

Sacred Arts of Tibet-Sand Mandala

From Drepung Loseling Phukhang Khangtsen, South India

Five Monks On Tour in North America

Sept 15th - 30th December, 2010

Drepung Loseling Phukhang Khangtsen

2010 North American Tour

A BRIEF HISTORY OF OUR MONASTERY:

The Drepung Loseling Phukhang Khangtsen was founded by the Venerable Tsangtso Samten in Lhasa, the capital city of Tibet, approximately 500 years ago. It thrived as one of the largest Khangtsen (sub-monasteries) of the majestic Drepung Loseling Monastery. It was home to over 12,000 monks in its heyday.

This great center of learning suffered a major setback when Communist China first occupied Tibet in the year 1959. Many of their buildings -- their homes, libraries, sacred temples and universities -- were destroyed. Their people, both Tibetan citizens and monastics, were attacked by the invading army, but the spirit and the heart of its people remained strong.

In 1976, through much dedication and hard work, this Khangtsen was re-established in Mundgod, Karnataka State, in Southern India under the guidance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government in exile.

THE MONASTERY TODAY:

The Drepung Loseling Phukhang Khangtsen, currently home to around 300 monks, is headed by the Venerable Sharpa Choje Rinpoche, the second highest lama in the Gelugpa sect, after the famous and Venerable Gadhen Tri Rinpoche.

Over the years, the newly established Drepung Loseling Phukhang Khangtsen has matured into a fully-fledged, recognized and reputed Khangtsen. It continues to play a vital role in the preservation of Mahayana Buddhist Philosophy. In fact, this monastery continues to be responsible for producing hundreds of renowned scholars in the field of Mahayana Buddhism.

OUR SPONSOR FOR THE 2010 TOUR:

The Drepung Loseling Phukhang Khangtsen monks' 2010 North American tour is sponsored by The Shakyamuni Tibetan Buddhist Center. Mailing address: 3439 NE Sandy Blvd., Suite 318, Portland, OR 97232. Center location address: 5403 SE Center St., Portland, OR 97206. (www.stbcportland.org),. This center is a 501(c)3. not-for-profit organization under the laws of the State of Oregon. This Center invites Tibetan Buddhist teachers to come to Portland throughout the year, and is happy to invite this group of monks to Portland, to begin their tour of the west coast.

OUR TOUR GOALS:

1. To be of service to the world community by helping to spread peace, harmony, compassion and tolerance through cultural exchange, interfaith dialog, and Buddhist teachings.
2. To raise funds that will provide for the education, maintenance, housing and medical needs of the monks at Drepung Loseling Phukhang Khangsten Monastery located in the Tibetan Refugee Settlement in Mundgod, India.

ELEMENTS OF THE TOUR:

I. Sand Mandala:

The most important aspect of each exhibit will be the creation of a traditional Sand Mandala - an ancient art form from Tibetan Buddhism. The Drepung Loseling monks are renowned for the Sacred Art of Sand Mandala Construction. Mandala construction is an art form that is particular to Tibetan Buddhism. The monks make an intricate design on a flat surface, using brightly colored sand that was ground and dyed by hand. This work of art is meant to depict a picture of the world in its divine form, and represents a map by which the ordinary human mind is transformed into the enlightened mind.

Each Mandala design is unique to a particular Buddhist Deity. The three that will be an option for this tour include the Medicine Buddha Mandala (the Buddha of Healing), the Amitayus Mandala (the Long-Life Buddha) and the Mandala of Chenrezig, (the Buddha of Compassion).

Mandalas are generally constructed in public places - in Universities, Libraries, Art Galleries, Cathedrals, and so on. The creation of a Sand Mandala begins with a special Opening Ceremony, which includes the chanting of Buddhist prayers. The construction of a Mandala generally takes place over four to seven days,. The monks work all day, placing sand grain by grain in delicate patterns as they create these incredibly rare and sacred works of art.

Upon completion of the Mandala, at an agreed-upon time, the monks hold a Deconstruction, or Dissolution Ceremony, whereby the Mandala is blessed a final time and the grains of sand are swept up into a pile - erasing the once-beautiful work of art. Some of the sand is given to people who are present, as a small blessing for their home or gardens. The remainder is taken to a nearby body of water where it is poured into the moving water, which, according to Tibetan Buddhist belief, blesses all the beings living there, carrying prayers and blessings throughout the world.

II. Teachings

The tour group, will be led by The Venerable Geshe Jampa Tenzin. Geshe-la will be available to give talks on the main tenets of Buddhist philosophy and is happy to answer any questions about the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. His teachings will be given in Tibetan and translated into English by a translator.

