



*Geshe Lama Konchog Stupa at Kopan Monastery, Nepal,  
June 2011. Photo by Ven. Roger Kunsang.*

# Nepal:

## 'The Most Holy Place in the World'

“[Nepal] is really the most holy place in the world,” Lama Zopa Rinpoche said at a 2007 talk in Kathmandu on the “Value of Meditation and Pilgrimage for Nepal.” “Guru Shakyamuni Buddha took birth in Nepal, and not only that, so many great yogis who achieved enlightenment were born in Nepal. They practiced and achieved the complete path to enlightenment, the path that Buddha has taught. ... So Nepal is unbelievable, such a precious holy place.”

Without a doubt, the country of Nepal has been integral to the development and flourishing of FPMT. Lama Zopa Rinpoche, FPMT’s spiritual director, was born in Thami in the Solu Khumbu district of Nepal, known for being the home of Mount Everest. In 1969, FPMT founders Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche came to live on Kopan Hill near Nepal’s Boudhanath Stupa. Within a few years, the Lamas had founded a monastery there and had begun to educate young boys from Nepal’s Buddhist areas. At the same time, Kopan’s November Course was drawing hundreds of Westerners onto the Buddhist path, inspiring invitations to teach around the globe for the Lamas and motivating students to open Dharma centers in their home countries.

Today, FPMT centers, projects and services number around 160 in 37 countries, but Nepal remains a source of profound inspiration and instruction for the organization as well as a place of vibrant Dharma practice. In this issue of *Mandala*, we’ll take a look at the centers and projects in Nepal connected to FPMT. Please be sure to visit [mandalamagazine.org](http://mandalamagazine.org) for more photos, stories and interviews from Nepal.

## Kopan Monastery

Central to all of FPMT's activities in Nepal is Kopan Monastery, located on the outskirts of Kathmandu. Today, Kopan Monastery is home to around 350 monks and the nearby Khachoe Ghakyil Nunnery has about 360 nuns. These two institutions provide monks and nuns with both a traditional Buddhist monastic education, including philosophy and ritual arts, and instruction in modern topics, including English, Nepali and mathematics. Kopan has a fully fledged geshe program (the Geshe degree is an equivalent to a Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies), enabling monks to complete most of their philosophical studies at Kopan before moving on to the monastic universities in South India for the completion of their studies and higher degrees. Khachoe Ghakyil also offers a geshe program for its nuns.

"Kopan Monastery and Nunnery form one of the biggest monastic complexes in Nepal and both of them are very highly respected for their education programs," Geshe Sherab, who was both an early student at Kopan and later served as Kopan's headmaster, told *Mandala*. "There is great respect from the Buddhist community in general. Kopan has taken a leadership role in bringing the Gelug monasteries together to have a Gelug Mönlam festival every year. Kopan also plays an instrumental role in the Jang Gunchö, the annual debate among all the Gelug monasteries."

Beginning at age 7, boys and girls can join the monastery and nunnery. The students' education, room and board are offered to them for free. They come from Himalayan regions in Nepal such as Tsum, Mustang, Menang and Solu Khumbu, as well as from some Himalayan regions in India such as Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh. Many come from Tibet as well.

In 2011, Kopan lost its abbot Khensur Rinpoche Lama Lhundrup Rigtsel to cancer [see *Mandala* January-March 2011]. Lama Lhundrup offered his service to Kopan for 40 years and was instrumental in developing the geshe program for both monks and nuns. A stupa is being constructed at Kopan for his quick return. Kopan's new abbot, Khen Rinpoche Geshe Chonyi, first came to Kopan as a boy in 1974. He was the first Kopan monk to become a lharampa geshe, completing his studies at Sera Je Monastic University and Gyume Tantric College. Khen Rinpoche also continues to serve as resident geshe at Amitabha Buddhist Centre in Singapore. By offering geshe programs at the monastery and nunnery, Kopan is helping to create the next generation of Buddhist teachers, many who will come to teach at FPMT centers around the world.



*Kopan monks in front of gumpa, May 2012. Photo by Ven. Roger Kunsang.*

"When Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche started the monastery, they wanted to make Kopan an institution not only for the local Himalayan people but also support the Buddhist education of Westerners as well," Geshe Sherab explained. "From the very beginning, it was planned and established that way." More than 1,000 foreigners come every year to the various courses and teachings offered at Kopan, not counting the visitors who come for short stays and attend the daily Dharma talks.

