

MSB SPR GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

Mangala Shri Bhuti Study and Practice Representatives (SPRs) are practitioners experienced with four immeasurables meditation, who serve as mentors for new students entering the MSB Sangha. The SPR's main responsibilities are supporting students to learn the four immeasurables meditation and being available to discuss general questions that a new person might have about Tibetan Buddhism and MSB. SPRs are not necessarily experts with all the answers; they simply provide friendly support by sharing their own present understanding of the practice, teachings, and organization. SPRs must have a fundamental trust in their own intelligence and understanding of the Dharma, and learn to rely on these qualities when working with others. SPRs in a local community are encouraged to support each other through discussion and collaboration. If questions remain unresolved, the SPR can consult a khenchung for further advice. The sole intent of our organization is to benefit others through providing the environment to study and practice the Dharma, and SPRs serve an important role in this process.

A BUDDHIST SPONSOR

The starting point on the path is to clearly recognize the self-created suffering in our lives that stems from self-clinging. This process takes both honesty and humility. Without this clear recognition, the remedy of Dharma will never fully impact our lives due to the simple fact that we are never fully willing to look at how our habitual ego tendencies create our own suffering, or we may use the Dharma as a form of spiritual materialism in order to further reinforce ego-clinging in the guise of a spiritual person.

As sentient beings, we must humbly acknowledge our addiction to indulging in unhealthy tendencies that stem from ego-clinging. For those new to Buddhism, the SPR is likened to a "sponsor" in a substance abuse recovery program. In other words, the SPR is someone who has made some progress in the Dharma and shares that experience on a continuous, individual basis with another who is turning towards the Three Jewels as a source of refuge. The SPR is like a good friend, tutor, experienced guide, or older sibling whose primary responsibility is to help us apply the Dharma to our lives. SPRs lead us by example, as we see how the Dharma works in their lives through their sharing of personal experiences and stories of where they were and where they are now. We start to learn how to

slowly break free of our own habitual tendencies by listening and doing the footwork that our SPR shows us.

THE ROLE OF STUDY & PRACTICE REPRESENTATIVES

The main prerequisite for becoming an SPR is to receive the four immeasurables shamatha instruction from Rinpoche, and to consistently do this practice over a reasonable amount of time. Although it would be helpful for the SPR to have gone through the Sangha Ceremony, this is not a requirement. The MSB khenchungs are responsible to train, guide, and support the SPRs. Therefore, SPRs are encouraged to contact khenchungs whenever it would be helpful. In addition, there will be two SPR training sessions held each year. As a general rule, about 25% of the students at a particular MSB center should be SPRs. As this is a voluntary position, it can rotate among a group of students if this is more practical.

SPRs meet with students who are in the first phase of the sequence of MSB practices. Students in this phase have made an initial contact with the Ven. Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche, are actively engaging in the activities outlined in the MSB General Information Letter (see Appendix I), regularly meet with a SPR, and are developing a daily shamatha meditation practice. After completing the Sangha Ceremony, students select an MSB Meditation Instructor (MI) from the most current listing. MIs must be MSB students who have gone through an MI training and are at least at the ngondro phase of practice.

SPR MEETING AGENDA CHECKLIST

The most important resource for your students to have at this time is the *Phase I: Shamatha Meditation* section of the *MSB Study & Practice Manual*. Please tell your student to download this section from the Study and Practice section of the MSB Member Site as soon as possible.

Once your students have this document, they will have access to a checklist of topics that need to be discussed with you. Below is a listing of the topics and discussion questions included in the Phase I section of the manual.

This guide also includes SPR background information for each discussion topic that will help inform your responses to the student. The Phase I section of the manual intentionally does not include this background information because we want SPRs to tailor their delivery of the content to meet the individual needs of each student during their regular meetings.

Each topic may be discussed over multiple meetings with an SPR; or multiple topics could be covered in a single meeting. This is up to the student and SPR. The bottom line is that all of the topics listed below need to be addressed with your student before he or she takes part in the Sangha Ceremony.

SPR DISCUSSION TOPIC #1

TOPIC:

- Importance and structure of daily shamatha meditation practice according to the MSB tradition

POSSIBLE DISCUSSION SUBJECTS:

- How do I meditate according to the shamatha instructions given in the MSB tradition of Tibetan Buddhism?
- Where can I get the Scenarios recording?
- How often and how long should I meditate on the four immeasurables?
- What is the structure of a typical meditation session using the Scenarios guided meditation recording?
- How do I structure my practice after listening to the recording ten times?
- I already have daily meditation practices. Do I have to stop doing these and just do the Scenarios meditation now?
- Is it okay to discuss my meditative experiences with friends and family?
- Does Rinpoche have any instructions about setting up and maintaining a shrine?
- Is it advisable to do retreat at this stage of practice?

SPR BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- Students should use the *Four Immeasurable Scenarios* recording on the *Guided Meditations on Relative Bodhicitta* CD as the basis for learning the four immeasurables meditation. This CD can be purchased at the MSB online Store at:
http://www.mangalashribhuti.org/html/store/recordings_new.html.
- The Scenarios meditation on the above CD is also available for free download on the Guided Meditation page under the Listen section of the MSB public website at
<http://www.mangalashribhuti.org/html/listen/guided.html>.
- It is essential that students cultivate a daily meditation practice. There is no minimum amount of time; the main thing is to practice the four immeasurables daily.
- Students should use the *Shamatha Meditation on the Four Immeasurables* outline included in the Phase I section of the Study and Practice Manual to structure their daily meditation practice (see Appendix II of the SPR Guide). It's crucial that SPRs are familiar with this document in order to support students with learning the structure of daily meditation sessions at this stage.
- Rinpoche suggests that students practice while listening to the Scenarios guided meditation recording at least ten times before doing the practice without the recording.
- After the student has practiced along with the recording ten times, encourage him or her to be creative in coming up with scenarios based on personal experiences evoking the four immeasurables. These can be used in place of the scenarios used on the recording, but the overall structure of the meditation should still follow *Shamatha Meditation on the Four Immeasurables* outline.
- An edited transcript of the Scenarios guided meditation is included in the Phase I section of the Study and Practice Manual (see Appendix III of this SPR Guide).
- Talk 12 from NSS 2006 is also an excellent resource because it is the question and answer session that directly followed the Scenarios guided meditation (Talk 11). Talk 12 is also available for free download under the Practice Resources page of the Study and Practice website.
- It's fine for students to maintain daily meditation practices from other traditions as long as they also make time for a daily meditation on the four immeasurables.
- Student should not talk about their meditative experiences to other people than the SPR.
- If one is inspired to have a shrine, it should include a picture of Buddha Shakyamuni as the central figure, along with the shrine bowls and a Dharma text. Cleanliness and daily upkeep should be emphasized.
- Students should not do retreat until they come to the point of doing the post-sessions retreat.

