of the defining characteristic trait of compassion, Asanga Rinpoche reminded us that this compassion for the sake of all sentient beings is the root of the goal of the Mahayana practitioner and one of the most important causes of enlightenment.

Asanga Rinpoche pointed out that one of the best ways to nurture and develop this is by relying on the practice of the bodhisattva Chenrezi as he is the embodiment of the compassion of ALL the buddhas of the three times. It is this great trait that has made Chenrezi one of the most popular bodhisattvas throughout many countries and which transcends boundaries not just in nations or cultures but also in the portrayal of this great bodhisattva in both male and female forms. Asanga Rinpoche further elucidated that although there is no distinction between “male” and “female” in the enlightened state, it is through the great compassion of Avalokiteshvara that there are many emanations, each with their respective names, based on the tendencies and needs of sentient beings.

So, what does the ancient Indian root name Avalokiteshvara mean? Asanga Rinpoche explained to us that to find the answer to that we need look no further than the Buddha himself. Referencing a sutra wherein Vajrapani supplicates the Buddha to know the answer to this same question, the Buddha replies that it is because the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara looks upon the world full of its sentient beings with love, care, and a benevolent heart—fulfilling their needs.

The two most common forms of Chenrezi in the Tibetan tradition are the 1,000-Armed Chenrezi and the Four-Armed Chenrezi. To expound on this, Asanga Rinpoche told of the miraculous birth of Chenrezi in the Buddha Amitabha’s Pure Land of Sukhavati, his vows, and development of the 1,000-Armed variation. The latter of these two forms is the primary focus of the Nyung-nye fasting vows, and the former is the basis for the regular Thursday and Sunday Chenrezi practices here at the Monastery.

H.E. Asanga Rinpoche with his father, H.E. Ani Rinpoche
Asanga Rinpoche further elaborated on the details and significance of each of these emanations’ heads, arms, body posture and various ritual implements. All of these great and unique qualities make Avalokiteshvara a very prominent and powerful Bodhisattva who is praised by the Buddha in many sutras such as the Sutra of the Basket’s Display and the Lotus Sutra (which has a whole chapter dedicated solely to Avalokiteshvara). Asanga Rinpoche reminded us that to even think of Chenrezi just once, one will be endowed with inexhaustible merit.

Asanga Rinpoche gave an elaboration on the six-syllable mantra, its origination and meaning as explained through the Mani Kambum, and also elucidated the differences in the six and seven syllable variations of the mantra. Asanga Rinpoche encouraged students who wish to know more to read the translation of the sutra on the 84000 website (https://read.84000.co/translation/toh116.html). Asanga Rinpoche further explained the addition of the seed syllable HRIH to the six-syllable mantra and its history, further explaining that recitation of either mantra is fine; however, one should follow the particular sadhana one is practicing.

To conclude, Asanga Rinpoche briefly elucidated the benefits of the recitation of the six-syllable mantra, citing the words of Guru Rinpoche, and gave an overview of the sufferings of the six realms of sentient beings, further teaching the benefits of daily recitation of the mantra.

Asanga Rinpoche reminded us that although Avalokiteshvara’s compassion is indiscriminate, we must remember that it is important to remain open to receiving these blessings—to have clear faith that is inspired and awed by the qualities of Chenrezi, and to aspire to the reach the stage of Chenrezi ourselves for the benefit of all sentient beings. Asanga Rinpoche ended his talk asking us to think of Avalokiteshvara and recite the Mani mantra as much as possible, and to take all safety precautions during the time of the pandemic, thinking of others in this way as well.
"If all the beings in this world were to generate thoughts for the welfare of others, not only would we be able to live in harmony with others, but undoubtedly all the disputes and problems that we face would also naturally subside and we would be able to live with a healthy body and joyful mind."

~Khöndung Asanga Vajra Sakya.
It was really good. One Tuesday when I went into Area 1—which is a high security centre where men are housed and waiting to face the courts—someone asked me if I had anything to read about Buddhism. This man, Sean, had little idea what Buddhism was and I offered him a copy of *The Way of Invincible Love*.

