

Saraswati Bhawan

Acharya Dawa Chhödak Rinpoche



Winter 2005 Sangha Newsletter

www.saraswatibhawan.org

Welcome to this first edition!

The Saraswati Bhawan Newsletter is a tri-annual communication instrument for Acharya Dawa Chhödak Rinpoche's worldwide sangha.

It is dedicated to the dharma activities of all of the precious teachers, and their disciples.

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The Night I Broke the Horse The Vajrasattva Drupchen Tim Clark

I guess the low point of the Vajrasattva retreat for me was the evening I destroyed the northern sector of the Drubchen mandala. Several events leading up to that fateful moment contributed to my demise.

Every year when I get the notice announcing Rinpoche's annual retreat I say to myself, "I can't possibly do this. I can't afford it. I don't have the time. I'm a miserable practitioner and this will be a waste of time." Negative thoughts along these lines continue – often all the way into the retreat. I always attend, though. If I gave into negative reasoning I would never have attended any of the retreats. (cont'd pg. 5)



Tim and Tsering

Dechen Drolkar

Boudha, February 2005

Kunzang Dorje Rinpoche



Dechen Drolkar



Dawa Chhödak Rinpoche & Kunzang Dechen Chödron



Jomo Samp'hel

In This Issue

Vajrasattva Drupchen

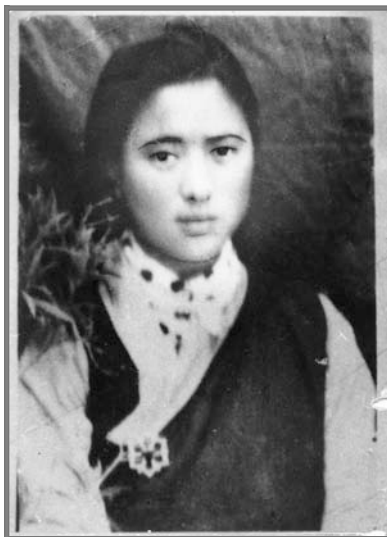
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Dekyong Yeshe Wangmo

from Saraswati Bhawan archives

(reprinted with permission)

This is a rare photograph of Dekyong Yeshe Wangmo, who was one of H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche's daughters. She was the younger sister to Thinley Norbu Rinpoche. Yeshe Wangmo was recognized as an incarnate dakini and believed to be an emanation of Yeshe Tsogyal. It was said that from birth, she had no shadow, indicating the full attainment of the rainbow body while in living form. She displayed many miraculous signs and all who saw her felt great devotion. Unfortunately, she died at a young age. As a result of her unexpected death, Dudjom Rinpoche wrote the now famous "Aspiration Prayer to Journey to the Realm of the Copper Colored Mountain." He writes in the colophon at the end of the prayer, "This prayer of aspiration was written from the heart with a sorrow-filled mind by the old father, Jigdrel Yeshe Dorje, as a support for the journey of my noble daughter, Dekyong Yeshe Wangmo, to the pure realm of Lotus Light." It is the short form of this prayer that we say regularly at the end of our practices.



Lama Dawa Rinpoche obtained this photograph from Pema Tsering, who was the Umdze for the Dudjom Monastery in Pemakot. Pema Tsering was very familiar with Dudjom Rinpoche's family and shared many stories with Lama Dawa. He believed that this prayer was Dekyong Yeshe Wangmo's last gift to us, for if she had not died, H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche would not have blessed us with such a prayer.



SANG-GYE KUN-GYI NGO-WO KA-DRIN CHEN/
OR-GYEN RIN-PO CHE-LA SOL-WA DEB/
NAM-ZHIK TSE-DI NANG-WA NUP-MA THAK/
PAD-MA ÖD-DU KEY-WAR JYIN-GYI LOB//

Dharma Dates

Naga Days (YES - practice!)

Jan. 3	1*
6	1
8	3
10	2
11	2
13	2
20	3
28	2
29	2
31	2
Feb. 1	2
4	1
7	3
9	1
13	3
14	3
17	1

Baden Days** (No prayer flags, sang, or tashi segpa, etc.)

Dec. 19
Jan. 3
15
27
30
Feb. 19
23

*Without going into more detail, the numbers after the Naga days indicate the relative degree of benefit of doing Naga puja on that day. Note: According to the Kalachakra and Vedic calendars, the 10th month is a Naga sleeping month. There is no benefit and no harm to doing Naga puja in the 10th month, although some Chinese astrology indicates there is some benefit of practice on the 20th and 21st days that month.