SPR DISCUSSION TOPIC #2

TOPIC:

- Reading *It's Up to You* and *Light Comes Through*

POSSIBLE DISCUSSION SUBJECTS:

- Discuss how the material covered in these books relates to my past studies of Buddhism.
- Discuss what impact these books have had on me.
- Other questions I have about the material.
- What else should I read before completing the Sangha Ceremony?
- I prefer to read Dharma books instead of meditating every day. Is this advisable?

SPR BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- In general, students should focus on listening to Rinpoche's recordings and reading his books during this phase, rather than reading general Dharma books. This is important for building a foundation to understand the style of meditation specific to our lineage and tradition. It's especially important for students not to read teachings on the nature of mind and Vajrayana practices until later on the path.
- Students can also read *Like a Diamond: Transformation in the Three Yanas*. This book is available at MSB programs or can be ordered online on the MSB website at:
<http://www.mangalashribhuti.org/html/book/palri.html>
- Students should prioritize maintaining a daily meditation practice. If time allows, studies can be done in addition.

SPR DISCUSSION TOPIC #3

TOPIC:

- Becoming a formal MSB student

POSSIBLE DISCUSSION SUBJECTS:

- How will I know when I am ready to write a letter to Rinpoche requesting to become a formal student through participating in the next Sangha Ceremony?
- What do I include in my letter to Rinpoche? What is the purpose of the letter?
- Who do I give the letter to? How will I be informed about Rinpoche's response?
- How do I get more information about the Sangha Ceremony?

SPR BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- Students should wait about one year after making initial contact with MSB before writing a letter to become a formal student. During this time students should engage in the activities outlined in the MSB General Information Letter (included in the Phase I section of the manual; also see Appendix I of this SPR Guide).
- The letter to Rinpoche can include some brief background information, and a statement of intent to become a student by attending the next

Sangha Ceremony. However, this letter should not be approached as a conventional resume or application.

- The letter is given to Rinpoche's secretary, Rebecca Zepp, either through email, mail, or in person.
- Rebecca Zepp will let the person know Rinpoche's response, and give the person a copy of the *New Student Letter* (see Appendix IV of this SPR Guide) that outlines how to prepare for the Sangha Ceremony.

SPR DISCUSSION TOPIC #4

TOPIC:

- Attending MSB programs and sangha events

POSSIBLE DISCUSSION SUBJECTS:

- How important is it to attend MSB teaching/practice programs?
- What is the value of consistently attending MSB group activities such as Sunday Sitting, work weekends, and discussion groups that are in my local area?
- When can I do tsok practice with the MSB Sangha?
- What is the difference between pursuing meditation and studies on my own and being part of a sangha?
- What is the standard shrine room etiquette?

SPR BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- Attendance at MSB teachings and practice programs should be encouraged as much as possible.
- For those who live within driving distance of an MSB Center, review the schedule of the weekly Sunday sittings and monthly nyinthuns. Emphasize that Rinpoche strongly encourages consistent and full participation at these group practice sessions. He once said that 75% of a student's connection to him is made through participating in the Sunday sittings and nyinthuns.
- It may be helpful at this point to go over the shrine room etiquette. This is posted in the post-meditation hall area of the center.
- After completing the Sangha Ceremony, students are welcome to come to the bimonthly tsoks at their local MSB center (even without having received the empowerment). Students who attend tsoks should purchase the MSB Tsok Manual available through our Texts/Liturgy department.

SPR DISCUSSION TOPIC #5

TOPIC:

- Service to the Sangha

POSSIBLE DISCUSSION SUBJECTS:

- What is the value of offering my time and service to the Sangha?
- How do I find out about current Sangha service opportunities?
- How can I offer my service to the Sangha if I don't live close to an MSB center?

SPR BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- Encourage students to participate in work weekends at their local centers. If they live out of town, there are still many other ways to serve, such as transcribing talks.
- There is a Help Wanted section at the bottom of the webpage on the MSB Member Site under the Service subsection at:
<http://www.mangalashribhuti.org/html/member/service.html>
- Students can always contact event coordinators to find out how to help at events.
- Rinpoche once said, “Ask not how the Sangha can serve you, but how you can serve the Sangha.”

SPR DISCUSSION TOPIC #6

TOPIC:

- Refuge and Bodhisattva Vows

POSSIBLE DISCUSSION SUBJECTS:

- What is the significance of taking refuge and bodhisattva vows?
- I already took refuge and bodhisattva vows with another teacher. Do I need to take them again with Rinpoche if I wish to become a formal student?
- When are the refuge and bodhisattva vows offered?

SPR BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- Vows are offered at specific MSB events. Currently, they are offered at the beginning of NSS and at the end of the Mahayana Seminar in Vermont. Contact the event coordinator for more information on participating in these vows.
- If the person has already taken the vows and received names from another Tibetan Buddhist teacher of an authentic lineage, there is no need to receive new names from Rinpoche.
- Students should take Refuge and Bodhisattva Vows at some point, either from Rinpoche or another authentic teacher.
- Students can read the corresponding sections in *Like a Diamond* for more background on the meaning of the vows.
- The suggested conduct to adopt and abandon after taking the Refuge and Bodhisattva Vows is posted in the Supplementary Materials section of the Study and Practice Manual webpage. This document also includes the meal chant.