"Kopan also assists monasteries in remote areas. This includes helping the local people with pujas and other things. So the monastery and nunnery definitely are helping to revive and to make flourish the Dharma in those places where the Dharma has declined to some extent," Geshe Sherab said. "In addition, Kopan has the medical clinic which helps a lot of local people around the Kopan area."

Over the past 40 years, Kopan has contributed to its local economy as well through building projects and other aspects of maintaining a thriving Buddhist community. The Kopan manager also offers assistance to FPMT centers around the world with procuring holy objects. As the monastery has developed relationships with many skilled and reputable artisans, centers are able to order and receive large statues and prayer wheels, stupas and other holy objects under the Kopan manager's supervision. Kopan Monastery also provides the FPMT Foundation Store with ritual items and meditation supplies and advises on vendors for thangkas and smaller statues, assuring the best quality of items.

Kopan Monastery supports itself through the courses and teaching programs it offers international visitors as well as through a sponsorship program.

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You can learn more about the monastery, the courses it offers and how to support its work at [www.kopanmonastery.com](http://www.kopanmonastery.com).



*Khen Rinpoche Geshe Chonyi, Geshe Sherab and Geshe Nyendrak on top of the dining room building at Kopan Monastery, Nepal, July 2011. Photo by Ven. Roger Kunsang.*

## Khachoe Ghakyil Nunnery

Located just down the hill from Kopan Monastery, is its sister nunnery, Khachoe Ghakyil, also born from Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche's inspiration and kindness. In 1979, the Lamas invited two young women who had just escaped from Tibet to join their monastery in Kathmandu. Over the years, more young women came to Kopan as nuns. In 1990, land was acquired for a nunnery. A gumpa and living quarters were built. In 1994, the nunnery was given the auspicious name of Khachoe Ghakyil Ling – Pure Land of Bliss.

Khachoe Ghakyil offers women an opportunity to not only follow their spiritual calling, but to receive a traditional Tibetan



*New gumpa, Khachoe Ghakyil Nunnery, Nepal, 2011*

Buddhist monastic education. When the first young women arrived at Kopan, nuns were expected to primarily perform pujas and prayers and recite mantras. But Lama Yeshe had a different vision. He wanted these intelligent women to have a deeper understanding of Dharma and to follow the same study program as the monks.

What makes Khachoe Ghakyil exceptional is that it is one of a few nunneries in India and Nepal offering a geshe program, due to the support of Lama Zopa Rinpoche and the past efforts of Khensur Rinpoche Lama Lhundrup. The curriculum is based on the same 16-year course of philosophical study as the monks, which includes participation in the annual inter-monastic debates, hosted by the various nunneries in India and Nepal that offer also geshe programs. In May 2012, the Tibetan Department of Religion and Culture announced the historic news that nuns will now be able to take the final geshe exams, allowing them to complete their degrees. The first group of Khachoe Ghakyil nuns is expected to be awarded their degrees in 2014.

More than half of the nuns at Khachoe Ghakyil are in the study program. Those not in the program offer their service to the

community through work as administrators, managers and teachers. Others work in the incense factory, which helps raise funds for the nunnery. The nunnery supports itself additionally through performing prayers for the local and international community and through a sponsorship program.

An extensive project to expand the facilities at the nunnery is entering its final stages. When completed in 2014, the additions will include an accommodation block of 100 rooms, a kitchen and dining building, a new beautifully decorated gumpa and a debating courtyard with a large memorial stupa for Khensur Rinpoche Lama Lhundrup in the center.

To learn more about Khachoe Ghakyil Nunnery and how to offer support to the nuns, please visit [www.kopannunnery.org](http://www.kopannunnery.org).

