

# Monlam Chenmo in Kopan (17-21 Feb, 2008)

## The Great Prayer Festival for Harmony and Peace in the World

Many times now has Kopan Monastery hosted the extraordinary five-day Great Prayer Festival. It is a gathering of more than 1800 Rinpoches, Geshes, monks, and nuns from Nepal and India to pray for world peace and other holy wishes.

At the beginning of Tibetan New Year, it is the tradition to make extensive offerings to large assembly of Sanghas performing powerful prayers and practices and to request them to dedicate for various purposes including removal of obstacles to our life, health, wealth and relationship; bestowing rainfalls of success in the year ahead with good health, long life and success in every aspect of our life; fulfillment of our wishes such as stable and successful career, relationship, business, harmony for oneself, all our family members as well as for the world.

### Monlam Chenmo in Kopan Monastery

In the last few years, Kopan Monastery has been hosting the annual Great Prayer Festival (Monlam Chenmo) in Nepal - the extensive prayer gathering lasting for five days. Kopan Monastery is again hosting it from 17 -21 Feb 2008. It will be presided by the Most Venerable Khensur Rinpoche Lobsang Tenzin the Ex-abbot of Gyume Tantric collage and inline to be the Ganden Tripa, who will be teaching everyday during Monlam. More than 1800 Rinpoches, Geshes, monks, and nuns from Nepal and India will attend this extraordinary five-day Great Prayer Festival to pray for world peace.

### The Monlam Tradition

The Great Prayer Festival was established by the Great Saint Lama Tsong Khapa (also known as Losang Drakpa) in 1409, when the first Great Prayer Festival was held in Lhasa. He invited all the people of Tibet to a two-week-long festival of prayer, auspicious rituals, teachings, and celebrations, from the first new moon until the full moon of

The main purpose of the Great Prayer Festival is to pray for the long life of all the holy Gurus of all traditions, for the survival and spreading of the Dharma in the minds of all sentient beings, and for world peace. The communal prayers, offered with strong faith and devotion, help to overcome obstacles to peace and generate conducive conditions for everyone to live in harmony.

### Prayer Sessions

Many different kinds of prayers will be performed during the festival. The five prayer sessions from Day 1 to Day 4 are as follows:

#### First Session

- ◆ Confession to 35 Buddhas
- ◆ Maitreya's Ornament for Clear Realization
- ◆ Root text of Madaymaka
- ◆ 100-syllable mantras
- ◆ Prayer of the Benefits of making Maitreya Statues
- ◆ Torma offering to Palden Lhamo and other protectors

the lunar New Year. Many hundreds of thousands, perhaps more than a million, came from near and far.

That time of the year was chosen because Lama Tsong Khapa firmly believed in the life story of the founder Guru Shakyamuni Buddha told in the Indian Buddhist Sutra of the Wise and the Foolish called "Overcoming the Six Teachers:

"Buddha was challenged by six rival teachers to a contest of miraculous performances. For many years, Buddha evaded their challenges, letting people believe that he was afraid of their magical powers, losing his royal patrons, and causing doubts and worries to grow among the people.

Finally, in the city of Shravasti, Buddha accepted the challenge and stood before a huge assembly of people from the entire central north Indian area. He proceeded to perform miracle after miracle during the first fortnight of the lunar New Year. The rival teachers were eclipsed almost immediately, as Buddha produced spectacular manifestations. He threw down a toothpick and grew a giant wish-granting gem tree. He rinsed his mouth with scented water, and celestial lakes with divine ducks and jewel lotuses appeared. He concentrated and emitted rays of light, and hosts of Buddhas, bodhisattvas and gods filled the skies.

Teachings of liberation and awakening, reverberating in every language known to man, illumined the minds of all assembled. He even manifested a vision of himself multiplying infinitely, his compassionate energy becoming clearly present to everyone's awareness."

It is said that during that first Great Prayer Festival in 1409, all the people who gathered in Lhasa had visions of Buddhas and divine beings filling the sky. Everyone got into their most religious mood and spent the whole time as if on a spiritual retreat, praying, studying, making offerings, teaching, learning, and debating meaningful philosophical topics.