SPR DISCUSSION TOPIC #7

TOPIC:

- Studying with other Buddhist teachers

POSSIBLE DISCUSSION SUBJECTS:

- I am already part of another Buddhist sangha and do the practices of that tradition. Can I still become a formal MSB student while maintaining my connection to my initial sangha and practices?

- Once I become a formal MSB student, is it okay to study and practice with other Buddhist teachers from other traditions in the future?

SPR BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- Students who have other Buddhist teachers may go through the Sangha Ceremony and become formal MSB students. There is no conflict with having other teachers and doing practices related to other Buddhist lineages, while at the same time being a formal MSB student. However, students should check with their other teacher to see if it's okay from his or her side as well.
- Students may also study and practice with authentic teachers from other lineages later along the path, while simultaneously keeping the commitments of being an MSB student.

SPR DISCUSSION TOPIC #8

TOPIC:

- Commitments, responsibilities, and characteristics of a formal MSB student

POSSIBLE DISCUSSION SUBJECTS:

- Will I be expected to pay dues once I become a formal student?
- Why do sangha members bow to one another?
- Is it important to have a lot of personal time with Rinpoche?
- How do I strengthen my connection to Rinpoche if I only see him at programs?
- What are practice records?
- What are shabten practices?

SPR BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- In 1994, Rinpoche instructed the MSB Sangha to bow to one another as a way of honoring each others' "light side," as opposed to their dark side. The bow should be done as an initial greeting to another Sangha person, but does not need to be done again to the same person that same day.
- Inform the student about the importance of paying the monthly dues and the positive effects of relating with this. Also, discuss the option of giving to Rinpoche's living fund, retreat fund, and dana offerings.
- Introduce the MSB Practice, Study, and Service Records and the process of filling them out and turning them in each month. These records can be downloaded on the Study and Practice Website. (Rinpoche has emphasized many times that everyone should consistently turn in these records.)
- Students are encouraged to cultivate a relationship with the sangha through service and practice as a means to be "close" to Rinpoche, rather than trying to get close to him through seeking special one-on-one attention.

SPR DISCUSSION TOPIC #9

TOPIC:

- Phases of MSB Practice

POSSIBLE DISCUSSION SUBJECTS:

- What are the phases of practice in MSB?
- Does Rinpoche expect me to go through all the phases of practice?

SPR BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- The phases of practice include: shamatha/four immeasurables, Sessions, Post-Session, Lojong, Ngondro, Sadhana, and Dzogchen
- Students may choose to continue to do the lojong practice and then may have the opportunity to enter into the Dzogchen phase at some point. Alternatively, students may do the ngondro and then sadhana phases of practice after the lojong phase and then possibly enter into the Dzogchen phase. More information about this will be provided when they get to the lojong phase of practice.
- Rinpoche does not want to put any pressure on students to complete each phase of practice. He is content if a student chooses to stay at a particular phase his or her entire life. Each phase is a complete practice in and of itself. Rinpoche strongly emphasizes this point.

APPENDIX I: MSB General Information Letter

Dear Friend,

Thank you for expressing an interest in our organization. We warmly welcome you to take advantage of the following study and practice opportunities that Mangala Shri Bhuti offers to the general public:

- ❖ Learn more about Mangala Shri Bhuti at our website <http://www.mangalashribhuti.org/>
- ❖ Read books by Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche: *It's Up to You: The Practice of Self-Reflection on the Buddhist Path* (Shambhala Publications), *Light Comes Through: Buddhist Teachings on Awakening to Our Natural Intelligence* (Shambhala Publications), *Uncommon Happiness* (Rangjung Yeshe Publications), *Like a Diamond: Transformation in the Three Yanas* (Palri Editions). Visit the Books webpage on the Mangala Shri Bhuti website for ordering information.
- ❖ Purchase a copy of our newsletter, *The Crucial Point*, on our website at the Store webpage.
- ❖ Visit the Listen webpage on the MSB website. Download talks given by Rinpoche on introductory Buddhist topics and register to listen to live talks given by Rinpoche and senior MSB students each Sunday. These study opportunities are available free of charge.
- ❖ Receive guidance and support from a Study and Practice Representative (SPR). SPRs are practitioners who serve as mentors for new students entering the MSB Sangha. They support students to learn the foundational Four Immeasurables meditation and are available to discuss general questions that a prospective student might have about Tibetan Buddhism or MSB. SPRs are not necessarily experts with all the answers, but they are capable of providing friendly support by sharing their present understanding of the practice, teachings, and organization. For more information about how to contact an SPR, contact Bob Reid at khenchungbob@mangalashribhuti.org
- ❖ Purchase recommended audio recordings by Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche available at the MSB online store.
- ❖ Attend public teachings and practice programs. Rinpoche teaches three programs a year at our center in Colorado and two at our center in Vermont. He also teaches widely in the US and abroad. The program schedule is listed on our website, or you can request to be on our mailing list.

- ❖ If you live close to one of the centers in Vermont or Colorado, attend the regular group practices and work weekends. We also have newly formed sangha groups in New York, Northern California, and Montreal. For more details and contact information, please visit the Centers webpage on the MSB website.
- ❖ If you would like to be part of our email distribution list for announcements related to our organization, please contact Moni Banerjee at msbsecretary@mangalashribhuti.org.
- ❖ Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche asks that one fully engage in the activities listed above for approximately one year before formally requesting to become a student and member of Mangala Shri Bhuti. The purpose of this exploratory period is to become better informed about one's own path and the path of MSB before making a more serious commitment.
- ❖ Resources
 - MSB Homepage - <http://www.mangalashribhuti.org/>
 - Books - <http://www.mangalashribhuti.org/html/book/index.html>
 - Store - <http://www.mangalashribhuti.org/html/store/index.html>
 - Listen - <http://www.mangalashribhuti.org/html/listen/index.html>

We hope that our organization can serve to support your spiritual path.