## Becoming Geshe-mas

*Ven. Jangchub Gyalmo is from Tumeli in Tsum, Nepal. She came to Kopan Nunnery in 1992 when she was 18 years old. Ven. Namdrol Phuntsok left her home in Pembo, Tibet, near Lhasa for Nepal in 1992. She arrived at Kopan in 1993 when she was 13. Both Vens. Gyalmo and Phuntsok are in the geshe program at Khachoe Ghakyil Nunnery. Arya Cayton, spiritual program coordinator at Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre in Kathmandu, talked with them in October 2012 about their experiences at the nunnery. Ven. Tenzin Tsomo (Chandra Chiara Ehm) helped with interpretation.*

**Arya:** What was Kopan Nunnery like when you first came and how has it changed?

**Ven. Gyalmo:** When I joined the nunnery in 1992, there were about 30 nuns, and we had a common sleeping room and a common puja hall, which were the same room, and we studied together with the senior nuns. Khensur Rinpoche [Lama Lhundrup], Geshe Khechok and Geshe Lama Konchog were



*From left: Khachoe Ghakyil nuns Vens. Jangchub Gyalmo and Namdrol Phuntsok, Boudhanath, Nepal, October 2012. Photo by Arya Cayton.*

teaching periodically and we were enjoying these teachings, but there were no structured studies.

Khensur Rinpoche was like our father. ... After one year, we settled down the hill at the new nunnery. It was a big day. Khensur Rinpoche at the time said, "This will be like every other year; I will take care of you. I will come down; nothing will change in terms of our relationship."

Over the years, the infrastructure has developed quickly and well. Now there is a study program with regular studies taking place. There is room for everyone and our diet is much more balanced.

**Ven. Phuntsok:** I came to Kopan a little later than Ani Gyalmo. At that time, the nunnery's new main puja hall had already been built, but not the kitchen and accommodation rooms. We had to work so much! We'd clean the grounds, moving sand and stones. We had to get water from far away as we didn't have water inside. We had to have our food and tea at Kopan Monastery. But we felt happy, very peaceful.

We had class with Khensur Rinpoche. We didn't have any chance to study English, but we had a very good opportunity to study Buddhadharma. Now we have many very good teachers – Nepali teachers, English teachers, Tibetan teachers. Of course, for philosophy, there is a very good and very famous teacher in the nunnery.

**Arya:** You'll both be completing geshe studies with the geshe exam soon, which will make you among the first Tibetan and Nepali nuns in history to receive this degree and become geshe-mas. What have been the biggest challenges in getting to this point?

**Ven. Gyalmo:** Since we are the first nuns to be getting this degree, there was nobody for us to look up to. Because there were no geshe-ma role models, it has been difficult to get our motivation straight and steady and persevere.

**Ven. Phuntsok:** We also didn't have any encouragement to become geshe. Monks inside institutions like Sera and Drepung obviously study very strongly, because after some years they *will* take the exam for the Geshe degree. We studied, but didn't feel that we would get that same opportunity. Maybe we can say that this was one obstacle we faced.

There was quite a lot of talk in India and Nepal about giving the Geshe-ma degree, but for a long time it was just words. In 2012, however, the Sikyong of Tibet, Lobsang Sangay, expressed his strong support for the idea. So that was important. Also we had support from high lamas such as the Ganden Tripa and the Jangtse Chöje – two very great lamas – and His Holiness the Dalai Lama as well. Now we feel very encouraged to take the exam.

You can read the complete interview with Vens. Gyalmo and Phuntsok as part of *Mandala's* exclusive online content at [mandalamagazine.org](http://mandalamagazine.org).

## Projects of Kopan Monastery

Kopan Monastery manages several charitable projects on behalf of the FPMT and Lama Zopa Rinpoche. All of these projects were initiated with the express purpose of serving living beings according to their spiritual and practical needs.

Of special concern are the remote monastic communities peppered throughout the Himalayas, which are vital in keeping the precious teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha alive and vibrant. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has repeatedly stressed how important it is to support these institutions as a means to secure the survival of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition for future generations.

## Thubten Shedrup Ling Monastery



*Thubten Shedrup Ling monks*

Nestled in the mountains of lower Solu Khumbu, Thubten Shedrup Ling, a branch of Kopan Monastery, is close to the trekking trail to the Everest base camp, but is quite isolated. With few jobs available, most people living in the area survive as porters during the trekking season, traders or subsistence farmers.

Thubten Shedrup Ling was initially founded to provide a spiritual center for the refugees leaving Tibet after 1959. In the late 1990s, the Tibetan government in exile requested Kopan Monastery to take over the care and management of the monastery and its resident monks.