Sean had been charged with violent offences. A couple of weeks later when I saw him again, he said he loved the book and wanted to know more about Avikrita Rinpoche and Buddhism. He had realised that he was angry and recognised the need to look at this. Sean was so inspired he became a committed practitioner and later took refuge.

**About Daniel**

Daniel Troyak is Australia’s first full-time Buddhist chaplain. Having trained in Clinical Pastoral Education, he has spent many years sharing the Dharma in Australia’s most infamous maximum security prison, Long Bay Correctional Centre.

To obtain a copy of the book, please visit:
[https://www.sakya.org/product/the-way-of-invincible-love/](https://www.sakya.org/product/the-way-of-invincible-love/)
THIEVES OF MEDITATION
BY STEPHANIE PRINCE

Out of mind awareness
The visualization of empty form
appears; mantra recitation commences.

Crawling on mouse feet,
Several thieves creep:
The morning news;
The plot of a previously read novel,
Fact or fiction;
Results of a lab test, and the like . . .

These thieves of meditation
Though no different in essence
To realization’s wisdom,
Pull us into samsara’s lair.

Rein in attention with
Focus again
On mindful being.
Make it a resounding Rescue!
On October 30, 2020, which was also the 14th day of the 9th lunar month of the Tibetan calendar, the Monastery lamas and members commemorated Sachen Kunga Nyingpo’s memorial with prayers on Zoom. When the prayers were completed, members could drive by the Monastery to circumambulate it and pay homage to the memory of Sachen Kunga Nyingpo. Respecting the COVID-19 physical distance mandate, Khenpo Jampa Rinpoche, Lama Migmar, Lama Kelsang and Gen Tashi Nyima set up outdoors in front of our main entrance a most glorious Shrine honoring Sachen Kunga Nyingpo. It was a cold evening, but our hearts were warmed with devotion upon seeing the radiant and glorious Shrine and offerings.

Sachen Kunga Nyingpo was the first of the Five Founding Lamas of the Sakya tradition. He is considered the great systematizer of the Sakya Lamdre Teaching Cycle. When he was twelve years old, he received from the Bodhisattva Manjushri a direct teaching transmission known as “Parting from the Four Attachments.” Sachen Kunga Nyingpo is renowned as the dual emanations of the Bodhisattvas Manjushri and Avalokiteshvara.

The Shrine outside the Sakya Monastery commemorating Sachen Kunga Nyingpo
In this comprehensive teaching, Khenpola gave an explanation of the six bards (Bardo of Birth and Life, Bardo of Dreaming, Bardo of Becoming, Bardo of Meditation, Bardo of Dying, and the Bardo of Dharmata/Suchness) and highlighted practices related to each to help the practitioner prepare for death and increase chances of a positive rebirth.

Khenpola explained the common practices related to the period of 49 days after death, including the profound practice of phowa (transference of consciousness) and especially highlighted the preciousness of having the fortunate rebirth of being human. Using the examples such as this, Khenpola stressed the importance of studying the practices related to the bardo and the phowa in order to aid one in the transition between lives. However, Khenpola reminded us that dwelling on the aspects of the bardo that may seem frightening or stressful is to be avoided. One should not approach the bardo with anxiety, fear, or stress; on the contrary, one should approach the bardos firstly with strong devotion to one’s own root guru.

Secondly, he emphasized the importance of listening to the oral instructions of the bardo and putting them into practice while we have the chance. Finally, Khenpola reminded us of the importance of putting great efforts into the practices of calm-abiding and insight meditation in order to stabilize the mind.

After these reminders, he set out on explaining in detail the six major types of bardo (of which greater emphases was placed on the first and last, stating that all the intermediaries of these two could be understood by understanding the first and last). He gave a thorough examination of the relationship of the consciousness of thought to the body and the separation of these concepts at the time of death. Both subtle and greater aspects of the bardo process were poignantly elucidated. He explained that a common factor of the process is due to that established connection between consciousness and physical form citing the example of the consciousness’s attempt at rebirth each week (typically) in the 49-day process.