**Dates may not necessarily correlate with Rigpa and other calendars. Rinpoche transmitted this to Kunzang Dechen Chodron and Dechen Drolkar, Oct. 2005.

Stages of the Yogi's (Ngakpa) Training According to the Buddhist Tantric Tradition Part One of Three

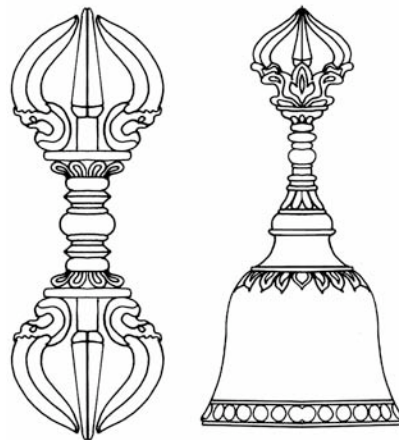
In this article, we describe and lay out the traditional path of the tantric practitioner, from taking Refuge vows to the most advanced levels. There is a lot of confusion about the path nowadays, and many different ideas have been propagated. In this article, which was drawn from private oral teachings given by Acharya Dawa Chhodak Rinpoche and compiled and edited by Kunzang Dechen Chodron, we explain the path as it has been practiced since the time of the Mahasiddhas of ancient India.

Entry into the Buddhist Path and Establishing the Essential Foundations

In order to be ready to embark on the tantric path and yogic training, the novice must have taken the Refuge and the Pratimoksa (Hinayana) vows of the lay practitioner, or of the monk or nun. According to the tantric tradition, and in accordance with the example of the siddhas, one should study and train in the Vinaya for some time. The length of time – whether it is one week, one year, or an entire lifetime, is dependent on the student's capacity and the Guru's advice. After successfully practicing these vows, the practitioner moves into the training of the Bodhisattva and takes the Bodhisattva (Mahayana) vows. *This essential foundation cannot be overlooked!* After training in these vows and evidence of attaining understanding the meaning of these vows has been shown, certain individuals with capacity are allowed to progress into the sacred tantric (vajrayana) vehicle, which begin with the 14 root vows common to all lineages.

Ngag-la Shug-Tsam – Taking the Tantric Vows

The entry into the sacred *mantradhara* path (tantra or Vajrayana) is when the novice receives the 14 root tantric vows or has taken a tantric empowerment in which the vows are implied. At this stage, it is assumed that the



practitioner has established a mutual relationship with a Root Guru, or Vajra Master, who will individually guide the practitioner according to their ability. Without such a guide, one cannot successfully practice the sacred mantra teachings. Also, the tantric vows must be carefully explained to the practitioner through the oral tradition of their lineage. These vows are not to be written down or learned from a book.

Once trust and commitment has been established between Guru and student, the Guru may then bestow the inner branch vows, in accordance to their particular lineage. These vows are given in a private ceremony and the student is required to memorize the information and to keep it secret – never revealing them to anyone, even their Vajra brothers and sisters. Along with the vows, the student receives a name and formally enters into the order of Yogis or Ngakpas. There are ten levels of tantric vows, adding up to hundreds of secret branch vows, which are based on the lineage and the particular practice they are doing. Usually, these vows are given as the practitioner enters retreat to embark on a particular practice. The vows pertinent to that practice are given as the retreatant does the practice. The student is introduced to these vows slowly, over time. They first learn to hold the vows of the practices they are doing. As they progress on the path and embark on more advanced practice, they receive more vows as their capacity to hold them increases. Throughout

The Vajrasattva Drubchen



Silvia Ibarra/Chokye Lhamo

The Vajrasattva Drubchen retreat took place from September 27 to October 12, at The Midwest Retreat House in San Pierre, Indiana. A group of 13 Dharma students gathered to receive teachings and practice following instructions by Acharya Dawa Chhödak Rinpoche, accompanied by Kunzang Dechen Chödrön. The Vajrasattva Empowerment took place on the first day.

The retreat was structured in four sessions: two in the morning, one in the afternoon, and the last one in the evening, all of them extending from 5 AM to 10 PM. Activity at the meditation room started at 4 AM. We kept continuous mantra recitation at the “wookie hole - as many good quality mantra repetitions as possible - and reported them to the Dorje Tunpa at the end of the day. Between our formal and informal activities, like Tsog songs rehearsal, we were so busy that days went by very fast.