The monastery provides an opportunity for the young boys from Buddhist families to receive an education, keep vows in a monastic environment, and study and practice the teachings of the Buddha. Geshe Yonten, a senior monk from Kopan and the

## NEPAL

abbot of the monastery, now takes care of 36 monks ranging in age from 3 to 23. The young monks both receive basic Buddhist training and general education. Older monks study philosophy with a qualified geshe. Several have already gone on to Sera Monastery in South India to continue their studies.

The monastery has been recently renovated and a large prayer wheel has been added. With new monks joining the monastery regularly, there is a need for more rooms, a proper dining hall and office facilities.

In addition to taking care of the monks, Abbot Geshe Yonten aims to revive the spiritual heritage of the Sherpas and Tibetans that comprise the local community. The monastery arranges prayers and pujas for the lay community, and gives advice and blessings during important life events, such as naming ceremonies for children, marriages and funeral rites.

Thubten Shedrup Ling is currently building a hostel to accommodate children attending a close-by Buddhist school, a much more affordable and safer option for local Buddhist families than sending children to Kathmandu. The monastery also hosts a small medical clinic and regular health camps are organized.

### Yulo Koepa Nunnery – Pure Land of Tara

In 2012, Khachoe Ghakyil Nunnery was offered Tara Temple, a project of the Universal Education School near Varanasi, India, founded by student Valentino Giacomo. The property and buildings were renamed by Lama Zopa Rinpoche to Yulo Koepa Nunnery. Currently, 15 nuns from Khachoe Ghakyil live and study there, taking turns to support a twenty-four-hours-a-day recitation of the *Praises to the 21 Taras* and daily Tara pujas. Every two years a new group of nuns takes over this rigorous schedule.

A new kitchen recently was built to allow for more hygienic food preparation, and a generator has been installed to make the electric supply more reliable. As soon as more funds become available, an accommodation block will be built to ease crowding.

### Tsum Monastic Communities

Rachen Nunnery and Mu Gompa are found along the river raging down the steep Tsum Valley, high in the Himalayas. Tsum is a very old Buddhist region, close to Tibet, with a long history of Dharma practice and is considered a highly conducive place for practice.

Rachen Nunnery was established in 1936 by Drupa Rinpoche, a Bhutanese lama who meditated in the caves dotted along the rim of the valley. The present Drupa Rinpoche requested Lama Zopa Rinpoche to take care of the two Sangha



*Rachen nuns helping to build their new gompa*

communities there. Due to generous sponsors, Kopan has been able to help improve the living conditions at the nunnery, including piped-in water, solar lights, electricity, a vegetable garden and construction of a kitchen, dining room, classrooms, accommodations and a gompa. A resident Tibetan doctor is available to address health problems.

Mu Gompa sits on top of a foothill, overlooked by high, white-capped peaks. Twenty monks live in the isolated monastery under the guidance of a spiritual teacher. The young monks receive instruction in Buddhist scriptures, Tibetan and English, and general education. Some of the older monks have lived at Mu for 40 years and spend their time in meditation.

Tsum winters are long and very hard and most of the young nuns and monks go to Khachoe Ghakyil and Kopan for the winter.

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Learn more about Kopan's projects in Tsum at [www.fpmt.org/projects/other/tsum.html](http://www.fpmt.org/projects/other/tsum.html).

### Animal Liberation Sanctuary

By Tania Duratovic and Phil Hunt, project coordinators

Animal Liberation Sanctuary is a sanctuary established near Kopan primarily to care for animals that Lama Zopa Rinpoche has rescued himself or on his request. New facilities for rescued animals are currently being developed to provide the animals with a more suitable environment.

The goats who were in quarantine at Khachoe Ghakyil Nunnery have settled in with the main flock in their temporary shelter at the monastery. But now with 35 goats and two sheep, overcrowding is making the need to move to the new site more important than ever. With building work recommencing after monsoon, a new treatment room is being added to avoid exposing the animals to the extremely poor conditions at the central veterinary hospital. The on-site treatment room will allow



*From left to right, front: Khedrup, Shenpen, Nyingje. Back: Christmas the cow and Asanga with Shunyata leaning on him. Animal Liberation Sanctuary, Nepal, October 2012. Photo by Phil Hunt.*

medical procedures to be carried out in sterile and safe conditions, and it will also prevent the need for travel, which is stressful for sick animals. Even though the goats and sheep will be moving to better facilities soon, there is still only limited space for new arrivals.