The virtue of one’s karma in this life, the assistance of a compassionate lama, and the combination of the two together are therefore of the utmost benefit and importance throughout one’s passing through the bardo states. On the other hand, if one has done little virtuous activity and is without the assistance of a qualified lama, there is the great potential for the consciousness to find less desirable rebirths in any of the lower realms or even an unfortunate human rebirth.
Citing the teachings of great Sakya masters, Khenpola again encouraged us in our practice by stating that one of the greatest benefits in this life for our time in the bardo is to become familiar with the teachings on impermanence. This contemplation on impermanence should include understanding that the consciousness that is experiencing the bardo is not necessarily the same as we might think of in this life. This led to greater explanations of varying types of bardo experience and teachings on the four types of birth. Further teachings were given on the influence of karma on one’s current and future life conditions—i.e., longevity, wealth, conditions of birth and death, and the like.

Khenpola also encouraged us to work towards removing our misconceptions and projections about this consciousness reminding us that it is without color or shape or other types of our fixations; it is essentially without what we might refer to as an “image.” This concept should help us to dispel some of our anxieties and projections about what we fear we may experience in the bardo. Khenpola explained that image or visual aberrations are simply generated by the result of our negative actions or negative karmic imprint—but they are merely hallucinations. On the other hand, performing virtuous deeds can influence the projections, or disposition, towards more positive experience.

One’s devotion to and guidance from the lama, one’s virtuous actions and karmic imprints, and one’s own understanding and practice are most beneficial to the bardo.

Khenpola further emphasized that we are able to realize that all positive and negative experiences of the bardo can be understood as mere projections. We can change this awareness to divine images for our benefit, for example, visualizing oneself as an inseparable entity to the guru, yidam or the mantra of the deity. This is how we are able to generate the purelands around ourselves. Finally when we approach the Bardo of Dharmata/Suchness, it is important to have cultivated an understanding of the three bodies of a buddha—understanding the selflessness and emptiness of all phenomena that exist, understanding all places as the mandala and all beings as the deity, and so forth. So, if we are able to begin to comprehend that now, it is easier to cultivate that understanding in the bardo state. Remember: all of the bardos are a result of cause and effect.

Khenpola again emphasized that the most important aspect of his teaching was to realize that everything we may experience in the bardos is purely a manifestation. This is key. We can carry this into our preparations for encountering each of the bardo states by cultivating a healthy sense of non-attachment.
This teaching was given by Khenpo Jampa Rinpoche from the second section of Kamalashila’s Stages of Meditation. Khenpola reminded us that the Buddha said the mind is most important in developing compassion for all sentient beings: bodhicitta. The biggest obstacle to the path of developing ultimate bodhicitta is our own mind. It is there that all the obstacles are created: selfishness and self-clinging arising from within our own mind and not the external world that is creating the most suffering. This self-created non-equanimity is that which establishes the idea of “I” and “you,” the dualistic mind. By continuing to follow the habit of self-clinging established after many lifetimes of habitual tendencies, we are unable to attain the highest form of enlightenment. This section of Kamalashila’s text teaches that it is impossible to achieve the ultimate goal of enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings without mastering the mind, and to do that requires meditation.

From the Mahayana perspective, we can find great motivation through this text as Kamalashila teaches that at the root of our meditation, we must have compassion. The great masters of all four major Tibetan Buddhist traditions have relied upon this text as a guidance for their meditation. Khenpola told of His Holiness Dagchen Rinpoche’s manifestations of clear blue skies and the aurora borealis in Seattle after his passing into parinirvana as a sign of accomplishment in meditative practice.