Yours in the Dharma,
Mangala Shri Bhuti Study & Practice

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APPENDIX II

SHAMATHA MEDITATION ON THE FOUR IMMEASURABLES

The following is an outline of the shamatha meditation on the four immeasurables. The Scenarios recording referred to in this outline is a guided meditation given by the Ven. Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche. This audio recording and a transcript of it can be downloaded free of charge on the Listen section of the MSB Website at <http://www.mangalashribhuti.org/> Please contact us at khenchungbob@mangalashribhuti.org if you would like any further support with this meditation practice.

I. Preliminaries

- A. Arouse a clear intention to engage in the meditation session in order to be of benefit to all living beings.
- B. (Optional) Recite the following:

REFUGE AND BODHICITTA

In the Buddha, the Dharma and the Supreme Assembly
I take refuge until enlightenment.
By the merit of generosity and so forth,
May I attain buddhahood for the welfare of all beings.
(recite three times)

FOUR IMMEASURABLES

May all sentient beings enjoy happiness and the root of happiness.
May they be free from suffering and the root of suffering.
May they not be separated from the great happiness devoid of suffering.
May they dwell in the great equanimity free from passion, aggression, and prejudice.
(recite three times)

II. Count 21 Breaths

- A. Start the session by listening to the shamatha section of the Scenarios recording, which focuses on counting one's breath 21 times in order to calm one's mind.
- B. Whether or not one listens to the recording, it is essential to calm one's mind by counting the breath before moving on to the four immeasurables practice.

III. Four Immeasurables Contemplations

- A. The four immeasurables are equanimity, loving-kindness, compassion, and sympathetic joy.
- B. Listen to as much or as little of the Scenarios recording as time allows.
- C. You may pick up where you left off in the recording during your next meditation session.

- D. Listen to the four immeasurables section of the Scenarios recording at least ten times before practicing without the recording.
- E. After meditating with the recording ten times, generate your own mentally created “scenarios” to sequentially evoke each of the four immeasurables in your mind.
- F. If you are contemplating all four immeasurables in a single session, it is traditional to start with equanimity.

IV. Aspiration Bodhicitta

- A. Listen to the section of the recording about giving birth to aspiration bodhicitta.
- B. Whether or not one listens to the recording, it is always important to end each session by giving birth to aspiration bodhicitta as instructed in the recording.

V. Conclusion

- A. Mentally dedicate the merit of your meditation session for the benefit of all beings.
- B. (Optional) Recite the following:

DEDICATION OF MERIT

By this merit, may all attain omniscience,
 May it defeat the enemy, wrongdoing,
 From the stormy waves of birth, old age, sickness and death,
 From the ocean of samsara, may I free all beings.
(recite once)

Emulating the heroes Manjushri,
 Samantabhadra and all those with knowledge,
 I too make a perfect dedication
 Of all actions that are positive.
(recite three times)

APPENDIX III: Scenarios Guided Meditation Transcript

A GUIDED MEDITATION ON RELATIVE BODHCITTA

The following is an edited transcript of one of two guided meditations from the Guided Meditations on Relative Bodhicitta CD. If you would like to order this CD, please visit our online recording store. The audio files of the Scenarios Guided Meditation are also available for free download on the Listen page of the Mangala Shri Bhuti website.

Shamatha means a calm abiding state without hindrances. The mind and the body are in this state, and the body is restful.

Most of you have probably experienced this state, so when you practice shamatha, you know you're not just searching through an ocean for some jewel that doesn't exist. That's important. The point of this guided meditation is to get to the shamatha state. Of course, this meditation has to be practiced over and over again, but from the beginning, based on your experience, you will know roughly how to get there.

Sit up straight. If you can sit in a full lotus like the Buddha under the bodhi tree, or in a half lotus, that is good. But what's more important is keeping your spine very erect. Sitting on a cushion can be helpful. You can join your hands on your lap, or, as in the Dzogchen lineage, put your palms on your knees. Keep your shoulders balanced and relaxed—not pulled back too far, and not too crunched in.

For the gaze, with eyes partly closed, look downward about two meters in front of you. You can breathe through your nostrils or your mouth. Your head is a little bit down, with your chin closer to your neck. Curl your tongue and rest it against the back of your upper teeth. Or, if that's too difficult, just leave your tongue as it is.

Breathe very naturally. Don't breathe too hard, or too shallowly; and don't hold your breath. If your breath is not natural, it's important to make it so.

That is the physical posture. Every detail of the posture is significant. They all help clear the energy in the body and calm the mind. So let's first get the posture right.

If there is tension anywhere in your body, instead of trying to fix it, bring your mind there. Relax and let go of the tension with your out-breath. All tensions in the body are created by wind moving through. Bring your mind there, bring your awareness there, and let go of the tension when you exhale. Soon, you'll realize the tension is gone, unless it's a big tension. But even a big tension can be resolved, if you work this way, over and over.

Once you are comfortable in your body and feel that you are settling, start to count your breaths. Count up to 21, counting each out-breath and in-breath together as one. You can count with your fingers on each knee: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. Do two rounds of ten, and for the final number use your pinkie again.

Now don't move. Just be there. Check your mind. Is it calmer? Is it in the calm abiding state? Check your body. Is it in the calm abiding posture? If it's still not fully there, you can go back to counting.

THE FOUR IMMEASURABLES

*May all sentient beings enjoy happiness and the root of happiness,
May they be free from suffering and the root of suffering,
May they not be separated from the great happiness devoid of suffering.
May they dwell in the great equanimity free from passion, aggression, and prejudice.*

1: EQUANIMITY

Now close your eyes. And think, "I'm going to develop a mind of limitless equanimity."

Bring up someone you have resentment, anger, or judgments toward. With an exhale, let go of those feelings.