We used all available free time to study the main Sadhana “A Chariot of Great Merit”, in order to achieve a better understanding of the powerful purification process we were experiencing. This process was being extended to our planet. Lama Dawa explained us that pure actions of body and speech can only come from a pure mind. A pure mind is one in which anger has been purified, and transformed into compassion.

Rinpoche was always available to answer questions, either at the end of the teaching sessions, while enjoying the tsogs, or during breaks. This provided an exceptional occasion to clarify our doubts. The same was true for Kunzang, who during the afternoon breaks patiently taught us how to do the many mudras the practice required, and the correct use of bell, dorje and dhamaru. At other times you could see her teaching Rigdzin Dorje how to play the cymbals, as part of his assistant umze tasks.

Thanks to our sponsors' generosity, Tsog offerings were always abundant. Finding enough room in the altar to place them all became our daily challenge. We were very fortunate as retreat pills were sponsored by a generous Dharma practitioner. Thanks to all of them.

(At the retreat center there were) ...many beautiful nights with skies full of stars. We could appreciate this amazing spectacle, rare for those of us who live in cities, either during mantra repetition shifts, or while walking to the early morning session.

To me, a new comer into Dawa Chhödak Rinpoche's Sangha, and retreats, the Vajrasattva Drubchen retreat was a powerful and moving experience. Through my own experience, I acquired the certainty that enlightenment in one lifetime is a real possibility. I have decided to put all my energy into this goal.

Kim Schafer

The retreat was a wonderful experience for me. Part of what made it special was the support we received from sponsors unable to attend.

18 people/groups contributed money in varying amounts to support the daily tsog, cost of the Vajrasattva pills, shrine items and other retreat expenses. Each sponsor was acknowledged during the daily tsog, and any specific dedications were shared. Our Gekko (Tim) determined an appropriate prayer for each sponsor, and the group recited the prayer, often multiple times.

Having the outside sponsorship was meaningful in many ways – it directly supported the retreat activities, prayers were said on behalf of the sponsors and any dedications requested, and it also gave (me at least) a feeling of a much larger effort. I came away with a sense of connectedness not only to those who were at the retreat but to the larger sangha as a whole. It truly was a group effort!

More Vajrasattva Drupchen



Jim Canary

Retreatants

San Pierre, Indiana

(....Horse, cont'd from cover

I decided years ago that I would just “do it” whether I wanted to or not. Don’t think about it – just do it. No ego in it’s right mind would choose to attend an intensive Buddhist retreat. The ego must be dragged, sometimes kicking and screaming. There is something deeper than ego that forces one to attend retreats. I sure envy those practitioners who actually look forward to their next retreat.

In some ways the process this year was even more anguishing. I’m married now and, although my wife is a devout Buddhist,

Tsering had never attended a long retreat and didn’t have a strong desire to do so. At first she declined my invitation to attend but later on, I’m not sure why, she changed her mind. She actually became more excited about it than I was. She likes traveling to new places and she likes the all the sangha members she’s met.

The logistics of getting from Garberville to Indiana is long and complicated. The Oakland airport is 5 hours away, finding a place to stay in the city and a place to park my car for two weeks was troublesome. The

(cont'd pg.7)