The sanctuary, including the treatment room, shelters and stupas, daily food and veterinary treatment, are supported by charitable contributions, which as explained by Khensur Rinpoche Lama Lhundrup are considered to be the equivalent of doing animal liberation yourself.

You can read a longer update from the sanctuary at [mandalamagazine.org](http://mandalamagazine.org).

For more information on the Animal Liberation Sanctuary, please visit [www.fpmt.org/projects/other/alp.html](http://www.fpmt.org/projects/other/alp.html).

## Losang Namgyal Rinpoche's Projects: Bringing Dharma to Remote Nepal

Losang Namgyal Rinpoche was born in 1970 in Okhaldhunga, Nepal, and came to Kopan Monastery as a novice monk in 1980. In the 1990s, Losang Namgyal Rinpoche spent time in New Zealand, Singapore and the United States interpreting at FPMT centers.

"Then I came back to Kopan, because I am supposed to be a local lama for the Tamang community," he told *Mandala*. "The population is very remote and very poor. Khensur Rinpoche Lama Lhundrup advised me that I should help them instead of translating and going overseas. Slowly it developed and I visited many different villages to see for myself how difficult their lives

are. Then I thought that in whichever way I could, I would help them to solve their problems, and set up different centers in those villages."

Losang Namgyal Rinpoche founded the Buddhist Awareness Center (BAC) in 1998 in Kathmandu, which now has more than a dozen branch centers and offers instruction on prayers and practices and courses on Dharma and meditation to local lay people. He also consults with Lama Zopa Rinpoche on how best to expand his work. "Lama Zopa Rinpoche and I decided to have a project to help the people in the remote communities where there is not much Dharma or facilities for practice," he said. "The main purpose is to go into the villages and promote Dharma by helping in whichever way we can."

The Lama Zopa Rinpoche Bodhichitta Fund (see page 36) has donated US\$100,000 toward the building of these kinds of projects in villages throughout Nepal. To date, four stupas, three prayer wheels and two gompas for doing nyung näs have been completed. Two more stupas and two more gompas are being built. Losang Namgyal Rinpoche has also overseen the construction of a school in Okhaldhunga.

Losang Namgyal Rinpoche works with a group of monks and BAC members to help develop these projects. "When we first go to a village, we ask them about their priorities and needs in order to have Dharma," he explained. "If they want a stupa or a gumpa or a prayer wheel, then we discuss that issue and how they can contribute. Often, they volunteer to find the basic materials and do the manual labor. When they are willing to provide those things, then we gather the other materials and organize how to send all these things from Kathmandu. We discuss in such a way as to ensure that work will go on, even after we've left. Working



*Stupa construction in Nuwakot, Nepal. Photo courtesy of Losang Namgyal Rinpoche.*

together is the best way so that the villagers get involved and will take care of it after it is completed.”

He has also worked with local people to set up the Namgyal Rinpoche Foundation in order to support the different aspects of the projects, offer scholarships to students, and promote the preservation of local culture as well as of the environment through tree planting programs and distribution of solar-powered lights and efficient wood-burning stoves. The foundation also supports medical, hospice and water projects for villages and the training of local lamas and monks.

You can learn more about Losang Namgyal Rinpoche's projects at [www.nrfoundation.org.np](http://www.nrfoundation.org.np).

## Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre: A Calm Space in Kathmandu's Chaos

By Arya Cayton, spiritual program coordinator

*In 1982, the Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre (HBMC) was founded in Kathmandu as the Himalayan Yogic Institute (HYI) by Pam and Karuna Cayton, long-time students of Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche. Thirty years later, their daughter Arya became the spiritual program coordinator there, bringing her experience and fresh perspective to the city center.*

Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre is located in the center of Thamel, the bustling tourist hub of Kathmandu. During Nepal's peak tourist season in late autumn, the sky is blue, the weather pleasant and the streets of Thamel are crowded with backpackers gearing up for the mountains and enjoying cappuccinos and a bit of comfort food before heading to more rugged terrain. HBMC offers these tourists as well as the expats and locals in Kathmandu a place where they can escape the busyness of the city while savoring a taste of what may lead them to ultimate happiness, something even the best chocolate cake in Thamel can't compete with.