Possible Teaching Topics:

Introduction to Buddhism
Basic meditation practice
The Four Noble Truths
Karma
Impermanence
Elements of traditional Lamrim Practice

III. Pujas

The monks are also sought out by local residents, as they are highly prized for their powerful prayers. In this case, they are asked to perform a *Puja*, which is a Sanskrit word that means "offering." In a *Puja*, the monks chant prayers and perform rituals specific to the type of prayer being offered. Prayers are addressed to Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Deities. Their primary purpose is to overcome negativities that could be considered to be obstacles for an individual or a group, in obtaining release from suffering and to promote spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical well-being.

Types of prayers that ordinarily are requested are as follows: They may be for a house blessing, for the success of a business, for good health, for the souls of those who have left this world, (including animals), for the clearing of karma, the purification of local negative energy, for world peace, for individual or global healing, for financial security, spiritual evolution, the development of wisdom, and/or the removal of obstacles.

The prayers are recited in the traditional overtone chanting, each monk singing a full chord of three notes. The prayers are often accompanied by delicate hand gestures (also called mudras), cymbals, drums, horns and flutes.



Short Biography of Geshe Jampa Tenzin

Venerable Jampa Tenzin was born to Mrs. Sonam Lhamo and Mr. Dhakpa at Kollegal on 12th May 1963. Since his very childhood Jampa played as a monk with his friends and often make prayer beads out of mud and then recite the mantra OM MANE PADME HUM. His parents knew that their son was very interested in living a monk's life.

Jampa joined Drepung Phukhang Khangtzen in 1988, and started his lifelong spiritual journey starting with reading and chanting prayers in Tibetan. His studies kept progressing year after year covering wide ranges of topic from both Sutra and Tantric teachings of the Shakyamuni Buddha. He studied the root texts as well as dozens of commentaries on each treatise written by both Tibetan and Indian scholars.

Besides his meditation and Buddhist philosophical studies, Jampa showed great interest and efforts in learning Tantric practices such as Mandala construction and Sacred masked Dances of Tibet. He also became a very good drummer and high horn player during the ritual ceremonies at the monastery. Because of these unique talents in these spiritual arts and imparting teachings, he was selected by the monastic elders to take part in the Mystical Arts of Tibet Tour to the USA in 2008.

Thousands of people in almost all states of the US appreciates and gave positive feedback to Ven. Jampa and his team for performing Sacred Music Sacred Dance, and Mandala Sand Painting and ceremonies at universities, churches, museums, and performing arts centers. They shared these ancient spiritual arts of Tibet with people from diverse background primary for the World Peace by building friendship and by sharing each other's faith, culture and values.

Upon completion of his touring, Jampa returned to India and resumed his teaching for the younger monks at Drepung Phukhang. He was conferred the Geshe Degree (equivalent to doctorate in Buddhist Philosophy) in the year 2009 by Drepung Loseling Monastic University. And, he is admired and well-known in our society for being very altruistic, knowledgeable, friendly, and full of energy for communal welfare. Hence, he was requested unanimously by monks of Drepung Phukhang Khangtzen to go on Sacred Arts of Tibet Tour to the USA.



Short Biography of Ven. Lobsang Dhonyoe

Venerable Lobsang Dhonyoe was born to Mrs. Passang Lhamo and Mr. Palden at Tibetan settlement, Mundgod on 06th Aug 1984. Since very childhood he had innate interest in being a monk and wearing monks robe.

Lobsang joined Drepung Loseling Monastery in 1999 and kicked off his lifelong spiritual journey starting with reading and chanting prayers in Tibetan. His studies keep progressing year after year covering wide ranges of topic from both Sutra and Tantric teachings of the Shakyamuni Buddha.

Besides his meditation and Buddhist philosophical studies, Lobsang put his effort in learning multi-phonic chanting as well as playing the longhorn, cymbal, hand-drums and other traditional music instruments. He is also very skillful in constructing Mandala Sand Painting for which he was selected by the monastic elders to go on the Mystical Arts of Tibet Tour to the USA in 2008.

Thousands of people in almost all states of the US appreciates and gave positive feedback to Lobsang and his team for performing Sacred Music Sacred Dance, and Mandala Sand Painting and ceremonies at universities, churches, museums, and performing arts centers. They shared these ancient spiritual arts of Tibet with people from diverse background primary for the World Peace by building friendship by knowing each other better.

Upon completion more than one year of touring, Lobsang returned to Drepung where he continues his advanced Buddhist studies and practices. He, currently, is in the final year of Madhyamaka (Middle Path) class. Lobsang received his full ordained vow from His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and received teachings and instructions from the leading Tibetan Buddhist masters and practitioners. He is appraised for being very humble, knowledgeable, friendly, and full of motivation and energy for communal service. Therefore, he was requested by every monk at Drepung Phukhang Monastery to go on tour to the USA as a cultural and spiritual ambassador from the monastery.