Jim Canary

Acharya Dawa Chhödak Rinpoche,

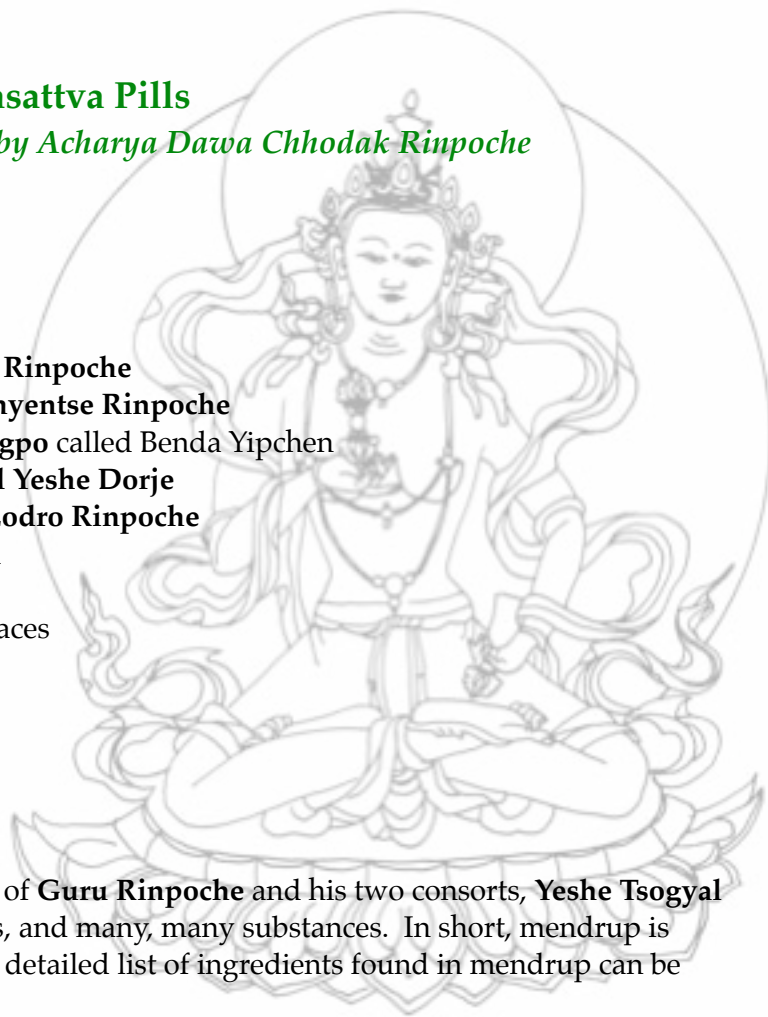
supported by the precious lineages, has been thoughtfully and meticulously planning the 2005 Vajrasattva Drupchen for many many years. This effort is exemplified in the following description of the Vajrasattva pills.

It was of incredible benefit for anyone to have been involved with the Drupchen in any way.

May the benefits radiate limitlessly.

The Vajrasattva Pills

Ingredients collected and prepared by Acharya Dawa Chhodak Rinpoche



1. Relics of **Kashyapa Buddha**
2. Vajrasattva Mother pills prepared by **H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche**
3. Vajrasattva Mother pills prepared by **H.H. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche**
4. Special Mendrup made by **Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo** called Benda Yipchen
5. Mendrup made by **H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche, Jigdrel Yeshe Dorje**
6. Dorje Namojoma pills made by **Khyentse Chokyi Lodro Rinpoche**
7. The ‘Three Mother Medicines’: Aryu, Baru, Khyuru
8. The ‘Six Great Medicines’
9. Precious water from forty-two sacred pilgrimage places
10. Five amritas
11. Five great meats
12. Langchen Giwang
13. Saffron
14. Heartwood from red and white sandalwood trees

Note 1. mendrup contains the virya and sutra essence of **Guru Rinpoche** and his two consorts, **Yeshe Tsogyal and Mandharava**; the five amritas, the five great meats, and many, many substances. In short, mendrup is made from ‘the eight roots and thousand branches’. A detailed list of ingredients found in mendrup can be found in the *Nyong-drol Kar-chag* text.

Note 2. Namjoma pills are made especially to purify “drib’(contamination, impurities) and to increase one’s merit, longevity and prosperity. Details of the ingredients can be found in the *Namjoma Rilbu Karchog*.

The ingredients used to color the pills white include:

1. Gang Kusha - Relics from Mt. Kailash
2. Chugang from Pretapuri
3. Jangsem Karpo, “earth treasure’ - the essence of the great masters.
4. Dzi stone called kartakata
5. Counterclockwise conch shell

(...Horse cont'd from pg. 5)

early morning flight meant getting up at 3am and paying a \$50 for a 15 minute taxi ride to the airport. We changed flights in Dallas and after arriving in Chicago caught a bus for a two hour ride to Michigan City – where we were to meet another shuttle the next day.

By the time we got to the retreat – somewhere in the cornfields of Indiana – we were exhausted and Tsering was coming down with the flu. To save money we had elected to pitch a tent rather than to stay in the dorms. It was Tsering's first experience with camping. Unfortunately the super mattress pads I bought turned out to be not very super. The tent worked well but when it started raining the cold from the ground came right through the pads. Tsering came down with a fever and was really miserable. My efforts to console her with my philosophical "This is a Vajrasattva purification retreat. You're purifying and what you are going through is probably a good thing" – got me into deep doo-doo. And, of course, as the spouse the whole fiasco was totally my fault.