Then bring up another person toward whom you have neither aggression nor attachment. Make these two people equal in your mind, with no aggression or attachment to either.

Then bring up someone for whom you have a lot of love and care, but also a lot of attachment. With your out-breath, let go of the attachment. Let go of what tugs on your heart. Just keep your love and care. Love is a feeling of tender heart, tender connection. Care is similar, but with an emphasis on having that person's best interest in your mind.

Now create this scene in your mind. You have a father, a mother, and a sworn enemy who's about to kill you. According to this script, get the image as clear as possible in your mind. Reflect on the script, the storyline. You are the director and you are in the movie.

Reflect upon your relation to your father, to your mother, and to the sworn enemy who's about to kill you. Feel the emotions of love, care, and attachment to your parents. Feel the fear, anger, and aggression toward your sworn enemy who's threatening your life. Then dissolve the scene and immediately create a new one.

Now you are sitting on a porch holding your baby on your lap. A dog is coveting a fish that you are eating. You give it a piece of fish, but it wants more. You feel irritated. You kick the dog and say, "Shoo! Go away!" Your child is crying. You rock your child and try to breastfeed as you eat. The dog won't go away, which makes you more and more angry. Your child keeps crying. You feel your heart going toward your child's need, as you breastfeed and rock to calm the child down. And you are trying to finish your lunch. Create this scene vividly, reflecting on the script.

Then, all of a sudden, you realize the fish you are eating is your previous life's father. The dog you are kicking is your previous life's mother. The child you are holding is your previous life's sworn enemy, who killed you.

Look at your relations to these beings and your feelings toward them. See how they have changed from one lifetime to another. See how there is no basis for any of the solid feelings you have toward enemies and loved ones, no basis for all your attachment and hatred.

Then come back to the people of your present life from the first contemplation: the person you resented, the neutral person, and your loved one. With your out-breath, let go of your attachments to your loved one even more. Keep just the tender love and care.

Then try to bring that tender love and care to the neutral person, reflecting on how he or she has been similarly dear to you in past lives.

Then think that the person toward whom you've had resentment, anger, and judgments, has also been, in many lifetimes, a dear loved one. So why not spread your love and care to this person?

If you are struggling, know that you are just struggling with your mind. Know that this mind, which is struggling to hold on, is the cause of all your suffering. So put more effort into working with your mind.

If you can extend your tender love and care to these three people equally, then spread it even more, extend it to all sentient beings. Spread it out limitlessly, like the limitless sky. Extend it to all beings that live. And then stay there, with the calm abiding feeling of equanimity, and with the tender love and care.

Now check your mind. Compare it to how it was before. Is it more clear, alert, and calm? If it is more clear, alert, and calm, where does that come from? It comes from your concentration, your practice of shamatha with the four immeasurables as the object. Concentration on the script and the scene unfolds your mind. Make a note of your mental state.

2: *LOVING-KINDNESS*

Then think, "Now I am going to practice loving-kindness." Create another scene. This time you are living in a city like New York. You have your father, your mother, your wife or husband, your children, and your close brothers and sisters living nearby you. Get that scene clear in your mind. Work on the script to make the scene clear and vivid.

Then reflect in your mind what happens to your father, to your mother, to your husband or wife; what happens to your children, to your close brothers and sisters, to your relatives and friends. Reflect on how what happens to them concerns you. If something good happens to them, you are happy. If something bad happens to them, you are sad, pained. Reflect on how in your daily life you wish your children to be happy; you do everything you can to make them happy. Reflect on how you want your spouse to be happy; you want all the causes and conditions for your spouse to be happy. You go through your whole day trying to cater to your loved ones' happiness. Reflect on how you want your parents to be happy; how you want your brothers and sisters to be happy; how you want your friends and relatives to be happy. You cater to their happiness, doing anything you can to bring about the right causes and conditions.

This is called loving-kindness. It is not attachment, because attachment is to yourself more than to them. Loving-kindness is just focused on them. Realize how one is clean, while the other is not.

Then reflect on your own desire for happiness. That desire is always there. The search for the causes and conditions to fulfill your happiness is always there. This desire for happiness and its causes and conditions is what you naturally extend to your loved ones.

Now think about how all the people in New York have that desire for happiness and are searching for its causes and conditions. At first, you can exclude your enemies and the people you dislike. Think about all the people running around on the street and riding the subways—the New Yorkers, the tourists, everyone. Embrace their wish to be happy as your wish. Embrace their search as your search.

Extend that loving-kindness, which you already know how to extend to your loved ones, to all the people in New York. For the time being, you can exclude your enemies from this wish, unless you don't need to.

Extend that loving-kindness to all the people in New York. Feel their wish and search for happiness as deeply as you feel your own. Feel how their wish is always there. Feel how much they are struggling in their search for happiness.

Create scenarios about how much they are struggling. Create realistic scenarios about their search for happiness. Whenever they move their body even one inch, it is in search of happiness. Think about how early they have to get up, how late they have to go to bed. Think about how hard they work, all through the day, for that happiness. Feel their struggle in search of happiness.

Wish them to have the happiness they are searching for. Imagine how happy they would be if they could fulfill their happiness. Imagine how happy you would be, as a witness to their struggle. Imagine how much relief you would feel if they found that happiness.

That is your natural loving-kindness. Embrace that, and wish all of them to be happy, and to have the causes and conditions of happiness that they are searching and struggling for.

Now extend that wish, those warm, kind feelings, to all the people in New York, and include those you dislike. Try to extend it to those who have caused you harm and pain. Reflect on how this is all due to karma, which always changes. Reflect on how your enemies were once no different from the people you think of as neutral, or from your close ones. They have also been close to you. So work specifically on being kind to them. Devote some time to working on your mind specifically to be kind to them. Reflect on the equanimity scenario.

Why do we feel resentment or anger? It is because we are hurt. Can hurt or pain come about without our own karmic involvement, either in this life or the last life? No. So take responsibility for your karma, and in exchange for your pain, extend loving-kindness. Work on the pain, work on the aggression, work on the judgment, let go of them when you exhale.

