

# Making Merit



Pieces of gold placed on a life-sized Buddha statue can create wealth luck.

World-renowned feng shui expert, Lillian Too, is also the director of FPMT's Losang Dragpa Centre in Selangor, Malaysia. She shares her thoughts about what the opportunity to work for a Dharma center means to her, what benefits we accumulate by making offerings, and an insight into the Sakya tradition, thanks to a visit from its revered leader, **Sakya Trizen**.

**A**s yet another year came to an end and I looked back on 2007, I felt a sense of joy that life for me has been a good balance of yin and yang in terms of attainments and motivations, material joys and spiritual developments, being helped and helping others.

In October, two events made me realize once again how lucky I am to be heading a Buddhist Meditation Society – not only in having access to some fabulous teachings on how to live life meaningfully and happily, but also having the opportunity to get up close and personal with very special persons – high lamas I regard as living Buddhas, whose only motivation in life is altruistic and who are totally selfless, whose whole reason for living is to benefit others. I feel very inspired by them and their teachings.

Our Buddhist Meditation Society, Losang Dragpa Centre (LDC), is a non-profit registered society. It has really nice premises in a leafy neighborhood of Petaling Jaya and of course its feng shui has been designed to benefit the neighborhood as well as all its members. The Center offers free courses on meditation and is involved in several community projects that benefit young children



as well as senior citizens. People come here to learn meditation techniques on how to cope with the stresses of living and working as well as how to bring spiritual meaning into their lives.

The meditation techniques focused on contemplative exercises for subduing the mind: How to tune into the philosophical aspects of life's many questions and how to cope with anger, ignorance, jealousy, impatience, and all the negative emotions that afflict us on a daily basis.

Our resident teacher, Geshe Tenzin Zopa, is a highly-educated, gentle, and soft-spoken scholar from Sera Je Monastic University who speaks perfect English and has a wonderful sense of humor. He is a veritable walking encyclopedia of many of the philosophical and ritualistic aspects of Mahayana Buddhism. One of the benefits to me of running LDC is working with someone so well-qualified in a subject in which I am so interested.

## Hosting His Eminence Khenrinpoche Lama Lhundrup

But there are other benefits as well, and in October two events drove home this fact. The first was that the highly revered Abbot of one of Katmandu's largest monasteries accepted our invitation to visit us and preside at our annual thousand offerings event. This was His Eminence Khenrinpoche Lama Lhundrup who, for three days, led prayers, pujas, and gave precious teachings to a continuing stream of visitors who came to the Chinese Assembly hall to participate in our event.

At the thousand offerings event which we organized over three days in the Chinese Assembly hall, we transformed the hall into a pure land filled with holy objects – Buddha images, statues, and thangkas. Everyone was invited to come and make offerings. The event was a huge success as it attracted many Buddhist devotees to come and take advantage of the occasion. Our motivation was to make it easy for anyone to gain the benefits of making offerings.

And for good measure we also brought in a life-sized Buddha so that people could offer real gold to the Buddha, using thin pieces of gold leaf which were “stuck” to the holy object. This is a very powerful practice which creates the cause

to have wealth luck manifest for you in this life or the next life. Offering gold to the Buddha is described as amassing great merit. Several people who came to the event, and who recognized me, volunteered their incredible tales of how after gold-leafing Buddha statues that had looked old and nondescript, not only did the Buddhas suddenly look radiant, exuding a glow, the students also went on to receive an unexpected windfall. Two of them even told me that they won the lottery.

Believe it or not, the vast merits created in offering gold to holy objects is well documented in the sutras – the teachings of the Buddha. Needless to say this was one of the more popular “stalls” at the event. This, together with other symbolic rituals set up with the motivation for people to create the causes for manifesting wealth in their life, was very popular with the public. What is important, however, is not



Above: The Chinese Assembly Hall was crowded with devotees.

Right: Khenrinpoche Geshe Lhundrup





Making offerings to holy objects is one of the best ways of making merit.

getting rich *per se*, but to get rich in order to be able to benefit others. It is the motivation that is important.

Some of the other rituals included offering wish-fulfilling jewels to the Seven Medicine Buddhas to ask for good health and recovery from illness; offering “gold coins” to the twenty-one Taras while reciting their mantra; writing the Sanghata Sutra to create success merit; and bathing the Dzambhala, the Buddha of wealth, to manifest a regular flow of income. Our collective wish and dedication for the three days was for everyone coming to the event to find whatever it was they craved for so that they can find real happiness.