Short Biography of Ven. Lobsang Tsetan

Ven. Lobsang Tsetan was born on 15th of May, 1976 at Tibetan Settlement of Mundgod, located in Karnataka State, India. Lobsang parents Mrs. Tsedon and Mr. Tashi had hard time as Lobsang was insistent in becoming a monk from his tender age. However, with their affection and courage they let their son Lobsang decide to choose his lifestyle when he attained age of 16.

He joined Drepung Phukhang Khangtsen Monastic Institute in the year 1992 as a teenager, and received his novice precept which comes with thirty-six points of observance and abandonment. His hard works in Tibetan literature and Buddhist studies bear good result for every annual examination conducted year after year for almost two decade. Lobsang was a leading monk for his classmates in debate, group discussion, and inter-class competition. He is also very rich talented in performing prayer ceremonies, making ritual cakes and butter sculptures as well as constructing Sand Mandala. His knowledge and super friendly personality earned respect from all younger and elders alike in the society. His years of rigorous studies and meditations helped him complete extensive studies in all five major Treatises (Logic, Perfection of Wisdom, Middle Path, Ethics, & Cosmology) of Buddhist Studies. He now is on the wait list to confer Geshe Degree from Drepung Loseling Monastic University.

Lobsang's great knowledge and extraordinary skills in ritual ceremonies make his a great candidate for Sacred Arts of Tibet, and the monks' congregation at Drepung Phukhang Khangtsen Monastic Community requested him to participate in the mission for Sacred Art of Tibet.



Short Biography of Ven. Thupten Nima

Venerable Thupten Nima was born to mother Chotso and father Khonchuk Thinley at Mundgod on 5th May, 1978. The small area of Mundgod housing two of the three major monasteries of Tibet with thousands of monks inspired Thupten to become monks since his tender age. Thupten recalls that the happy, peaceful, and smiling face of monks made him change his lifestyle.

Thupten received his novice vow and joined Drepung Loseling Monastery in 1993. He has been studying and practicing at Drepung Phukhang for almost two decades now, and was involved in many community services at the monastery. He has been one of the most intelligent persons among his classmates and his skills in debate were highly appraised. Having great skills in Multi-phonic chanting, high horns, and performing arts of Tibet, he was selected by monastic elders to go on the Mystical Arts of Tibet Tour in 2005. During his yearlong tour he performed in various venues across the United States, and took part in many interfaith events. Thupten and his team were appreciated by people from diverse background for bringing inspiration and positive energy for peace and happiness.

Upon completion of the tour, Thupten returned to the monastery and resumed his Buddhist studies. He now has completed his studies in the five major treatises with great success. He has been teaching for the younger generation at the monastery, and contributing in many ways for this spiritual community.

The rich experience in touring and great talent in playing high horn (Gyaling), multi-phonic chanting, and Sacred Dance makes Thupten an invaluable candidate for the Sacred Arts of Tibet. Thus, Sangha members at Drepung Phukhang Khangtsen Monastic Institute requested his involvement in the tour



Short Biography of Ven. Lobsang Thupten

Venerable Lobsang Thupten was born at Kongra, Tibet on 12th August, 1968. Lobsang and his parents suffered a lot under the brutal culture revolution imposed by the Chinese communists, but that very law forbidding practice of Buddhism aroused curiosity and inspiration to his young mind to become a monk. As a major policy change took place in China and Tibet under new leadership of Deng Xiaoping in 1980s, some of the banned and destructed monasteries are allowed to renovate and reopen. Lobsang was one of the first from the generation to become a monk and joined Dhondup-Ling Monastery located in Kongra region. He started with learning Tibetan alphabets and prayers for peace and happiness for oneself and all others.

However, he and all other monks in Tibet are always under the government orders and observation which hamper their freedom of study and practice of religion. The monastery is under military surveillances days and nights, and the monks are given orders to cancel spiritual festivals and prayers ceremonies. Often the military personnel barged into the monastery and conduct raids for picture of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and also to force Communist Educations. Yearning for freedom of religion and to have most cherishing audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Lobsang fled Tibet with some of his friends. They underwent unthinkable hardships by walking across the Himalayas with lack of sleep, food, water and clothing for sustenance. Fortunately, he made it alive to India and joined Drepung Phukhang Khangsten in 1990.

He continued his Buddhist studies under guidance of many monastic scholars and had unforgettable audience and teachings from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Lobsang is well known for his enthusiasm in memorization and monastic debate. He serves as an example and inspiration for newcomers on perusing their rigorous studies in the monastery. He graduated from all classes of five major Treatises (Logic, Perfection of Wisdom, Middle Path, Ethics, & Cosmology) of Buddhist Studies from Drepung Loseling. And, he is now is on the wait list to confer Geshe Degree from Drepung Loseling Monastic University. Lobsang's great talent in playing musical instruments, Mandala sand painting, and sacred dance make him a great candidate for **Sacred Art of Tibet Tour**. All the Sangha members of Drepung Phukhang Khangtsen Monastic Community requested him to take his part in this mission for Universal peace and Harmony.