Our center focuses on providing quality, short introductory programs. We currently offer guided meditation classes four evenings a week, with a different teacher every day. On Sunday mornings, a teacher, often from Kopan Monastery or Nunnery, teaches on basic Buddhist concepts. We try to keep these topics at an introductory level and put the primary focus on how Buddhism can be practical and immediately applied to everyday life. Our classes include time for questions and discussion. We also have regular day-long introductory courses in Buddhism and meditation. In addition, we have "Movie and Momo Nights" on Mondays and Saturdays. We now have a projector so we can screen Buddhist related films and documentaries on our rooftop terrace. Tea, popcorn and momos [Himalayan dumplings] are available and we open up a discussion after the movie for those interested in staying.

We're starting a new program offering guided pilgrimages to the many holy sites around the Kathmandu Valley as well as longer trips in Nepal, Bhutan, India and Tibet. A geshe or experienced teacher accompanies the tour

and gives teachings and meditations throughout the day so that the focus is on spiritual development and not just sightseeing. Nothing quite like this is currently available in Kathmandu, so we're excited to offer a beneficial way for people to see the holy sites while also getting an introduction to Buddhism and meditation.



Courtyard at Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre, Kathmandu, Nepal. Photo courtesy of HBMC.

For more information about the Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre activities, please visit [www.fpmi-hbmc.org](http://www.fpmi-hbmc.org).

You can read more about Arya Cayton's experience coming to HBMC and Pam Cayton's reflections on its founding at [mandalamagazine.org](http://mandalamagazine.org).



*This future library and school at Lawudo Gumpa and Retreat Centre will provide much needed education to local children in the region, April 2012. Photo by Simone Fry.*

## Renovation and Expansion at Lawudo

By Ven. Lobsang Deden

At an altitude of 13,000 feet (4,000 meters), Lawudo Gumpa and Retreat Centre is situated in the Solu Khumbu region of Nepal not far from Mount Everest and is undergoing complete renovation and expansion. Lawudo is the site where Lama Zopa Rinpoche's previous incarnation, Lawudo Lama Kunsang Yeshe, meditated and attained profound realizations – it's virtually the root of the FPMT.

"Many people advised me to tear down the old gumpa and build a completely new one," recalled Sangay Sherpa, Lama Zopa Rinpoche's brother and Lawudo's director. "But after having thought about this, I decided to conserve the old building, and in doing so, somehow conserve all the effort, all the love and devotion that has manifested there. Our mother, in fact all of us, including Lama Zopa Rinpoche, worked so hard and tirelessly to actualize this project. We practically built the gumpa with our bare hands. We had no money at all, but because the local people requested him to erect the gumpa to meet their spiritual needs, Lama Zopa insisted."

Currently, in order to complete the new library and Dharma school that will serve the local community and center guests, as well as the new gumpa, tons of building materials are brought to Lawudo under extremely harsh conditions. Construction is expected to continue for the following two to three years.

For more information and opportunities to support Lawudo Gumpa and Retreat Centre, please visit [www.lawudo-gumpa-project.com](http://www.lawudo-gumpa-project.com).

## Lama Zopa Rinpoche Helps Move Ganden Yiga Chözin Meditation and Retreat Centre

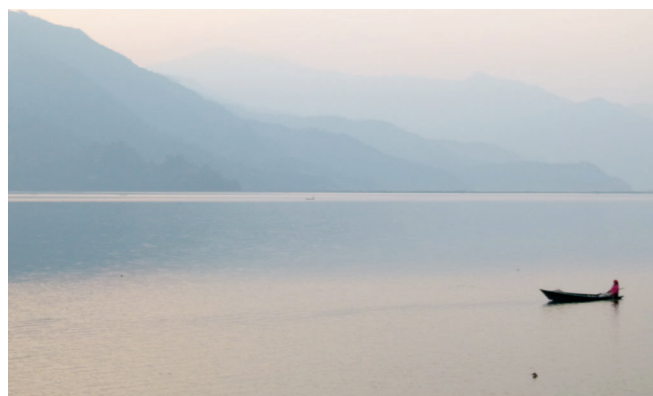
By Gerald Blomeyer, project coordinator

Pokhara is a popular tourist destination 124 miles (200 kilometers) west of Kathmandu. A warm valley at an attitude of 2,296 feet (700 meters), it offers views of several of the world's tallest mountains and access to Fewa Lake, the second largest lake in Nepal. Treks around Annapurna start here and the conditions for paragliding, kayaking, mountain biking and more are optimal. It is a nature lover's paradise with over 500 species of butterflies and birds.