The noble tradition is preserved and is practised in the same way to this day in most of the Gelug monasteries. On the full moon, the Day of Miracles is the most special day of the festival, Where thousands of people, lay and ordained alike, come to pray, view the big butter sculptures, and make offerings to the Sangha.

- ◆ Torma offering to local deities
- ◆ Migtsema prayer  
(Breakfast is served during this session)

#### Second Session

- ◆ Sanghas debate on Valid Cognition
- ◆ Teachings on the Life Story of Buddha by the Monlam Abbot the Most Venerable Khensur Rinpoche Lobsang Tenzin

#### Third Session

- ◆ Lama Tsong Khapa Guru Yoga
- ◆ Lamrim Lines of Experience
- ◆ Triple Grounds Glory
- ◆ Prayers to 16 Arhats
- ◆ Supplication to Lineage Gurus (Khensima)
- ◆ Name of Manjushri



- ♦ The 8 Prayers
  - ♦ Praises to 21 Taras
  - ♦ Namgyalma long mantra
  - ♦ Other long life Buddha Mantras
  - ♦ Torma offering to Palden Lhamo and other protectors
  - ♦ Torma offering to local deities
  - ♦ (Lunch is served during this session)
- (All the prayers will be chanted in traditional monastic tunes)

#### Fourth Session

- ♦ Debate on Madaymaka, the middle way philosophy
- Actual Monlam starts:**
- ♦ Recitation of Lekdrima (praise to Tara)
  - ♦ Kapsumpa (Praise of Buddha known as Jewel of Three Crowns)
  - ♦ Supplication to Lineage Gurus (Losang Gyalkunam)
  - ♦ Trusol (very extensive bath offering)
  - ♦ Offerings of 8 auspicious signs
  - ♦ Long Mandala offering
  - ♦ Confession to 35 Buddhas
  - ♦ The secret biographical prayers of Lama Tsong Khapa
  - ♦ Prayers to Buddha Maitreya
  - ♦ Prayers of success in the start, middle and end of practice
  - ♦ Monlam Abbot the Most Venerable Khensur Rinpoche Lobsang Tenzin leading comprehensive dedication prayers followed by the assembly chanting the prayer - "For As Long As"
- (Most prayers will be chanted in traditional monastic tunes)

#### Fifth Session

- ♦ Long White Umbrella prayer (Dukkar)
- ♦ Long life mantras
- ♦ Praises to 21 Taras
- ♦ Torma offering to Palden Lhamo and other protectors
- ♦ Torma offering to local deities
- ♦ Migsema Prayers are chanted while Sangha leave hall (Dinner is served in this session)

In this way, the Great Prayer Festival continues for four full days. On Day 5 of the Festival, it will begin with a morning session. Then the procession from Kopan Monastery to Boudhanath Stupa will commence. All the Sangha together will walk 4km to Boudhanath Stupa carrying the Buddha Maitreya statue. At the Stupa, the Monlam Abbot the Most Venerable Khensur Rinpoche Lobsang Tenzin, and the assembly of Sangha will make offering to and consecrate the Great Stupa in all four directions. After lunch at Kopan, extensive concluding offering and long, long dedication will be made. During Monlam, many, many offerings and light offerings will be made everyday. The merit from making offerings during these special days will be multiplied by 100 million times!

#### Join the Monlam

We are pleased to invite everyone to participate in this great occasion in person or by making offerings of food, tea, lights or money offering to the Sangha. Your names and dedications will be read to the assembly of Sangha in every prayer session over the five days to request for dedication. If you would like to accumulate extensive merits, this is a unique opportunity to make offerings to Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha to collect ocean-like merit and to create the cause for prosperity by practising generosity.

All pujas, prayer ceremonies, food offering and cash offering for the Sangha for the five-day festival are open for sponsorship.

***"Offering even one cent to the Sangha community brings uncountable benefit and merit. As long as the Sangha community exists your merit exist. It will not be exhausted. When making the offering in your mind dedicate strongly for your purpose and make strong prayers for all your wishes to be fulfilled"***