Even for the ordinary lay practitioners, clear meditation practice allows us to engage with all of the many obstacles of daily life. Kamalashila labeled two types of benefit from meditation—the benefit of situational benefits in common experience and the ultimate benefit of attaining buddhahood—freedom from suffering and accomplishment of the cause of ultimate happiness.

Kamalashila’s text discusses further three root causes, with bodhicitta being the first. This is the development of loving-kindness in equanimity, which is required to cultivate bodhicitta. The compassion that “goes beyond” is the second root of our meditation which is developed by expanding our compassion outward from those we consider close to those we consider far.
The third root is the practice of the Six Perfections. All of these roots have a focus firmly engaging with the equanimity of seeing all beings as precious and even as more important than oneself.

Khenpola explained of three types of meditation—the general meditation, meditative absorption and single-pointed meditation. Engaging in this process of meditation requires us to examine the two basic parts of “mind” which Khenpola summarized as the root and everything around it. He discussed calm-abiding and contemplative/insight meditation, emphasizing that it is impossible to move along the bodhisattva path and arrive at buddhahood without BOTH shamatha (shine/calm-abiding) and vipassana (lhangtong/insight). The point of vipassana is to contemplate the lack of inherent existence of the self and phenomena and the nature of all things as emptiness and what that means.

It is with these main points that Khenpo Jampa Rinpoche elucidated the foundations of Kamalashila’s text, reminding us in conclusion that all of these topics are steps on the path to Enlightenment.
October 30 - November 2, 2020

On November 2, 2018, in honor of his late grandfather H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Dorje Chang’s birthday and for World Peace and Well-being, Sakya Khöndung H.E. Avikrita Vajra Rinpoche established the first Bhadracarya Festival in Lumbini, Nepal, the Holy birth site of Lord Buddha. Practitioners gathered at the Bhadracarya Festival to celebrate the generation of virtue by doing prayers, meditations, prostrations, noble deeds, making offerings and suchlike.

Under the leadership of H.E. Avikrita Rinpoche, in the fall of 2019, Lamas and Dharma students made another pilgrimage to Lumbini to participate in the second annual Bhadracarya Festival. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and its restrictions, the 2020 or the third annual Bhadracarya Festival could not be held in person. Instead, of being cancelled, it was wisely decided that with modern technology practicing virtuous prayers and receiving profound teachings could be done virtually. So from October 31-November 2, 2020, a beautiful 3-day online prayer and teaching program was held. It was sponsored by Bhadracarya Foundation, Nepal. The event was a magnificent technological feat, which our John Connolly helped put together.

The 2020 Bhadracarya Festival was a 3-day event. It included a wonderful video of clips of past Bhadracarya Festivals with Lamas and students praying in Lumbini, Nepal; teachings from H.E. Avikrita Rinpoche; prayer recitations led by H.E. Avikrita Rinpoche and H.E. Abhaya Rinpoche from the 138 page prayer book: “The Bhadracarya Festival Prayer Book”, and an inspiring video documenting the 2020 outstanding good works of International Marici Fellowship volunteers from Lumbini, Nepal; Sydney, Australia; Bangkok, Thailand; Thimphu, Bhutan; Seattle, Washington; and New Delhi, Orissa, Hunsur, Dehradun, Bodhgaya, India.
The 2020 Bhadracarya Festival began each morning with concise and insightful Dharma teachings from H.E. Avikrita Rinpoche. Speaking in English, Avikrita Rinpoche’s teachings were interpreted into Nepali and Mandarin. On the first day, Rinpoche introduced to the students the concept of “mind training.” He mentioned that with the raging pandemic, the world was experiencing many challenges and that we do not personally have the power change the outside environment like the economy and disease around the world. But we do have the power to look within ourselves to remove the dis-ease of our own minds. Furthermore, he mentioned that the “true nature” of the mind is not pain; thus, we have the power to purify it. By looking inward or by being mindful through prayer, meditation, and aspiration, we can create wisdom. Then he reflected that the Bhadracarya Festival provides us with the opportunity to create virtue, love, peace, and dedicate it to the benefit of all sentient beings.