In 1992, Lama Zopa Rinpoche bought a small plot with a fabulous lake view on what was then the outskirts of Pokhara Lakeside. In the following years, Jean-Luc Monné developed it to provide a peaceful place to study and contemplate Tibetan Buddhist teachings. Lama Zopa Rinpoche gave it the name Ganden Yiga Chözin (Maitreya's Pure Land) Meditation and Retreat Centre when he came with Dagri Rinpoche in January 1996 to bless it.

In 2005, an American monk, Ven. Losang Yeshe, moved to the center as resident teacher. When tourism to Pokhara revived in 2006 after the Maoist uprising stabilized, students, mainly between 20 and 35 years old, came from all over the world. Although the courses were quite small, participants often commented on what a life-changing experience our weekend course was for them.

In two-and-a-half days, students are offered an introduction to Buddhist philosophy in order to develop the mind through teachings on compassion and wisdom; meditation in order to relax the mind and make it peaceful, clear and serviceable; and yoga in order to relax and bring balance to the body and mind. The center's retreat facilities served us well up until three years



*Fewa Lake, Pokhara, Nepal, 2012*

ago when the most recent tourist boom started. The increased number of tourists has been positive for the center, but recently we've had to turn students away at the weekend, as 26 participants is our absolute capacity.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche visited the center in February 2012 and confirmed that it was time to move two miles (three kilometers) further down the road to a property overlooking Fewa Lake. Rinpoche gave us a donation of 1 million Nepali rupees (US\$11,386) with the words: "Is that enough?"

Ganden Yiga Chözin Meditation and Retreat Centre is currently in the process of securing the property and preparing a fundraising campaign. You can learn more at [www.pokharabuddhistcentre.com](http://www.pokharabuddhistcentre.com) and [www.facebook.com/FPMPokhara](http://www.facebook.com/FPMPokhara).

## 100 Million Mani Retreat at Bigu Nunnery

Every year since 2009, the Lama Zopa Rinpoche Bodhichitta Fund (see page 36) has sponsored at least one 100 million mani retreat at Bigu Nunnery in Nepal for US\$7,000, which covers the cost of offering food to the 70 nuns that participate, sponsoring a

qualified geshe to give lam-rim teachings throughout, providing a small offering to each participant and making a general donation to the nunnery itself. This year, the fund sponsored two such retreats, specifically dedicating the second to Lama Zopa Rinpoche's long life.

For more on the Lama Zopa Rinpoche Bodhichitta Fund, please visit [www.fpmt.org/projects/fpmt/lzrbf.html](http://www.fpmt.org/projects/fpmt/lzrbf.html).

## Proposed Project in Lumbini

Lama Zopa Rinpoche was offered a small amount of land in Lumbini, Nepal, the birthplace of the historical Buddha. Rinpoche has expressed a wish to build a four-story statue of Shakyamuni Buddha and possibly a small retreat facility with accommodations for two or three geshe or Western teachers who would be available to introduce Buddha's teachings and answer questions. Currently, FPMT's proposal is being considered by the minister of tourism in Lumbini. ♦

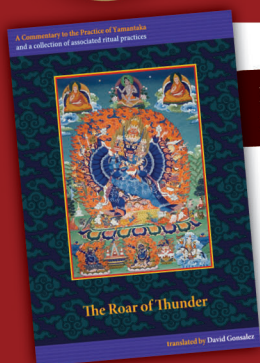
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By David Gonzalez

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Forthcoming releases will include commentaries such as the **Six Yogas of Naropa**, **Lama Chopra**, **Chakrasamvara Body Mandala**, and many others, as well as **Secret Revelations of Chittamani Tara** and **Healing Nectar of Immortality** that will be published in the very near future.