Make any thoughts going toward your enemies be kind. Think, "May they find their happiness, may they find their sources of happiness." Work to have kind thoughts, kind feelings, a kind heart toward all the people of New York, including the ones you didn't use to have these thoughts about.

Realize how all beings in samsara, in the universe, have this longing to be happy. They are all searching for happiness. So extend thoughts and feelings of loving-kindness toward all beings, limitless as space. Even though you cannot count all the beings, extend to all them.

Then let go of conceptual thought. Just be with your state of mind. See where your mind is now, how it is calmer, clearer. You have not only more peace in your mind, but a deeper, more tender heart. Know that that comes from your shamatha practice of the four immeasurables.

3: COMPASSION

Then think, "Now I'm going to meditate on compassion." Take pleasure in your mind. Enjoy what you are doing with your mind. And then create another scenario.

You are wherever you are, say Los Angeles. You have parents, a spouse, children, friends. Somehow your child has gone down the wrong path. Your

child has gotten into drugs and gangs; has come under the influence of negative friends; has committed a crime against other people; is in prison. Your child is about to receive capital punishment.

Your heart goes out so much to your child. You feel so much compassion. Feel how you would want to save your child from such punishment. You would do anything to find a solution, so that your child would not be executed. How would you feel in the day, how would you feel at night? To whom would you plead? Whom would you solicit?

Though this scenario is not real for you, it does happen, and it is real for those it happens to. Putting yourself in their shoes makes you feel so compassionate, so concerned, so deeply wanting to save the child, willing to do anything.

Realize this is your mind, your compassionate mind. Recognize the compassionate potential within you. Compassionate mind can manifest in you. Then go back to the scenario.

Forget that you are here imagining. Be as if you are there. Feel all the emotions. The time is coming closer. You feel tremendous compassion as the time approaches. Day and night you think about how to save your child. What can you do? Are you angry? Who can you get angry with? Can you get angry with the law, the legislators, the child himself or herself? Can you get angry with the friends, with yourself? Who can you get angry with, and what is the point of getting angry?

So you can only feel tremendous compassion, which is your heart going to the pain about to be inflicted on your child. You imagine what your child must be going through, and you go through it as well. You feel vulnerable, but still look for any possible ways to save your child.

You are willing to sacrifice anything. If you could sell your house and save your child, you would be willing. If you could sell your car and save your child, willing. If you could use all your savings and save your child, willing. Look at your mind, willing to do so much out of compassion. Because of compassion, your mind is not tight, but very generous. If you have to smile, you will smile. If you have to plead, you will plead. If you have to do anything, you will do it, because of the urgency to save your child.

Now dissolve that scene. Create a scene of animals being lined up to be slaughtered right in front of you. They can't run, they can't escape. They have no control over their life. They can't say what they like or what they don't like. They are about to be slaughtered for food, for clothing, for their bones.

These animals don't want to suffer. They go through all their suffering just as your child does. So why not have the same compassion?

In this way, generate compassion toward all the animals who are about to be slaughtered. Today alone, how many chickens will get their heads chopped off? Think about that and extend your compassion toward them. Wish them to be free. Wish them to be free from any karma they have created.

Think about all the pigs in the world that will be killed just today. Wish them to be free. Wish them to be free from such suffering, and from the causes of suffering that they have created. Think about all the cows and bulls that will be slaughtered just today. Extend your compassion to them. Wish them to be free from suffering and the karma of suffering. Think about all the lambs, sheep, and

goats that will be slaughtered today. Extend your compassion to them and wish them to be free from suffering and the karma of suffering.

Think about all the seafood that, today alone, will be caught and consumed. In their wish to be free from suffering, these creatures are no different from your own child. Wish them to be free from suffering and the karma of suffering.

Be willing to at least practice compassion. At least plead to the buddhas and bodhisattvas to come to these animals' aid. Solicit anyone who has any power to come and help them. Dedicate all your merit on their behalf. Vow to dedicate all your merit to empty the suffering of samsara.

Then go to all the different realms at your leisure. In a similar way, reflect on the sufferings there, and extend your compassion to those beings: in the hell realm, the hungry ghost realm, the human realm, the asura realm, and the god realm. Beyond these, in the form realm and the formless realm, there are the suffering of change and the suffering of everything composite. So extend compassion to all beings and wish them to be free from all suffering. Wish that their karma to be caught in the circle of existence come to an end.

Wish that the suffering of samsara come to an end for each and every being. Plead to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas. Solicit all virtuous beings to have compassion. Dedicate all the merit you have accumulated or will accumulate, in the past, present, and future, on the behalf of beings.

And then let go of the conceptual mind and just rest. Reflect upon your mind. See how it has become awake, agile. See how your heart, which was previously hard as a rock, has become soft, tender, moist with compassion.

This is your compassionate mind. This mind comes from the practice of shamatha on immeasurable compassion. Do not mistake this for suffering. This compassion ends all your suffering and all the suffering of beings. It is the seed of Buddhahood. A single teardrop falling from your eye purifies many lifetimes of negativity. So don't be afraid to cry on behalf of these beings.

This time you are crying for beings. In all our past lifetimes, every time we have cried, we have cried for ourselves. This time, the tears are the same, but their source is different. We have cried so much for ourselves, that if we gathered all our tears, they would be equal to an ocean. But there has been no benefit. A single teardrop from this kind of compassionate cry purifies so much of our wrongdoing. So be happy that you have the compassionate mind. And then rest again.

4: SYMPATHETIC JOY

Then think, "Now I am going to meditate on sympathetic joy." Create a scenario of immense suffering in samsara, the kind of suffering that we all experience cycling through the six realms.

Create a scenario of two people suffering in the environment of hell. They are pulling a big cart full of heavy objects by straps tied to their foreheads. The person on the right thinks, "Since we both have to be here and suffer pulling this big load on our foreheads, why don't I do it alone?" So he asks Yama, "May I pull this alone and give my friend a break?" And Yama says, "All beings suffer for their own karma. No one can take another's karma." Yama smacks that person's head, and he becomes free from hell.