These were the events that led up to that fateful night... A few days into the retreat, between the long practice hours and taking care of my wife I was exhausted and could hardly keep my eyes open. I was seething.

After an interminable evening session Tsering told me to get some more blankets that we could put under us and over us. The retreat manager, Heidi, gave me a huge bundle in a plastic garbage bag. Stomping impatiently through the shrine room with this load, as I reached the bottleneck between Alan Ma's puja table and the central mandala, Tsering told me to get another pillow. Resentfully turning back I nearly ran into Rigdzin (Charlie) and all hell broke loose. It was like a chain reaction, a set-up, destiny waiting to happen. My clumsy bundle barely knicked the edge of a thangka hanging on a post next to the shrine. The stick on the bottom to the thangka pivoted around the post hitting an offering bowl - which went flying. Somehow the silver bowl hit a cast stone horse rupa. One of the 7 Precious Possessions of the Monarch – the

Precious Horse carries the Wish Fulfilling Jewel of Enlightenment. The little red horse went flying like the Wind Horse.

I quickly stooped to pick up the mess but Ola and Juanita, the Chopins, yelled "Don't touch anything. Get Rinpoche." I thought "Shit, can't we just clean things up with out getting the Lama involved?" It's then that I noticed --THE PRECIOUS HORSE HAS BROKEN HIS PRECIOUS LEG! The little red leg was on the floor 3 feet away from the body. I was stunned. How could this happen? Talk about bad luck! It's got to be worse than the seven years one gets for breaking a mirror.

The chopins came running back, ushering in the Vajra Master. Rinpoche carefully examined the mess- bowls, water, broken legs, me in the middle – like he was discerning a divination. He asked me how it happened and I murmured something about blankets and Tsering and Charlie – I think I even managed to implicate Ola in some way. I couldn't go down without taking of my friends with me! Rinpoche seemed satisfied with my explanation and indicated that things were as they should be. He'd been expecting some negative event and seemed relieved that this was it. I'm glad it was I that screwed up. I think it could have been more devastating had it happened to a new practitioner.

Juanita did an amazing job repairing the horse's leg. I'm so happy we didn't have to shoot it. On Lama's advice Tsering, Rigzin and I sponsored a Tsog a few days later and the whole sangha recited Tashi Segpa and Apology prayers. After that the retreat took a positive turn for me. Tsering's health returned, the stupor that had been hanging over me lifted and my practice became energized.

The highpoint of the retreat, for me, was the Fire Puja at the end. It was so powerful –a purification-offering ceremony from far back in antiquity. It spoke to something (or nothing) deep within – probably to that same something that made me go to the retreat in the first place.



Dachen Drolkar

(Stages: cont'd from pg. 3)

their training, the student's ability to hold samaya with their teacher is repeatedly tested, as well as their level of commitment to the practices. Ideally, the Guru will assess each student's level of commitment and ability and give the teachings that are appropriate for that student. In this way, sacred teachings, which require high levels of commitment and trust, will not be divulged to a student who does not demonstrate correct understanding, or who is not ready to take on such a commitment.

It is very difficult nowadays to keep tantric vows purely, while living in the modern world. For example, some of the vows regarding substances requires that the yogi always keep certain articles with him or her at all times. Other substances are almost impossible to obtain. There are vows of dress and appearance (just as with monastic vows). Most of all, it is very difficult to keep the level of secrecy required with respect to one's practice. This is one reason why it is always stated in the texts that the yogi should live in an isolated place.

These vows require that pure samaya be kept between Guru and student. There are many warnings of the dangers of being reborn in Vajra Hell if sacred samaya is broken. The inner branch vows are never given to anyone with a questionable samaya history or if they have proven unreliable in maintaining practice commitments. The student must also have demonstrated the ability to keep secrets – never talking about their practices or vows to others. Naturally, talkative types of students, or students who enjoy boasting or gossiping, will not be candidates to hold inner tantric vows. Traditionally a Guru is only allowed to give these inner vows to a small number of students in his or her lifetime. Therefore, great discernment is used before agreeing to bestow them. On the other hand, the fourteen root vows can be given to any number of students.