### Hosting His Holiness Sakya Trizen Rinpoche

In October we were amazingly fortunate to host His Holiness Sakya Trizen Rinpoche to a special vegetarian lunch at LDC. His Holiness is the head of the Sakya tradition, one of the four traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, and although he is lesser known than His Holiness the Dalai Lama, he is equally revered and respected in Tibetan Buddhist circles, being the forty-first throne holder of Sakya. (His Holiness the Dalai Lama belongs to the Gelugpa tradition of Lama Tsongkhapa which is the largest amongst the four schools. LDC follows the Gelugpa tradition, and HH Sakya Trizen's visit opened for our members a very precious window into the Sakya path to enlightenment.)

While Sakya Trizen Rinpoche was with us on that magical day, he explained that the central text used in the Sakya tradition was the Lamdre. The term “Lamdre” is Tibetan meaning “the path including its result.” Its origin can be traced back to the great Indian Mahasiddha, Virupa.

Lamdre covers the whole range of sutra and tantra teachings given by Lord Buddha. But its main teachings are based on the Hevajra Tantra. Originally it had been brought to Tibet by the translator, Drogmi Lotsawa, in the tenth century, then later codified in the twelfth century by Sachen Kunga Nyingpo. This teaching is described as the complete path to enlightenment and it has since been passed down in an unbroken lineage of masters to the present day.

There are two sections to the Lamdre; the preliminary section which contains the teachings on the sutras of Lord Buddha focusing on the three visions: impure vision, the vision of experience, and the pure vision. And the tantric section which include teachings on the Three Tantras. Lamdre is given by a single teacher (who must be an officially recognized lineage holder) in a single place over a period of four to six weeks. In any generation there only a handful of lineage holders and they are all within the Sakya lineage.

Having the opportunity to meet and play host to such a high being as the head of the Sakya was thus a fabulous privilege. It was the highlight of my October and also for my friends at LDC. It was a great opportunity to receive blessings and precious advice from someone genuinely special. Such an opportunity might happen only once in one's lifetime. ☸



World-renowned feng shui expert Lillian Too has written more than eighty books on the subject – and she also publishes the excellent bi-monthly Feng Shui World magazine. Especially devoted to her guru, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, she honors him on her website [www.lillian-too.com/lamazopa/](http://www.lillian-too.com/lamazopa/)





## Making Offerings to Holy Objects

*by Lillian Too*

**When you offer flowers** to the holy objects it creates the cause for you to become more radiant and attractive. This is why Buddhists always place beautifully arranged bouquets at their altars. The more flowers you offer at your altar, the more radiant and beautiful you become!

**When you offer water** it creates the cause for all your tension and anger to subside, and this is a great way to reduce your temper tantrums and help you gain control over your mood swings and changes. Hot-tempered people should make water bowl offerings daily and dedicate this act of offering for them to **NOT** be so quick or hot tempered. Try doing this for a month and you will observe yourself getting calmer and more patient. It is a wonderful antidote to stress and tension.

**When you offer food** it creates the cause for all your money problems to dissolve. You will then never be short of sustenance in your life and this means being always gainfully employed and being able to make a decent living. These days it is so easy to offer food – any kind of biscuits, chocolates, or sweets are great. In fact, the Chinese believe that offering sweet food to holy objects makes our words and our voice very “sweet and attractive.”

**When you offer light** it creates the cause for the mind to become clear and creative. Light offerings (candles or bright lights) are excellent for the rise of wisdom, and those still in school or college are sure to benefit from making daily light offerings to holy objects. Indeed it is beneficial to set up an altar just for this purpose, for any rise in wisdom is always beneficial. This will help one in their ability to concentrate and to absorb all that they are taught at school and by their elders.

**When you offer incense** to holy objects (and here the better the aroma the more pleasing it will be) it creates the cause for all the obstacles that are blocking your success to be dissolved. Incense offerings dispel afflictions and troublesome influences in your life. It blesses the ethereal Universe alongside which we live so that all things associated with ghosts, hauntings, and black magic are appeased. Incense offerings are said to be extremely powerful in dispelling bad intentions aimed at you or your house.