That person in hell was the Buddha, our own Buddha. That was the first time the altruistic mind was born in his heart. From that point, he went through five hundred negative lifetimes and five hundred positive lifetimes as he practiced the six paramitas and perfected the Bodhisattvayana path. In the end, under the bodhi tree, he became enlightened; he became free from the suffering of samsara and the circle of existence. And then, like the sun, he illuminated the world, where there is so much ignorance, by his wisdom.

So rejoice in his freedom. Rejoice in his enlightenment and the causes of his enlightenment. Rejoice in all the benefit that he brings to the world.

Rejoice in the similar altruistic mind of all the bodhisattvas. Rejoice in their purification of the obscurations of samsaric mind, and in the freedom and qualities that they have gained. Rejoice in the shravaka arhats' and the pratyekabuddhas' abandonment of samsara. Rejoice in their cessation of samsara and its causes, and in the peace and bliss of their state of mind. Realize that somebody has done this. So why not rejoice as if it were your own accomplishment?

In samsara there is no ultimate happiness and freedom. You shouldn't think that there is when there isn't. Nonetheless, you can understand that what's not your cup of tea could be someone else's. You can serve a cup of tea the way someone else likes it, as long as there is no harm.

So rejoice in any kind of freedom or happiness that beings in samsara have. Rejoice in the happiness of Brahma, Indra, the gods and goddesses. Rejoice in the happiness of human beings who have wealth, leisure, food, housing, clothing, name, fame, power, family, children, good physique, talent, reputation, glory. Rejoice fully in anyone in samsara who has anything positive, that they enjoy as their cup of tea. Wish to serve by dedicating yourself to the welfare of all beings in samsara, and to bringing them out of samsara.

Rejoice without any hesitations, jealousy, or competitive mind. Samsara is so full of suffering, so if anyone gains any freedom or happiness, why not rejoice, even if it's within samsara and the realm of delusion? You don't want to be caught in that delusion, but you can still see what is a cup of tea for others and rejoice in serving that. You want to be a spiritual person who realizes delusion is delusion and obtains the state of natural nirvana. Yet one who prefers hot water to espresso can still serve espresso to those who enjoy it.

So with this attitude, rejoice in anyone in samsara who has any freedom or happiness by any means. Wish them to have more and more; never decreasing, always increasing. And then wish them to be ultimately free from the suffering of samsara.

Then let go of your contemplations. Come back to your state of mind and see whether it is happy, gay. Know that this happy state comes from your vicarious satisfaction in what others have. This is the true state of happy, gay mind. It is the cleanest state of mind. You can always maintain this by practicing sympathetic joy, taking vicarious satisfaction in others' happiness and freedom.

Know that all these capacities are in your mind. Your mind has the capacity to concentrate. You can visualize the scene, which is called *nampa*. In your mind, you can run through a script, which is called *migpa*. *Nampa*, *migpa*, and concentration (*tsechik*) make the shamatha, or *shiné*, practice come out of your mind.

If you have the obstacle of having a wild mind and going off, you have to bring your mind back. If your obstacle is sleepiness and not being able to keep up, you have to keep up by doing it. But if you keep practicing, then most of the time, you will have no obstacles. If you concentrate on the scenes and the script, and work with the states of wildness (*gōpa*) and dullness (*chingwa*), the capacity of shiné will naturally be there.

And now, having practiced shamatha based on the four immeasurables, we must give birth to aspiration bodhicitta. To do so, recite these lines three times:

*Just as all the buddhas of the past
Embraced the awakened attitude of mind,
And in the precepts of the bodhisattvas
Step by step abode and trained,*

*Just so, and for the benefit of beings,
I will also have this attitude of mind,
And in those precepts, step by step,
I will abide and train myself.*

Now close your eyes and make a genuine wish to be enlightened like the Buddha Shakyamuni, to save all beings from the suffering of samsara, and bring them to their own state of enlightenment.

That is the instruction on the shamatha practice.

APPENDIX IV: New Student Letter

Dear Friend,

We warmly welcome you to Mangala Shri Bhuti. The decision to study under a teacher and to join a sangha is a significant step on the Buddhist path. In order to facilitate this process for new students, we have written this letter to provide some background information and to answer a number of questions that naturally arise. Please read it thoroughly and reflect on the points covered.

1. What is involved in the process of becoming a formal student of Dzigar Kongtrül Rinpoche and a member of Mangala Shri Bhuti?
2. What is the culture of Mangala Shri Bhuti and how do I explore it?
3. What is the *Ceremony of Becoming a Student of the Mangala Shri Bhuti Lineage*?
4. What is the Mangala Shri Bhuti Sangha Manual?
5. What are the three approaches to being a student?

BECOMING A FORMAL STUDENT

The first step in becoming a formal student and member of Mangala Shri Bhuti is to make a request to Rinpoche, which you have already done. Upon receiving Rinpoche's acceptance, you are eligible to participate in the *Ceremony of Becoming a Student of the Mangala Shri Bhuti Lineage* (also referred to as the *Sangha Ceremony*), which marks your formal commitment to Rinpoche, this lineage and to the path.

We wish to inform you that there is no pressure to make this step from Rinpoche's side or anywhere else in the organization, and certainly there would be no point in doing it simply to fulfill a sense of membership or inclusion. Longing, appreciation, and devotion have always carried practitioners forward on their paths, and it is the same case now with your decision. After you arrive at a clear and informed conclusion that this is the right step for you, please ask Rebecca Zepp about when the next Sangha Ceremony will take place and how to prepare.

THE CULTURE OF MANGALA SHRI BHUTI

When we speak of the culture of MSB, it concerns three interrelated parts: study, practice, and service. Together these provide unlimited ways for students to connect with the vision of this lineage and mature on the path.