Next Issue: Part Two
**Ngak- Tsog Stage – Generation Stage
(Kye-Rim) practices**

*Upon removing himself to a cremation ground
where he attained realization through generation
and completion:*

*“The roots of anxiety are embedded
In the delusion that every one of us
Is an island unto ourselves,
Alone and separate, each from the other.
If you would be free of this suffering,
See the workings of your mind
As but a single thought,
A retinue of gods
That vanish into the sound of “A”
As the rainbow vanishes into the heavens.*

*Birth, life, and death have lost their hold
Upon this madman.
The action flowing freely through him
Is pure pleasure;
The realization of unimpeded clarity
Is pure pleasure;
Meditation upon the unobstructed sense fields
Is pure pleasure;
The goal attained without effort
Is pure pleasure.”*

Kalapa of Rajapur

*Text and line drawing from “Masters of Enchantment” with
written permission from Inner Traditions, Rochester, VT,
www.innertraditions.com*

Family Photos

(send your photos for next edition to editor@saraswatibhawan.org)

Ananda exclaimed to Lord Buddha that half the spiritual life consists of spiritual friendship, or friendship with what is lovely. The Buddha replied, 'Say not so Ananda. Say not so. It is the whole, not the half of the spiritual life.'

Waiting for Rinpoche



Kekoa

Dharma pets: Tsog enjoyers (with varied success in covert ops), lap sitters, and heart warmers...wanting to be in the middle of it all.

"That was a long practice, Kim!"



Pacem: Rescued Greyhound racer

Kim Schaffer



Orgyen, Rigdzin



Padma Khandro



Olivia
of Josh Vernon
and Elizabeth

Sangye Thinley

"....what is lovely."



Gyuto Tantric University, Dharamsala Sangha preparing for visit from H.H. Dalai Lama



Allan Ma

Sangha Forum

More Meaningful

Speak ill of others no more
Dear one, it's boring.
Besides, there's so much
In life more meaningful
Than how others disappoint,
Or fail or make mistakes -
Like those radiant, golden leaves
Falling from the maple
In the yard, or that black cat
High up in the walnut tree
Who imagines she is
A squirrel.

Larry Barnett (Sonam Tobgyal)
Sonoma, CA

Lineage Tribute

As I stated to Rinpoche in an interview after a Vajra Armor Mantra closed access retreat: "A big lineage comes in a little package!"

I was referring to the steady stream of pure blessings flowing from Guru Padmasambhava and Yeshe Tsogyal through Dudjom Rinpoche to Dawa Chhödak Rinpoche who blesses us now in North America. He may be short in height yet he is awesome in accomplishment.

It has been wonderful to make a connection with Acharya Dawa Chhödak Rinpoche. My relationship with HH Jigdrel Yeshe Dorje goes back to 1979 when I took Buddhist Refuge Vows in New York City. Little did I know who I was fortunate enough to make a connection with! Over the decades the blessings of H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche have shown themselves again and again in many ways in my life.

One way is via the teachings made available by His accomplished Lama disciples. Among the most accessible has been Rinpoche. He is so down to earth and unpretentious. Truly a great conduit for the blessings of Dudjom Lingpa's lineage for beings in this time.

My personal path has been Rime' from the start ... It is a very good attitude to have in general and seems particularly suited to our time and place here in Turtle Island..... With Rinpoche I have found a Dharma connection which is very practical. He does not spend a lot of

time on scholasticism and abstract philosophy, being an adept of tantric magic and a consummate ngakpa lama. His fame as a divination master is unmatched.

As I slowly found my own deeper connections to lineage I have entered the practice of the Yang Zab Dzogchen wholeheartedly.... Even as my commitment to the ngakpa path deepened so did my relationship with Dawa Chhödak Rinpoche. It is like having a Nyingmapa godfather to whom one can turn with questions or concerns. My intention is to rely on his help and guidance for many years to come.

In closing I would like to thank Kunzang and Dechen and the webmaster at Saraswati Bhawan for their dedication in supporting Rinpoche's work for all beings.

*Ngakpa Sangye Phuntsok
aka Orest Pelechaty*

*"Thus shall ye think of all this
fleeting world:*

*A star at dawn, a bubble in a stream;
A flash of lightening in a summer cloud,
A flickering lamp, a phantom,
and a dream. "*

- Shakyamuni, the Lord Buddha

Saraswati Bhawan Newsletter

Please print and share

(archival material use restricted to Saraswati Bhawan)

Submission deadline next issue: **March 1st, 2005** editor@saraswatibhawan.org

(photos, articles/essays, letters, questions, corrections...single spaced)

Next issue: Mind and Life Conference : Consciousness

Stages of a Yogi's training: Part two

Forum topic: "renunciation"..... send your thoughts/brief essays

Editors reserve right to edit. Contributors as noted.