On days 2 and 3 of his teachings, Avikrita Rinpoche referred specifically to the Dharma text entitled “Festival of the Heart/Reflections on The Vajra Song to Chant as a Meditation to Train the Mind.” He explained in depth stanzas from The Vajra Song. The lineage of The Vajra Song is from Buddha Maitreya to Maitriyogi to Atisha down to the Sakya lineage holders. Hence, this text contains a translation of The Vajra Song to Chant as Meditation to Train the Mind” is a text with a translation of The Vajra Song and includes a of Avikrita Rinpoche’s 3-day teachings, which are his reflections on The Vajra Song to develop mindfulness. To fully appreciate and understand the significance of a Bhadracarya Festival, I highly recommend that everyone to download the text, “Festival of the Heart/Reflections on The Vajra Song to Chant as a Meditation to Train the Mind.” It can be obtained at no cost or by donation at https://www.sakya.org/product/festival-of-the-heart/.

In summary, Avikrita Rinpoche mentioned that the importance of mind training is to accumulate merit and wisdom. Through purifying the mind of defilements by practicing bodhicitta, merit is generated. Wisdom is achieved through purifying the mind of “not knowing” or ignorance. Mind training leads to the Bodhicitta of Great Compassion and Wisdom and ultimately, liberation for the benefit of all sentient beings. The Bhadracarya Festival provides practitioners the glorious opportunity to celebrate and gather to generate great merit for the benefit of all sentient beings.
We would like to recognize Rhiannon Mayes for serving the Monastery in a very special and important way; teaching the Dharma to our youngest students in the Children’s Dharma School. While Sunday Chenrezi practice was going on upstairs, Rhiannon led the children’s version downstairs. Each class started with taking refuge, followed by a Manjushri practice recommended by H.E. Dagmo Kusho, a silent meditation, and then a Jātaka tale or Buddha life story. The story usually ended just in time for the children to line up and make their way upstairs to join the Sangha in silent meditation and chanting Om Mani Padme Hum.

Rhiannon first started going to the Monastery in 2000, when Rigdzin-la invited her to a teaching, which turned out to be a Vajrasattva initiation from a guest lama. Shortly thereafter, she started attending Chenrezi and Green Tara practices regularly. Rhiannon helped run the Dharma School from 2001-2003 with Ashley Toney and other parents. After the birth of her first child, Metta, in 2003, Rhiannon took a break from teaching the Dharma School. She focused on raising her children, which soon included sons, Merle (born in 2005) and Michael (born in 2007). Throughout their childhood Rhiannon was deeply involved with the Dharma School as a parent volunteer, and as a teacher again in 2008. Eventually she took on the lead instructor role again in 2011, after the passing of Monica Wilson.

After so many years of her generous dedication to the Monastery, Rhiannon has moved her family down to Oregon to take care of her family’s farm and continue to practice the Dharma. We will miss her dearly but hope to stay in touch and see her here at the Monastery whenever she can make it back.

When asked which part of the Children’s Dharma School are the most memorable to Rhiannon, she mentioned the singing and art, the multiple talks by the monks and other Sangha members and reading all the wonderful children’s stories. A favorite memory of hers is the time when the children made H.E. Dagmo Kusho a quilt for her birthday. Rhiannon also said that she greatly appreciated H.H. Dagchen Dorje Chang and H.E. Dagmo Kusho for always being so welcoming and supportive of the children. They nurtured and supported the children so much. It always felt like one big loving family.

Rhiannon described the Monastery as “a brilliant jewel” and said she is “forever grateful to have had it in her and her children’s lives”. It was her pleasure to teach the Dharma School for so many years. She is grateful to all the guidance and support H.H. Dagchen Dorje Chang and H.E. Dagmo Kusho gave her over the years and to all the children and families whom she met through the program.

Happy trails to you, Rhiannon! We thank you for enriching the Monastery with your many years of service. You are loved and missed by us all. We hope to see you, Metta, Merle, and Michael again soon!
The Marici Fellowship

- Allyship Program
- Community Support Speaker Series at Sakya Monastery
- The Marici Fellowship Dana Garden
ALLYSHIP PROGRAM

Sometimes putting the Dharma into action does not take on the appearance of an outward action of compassion, but a deep inward dive into confronting our prejudices and inner biases while building awareness and discussing how to become allies to BIPOC and LGBTQ communities.

In 2020, the call for social justice swept across the US. With current events spotlighting the injustice affecting our BIPOC (Black Indigenous, People of Color) friends and neighbors, we realize the need to support these communities: to stand beside them, to become better allies to them. So we have created the Marici Fellowship Allyship Program.

The Marici Fellowship Allyship Program focuses on the understanding that although we may acquire racist or discriminatory tendencies, and these may have become part of our conditioning, it is not our true nature. Our inherent condition is our Buddha Nature, compassion and non-violence. Knowing this, the goal of the Allyship Program is to provide tools to draw from, to build awareness, and to make it possible to live by non-violence and compassion, our universal way of being. In this way we become true allies, and a genuine part of creating the changes that need to be made.
COMMUNITY SUPPORT SPEAKER SERIES AT THE SAKYA MONASTERY

Our goals for these events: building community, increasing awareness, educating and providing support where needed.

Because suffering takes many forms, the Marici Fellowship opened its doors at Sakya Monastery in Seattle to local advocates and educators to give presentations to the community. We offered Important topics such as mental health, bullying, youth homelessness, ’end of life’ care for people as well as animals, and racism and cultural bias.

On September 21, 2020, The Allyship Program presented Reverend Seiho who gave a special talk on Cultural bias, Racism, and Otherism.

This two hour event was two parts. In the first hour Rev. Seiho Morris shared on his developed framework and approach in working with cultural and racial bias, racism and otherism; as a process and practice of harm reduction. This is through mindful engagement with Ahimsa, The Eightfold Path of Buddhism and relationship with skillful means.

In the second hour, the floor opened up for questions, answer and dialog, concerning cultural and racial bias, racism and otherism; including how we might work with it to cultivate and support equanimity in our difficult times.

Ven. Seiho Morris  | 清峰 (Clear Peak) is an ordained Rinzai Zen Buddhist monk, having trained and practiced in the Zen tradition for nearly three decades. He has also receiving formal training and empowerments in Tibetan Nyingma and Sakya lineages in various teachings and practices.

Ven. Seiho has been providing workshops and immersion practices related to cultural/racial bias, racism and otherism. He does so, harmonizing Ahimsa, the Four Noble Truths, Eightfold Path and Upaya; within a specifically revised expression Twelve Step healing principles; in an effort to help support and advance a path of change related to racism.

He’s been in long-term recovery for the last 33 years, with regards to addictive disease. He’s a former addictions counselor, program director and facility administrator; and currently on the administrative team of an addictions treatment center in the State of Maryland. He regularly offers 1, 3, and 5 day immersion practices.
The Marici Fellowship Dana Garden (dana means “giving” in Sanskrit) was created to grow and provide fresh vegetables to those that are unable to otherwise obtain fresh foods due to financial hardships or other factors.

Due to COVID-19 pandemic, the number of our gardening team was kept small, and safety protocols such as physical distancing and wearing masks were also observed. Along with having fresh food to donate to those in need, another wonderful benefit was for all of us to be able to keep our minds and bodies busy in the fresh air. This helped so much so much in keeping spirits high.

Masked Marici gardeners displaying their bounty
We were so happy to be able to provide donations of a variety of vegetables including chard, beets, onions, potatoes, zucchini, cucumbers, winter squash, green beans, heirloom tomatoes, as well as leeks, to food banks in both North and South Seattle.
We also combined donations with other garden farmers to help provide a local senior center with fresh weekly vegetables.