Study sharpens the mind of the student, enriching his or her path with an educated, non-judgmental intelligence. Attending programs, such as the Nyingma Summer Seminar and Shedra, supports the development of this non-judgmental intelligence and insightful self-

reflection. With Rinpoche's guidance, we've created Recommended Teaching Sets on MP3 CD that offer a basic introduction to the view and practice of the Buddhadharma. You will find a list of required and recommended recordings at the end of this letter.

Through the *practice* of the Longchen Nyingtik cycle of teachings, we connect to the heart of this lineage. Attending weekly Sunday sitting at a local center forms the basis of this connection, in addition to your personal daily practice. Hopefully, you've already had the chance to establish a relationship with a Study and Practice Representative (SPR) and receive training in the Four Immeasurables meditation. If you are unfamiliar with the SPR support system or do not have an SPR, please see the "Resources" section of this letter to find out more about SPRs. Once you participate in the Sangha Ceremony, you can request the Sessions teachings from Rinpoche. After receiving these teachings, you should choose a meditation instructor from a list of available people in your area. Your relationship with an MI serves to further support your study and practice.

Service provides an opportunity to shift our care from our habitual focus on the self to a larger vision. When we work to support that which has benefited and continues to benefit all of us, we extend the appreciation we have for the teacher, the teachings, and the sangha toward others. Volunteering and helping in the many different activities of Mangala Shri Bhuti is an essential means of service. Please visit the Service webpage on the Community section of the MSB Member website to learn about our current service opportunities. Contributing to the financial health of MSB through paying dues is another way of expressing a sense of partnership with the community and the vision.

THE CEREMONY OF BECOMING A STUDENT OF THE MANGALA SHRI BHUTI LINEAGE (THE SANGHA CEREMONY)

The Sangha Ceremony takes place once or twice a year. Please contact Rebecca Zepp about the schedule for the ceremonies.

Preparation

You will need the following three things for the Sangha Ceremony.

1. A clear, well-informed intention.
2. A \$500 offering to Mangala Shri Bhuti. This is a traditional offering that takes place in monasteries. For planning purposes, please inform the Treasurer (Polly Banerjee) of your intention to take part in the next Sangha Ceremony, and give her your offering prior to the ceremony itself.
3. A beautiful, long white khata that you will offer to Rinpoche. You will offer this khata and the Sangha Ceremony Request Letter (see Resources section) to Rinpoche during the ceremony.

Mangala Shri Bhuti Sangha Manual

You will receive your personal copy of the Sangha Manual from Rinpoche during the Ceremony. Compiled and written by many of Rinpoche's long-time students, this manual embodies the inherited wisdom of the sangha and contains essential advice on our relationship with the teacher, teachings, practice, and sangha. Please read it thoroughly and integrate it with your practice. As we grow as students, the meaning of the manual's precious advice only deepens.

The Sangha Manual is intended only for those who have been formally accepted as students of Mangala Shri Bhuti. Rinpoche asks that it not be shown or lent to others or copied in any way. The purpose and description of the Sangha Manual can be found at the end of this letter in Rinpoche's *Preface to the Sangha Manual*.

The Three Approaches to Being a Student

Rinpoche has outlined three approaches to being a student within MSB. These approaches or categories reflect general trends Rinpoche has observed in how people relate to being part of the sangha. He has formalized these approaches so that students may self-reflect and gain greater clarity about their paths. If we are not clear about our aspirations we may feel that our relationship with the sangha is imposed upon us from the outside or that we are simply following along without a sense of purpose. The clarity these approaches provide is not limited to incoming students. They provide an overall framework in which we assess our path, and we are free to move from one approach to another. The point of this framework is nothing other than to put our path into our own hands.

1. The first approach corresponds to students who have studied or wish to study under Rinpoche's guidance from the start of their path and be an integral part of the Mangala Shri Bhuti sangha. This means that they actively participate in sangha events and programs, pay dues, aspire to follow the cycle of teachings passed down by Rinpoche, and have an openness and enthusiasm to work within the Mangala Shri Bhuti culture. These students must have an essential understanding that this culture or structure has been put into place to provide the opportunity for them to further their studies and practice. Through understanding how this structure can bring benefit to themselves and others, this category of student naturally has a desire to support it.
2. The second approach corresponds to students who have come from another sangha or teacher, yet are interested in studying with Rinpoche, following the cycle of teachings, engaging in the sangha, paying dues and so on in the manner of the first group. Rinpoche has described these students as "Rimé students." However, in order to enter into the Mangala Shri Bhuti sangha in a way that can fully benefit them, Rinpoche asks that these students maintain a strong, resolved, and clear relationship with their other sangha and teacher. Specifically, they should work out whatever challenges, if any, they have with the other sangha or teacher in order to avoid repeating them again in this new situation. Rinpoche also asks that these students not attempt to juggle two separate situations in order to avoid having to deeply commit to either one.

3. The third approach addresses students who desire to come to some or all of MSB's public teachings but who do not wish to commit to follow the entire cycle of teachings, participate actively in the sangha, pay dues and so forth. Rinpoche emphasizes that these students are more than welcome to study and practice with MSB and should not feel any pressure to commit further.

Again, these definitions are not static. If someone in the first two categories should, for any reason, decide to pull back from the requirements previously mentioned, they are more than welcome to make that change. By the same token, a person in the third category is always invited to join further with the sangha by requesting to enter into either the first or second category, depending on their individual circumstances. No judgment will be made on an individual's choice, as all these structures have been put in place only to support the decisions that each student feels best support his or her path. If our path were not ultimately in our own hands, then in whose hands would it be?

We hope this letter is helpful and informative.

Yours in the Dharma,

The Mangala Shri Bhuti Administration

RESOURCES

MEMBERS AREA

One of the most effective ways to educate oneself about the MSB Sangha is to read the webpages on the MSB member website at: <http://www.mangalashribhuti.org/members/> and to contact the MSB secretary, Moni Banerjee, in order to be added to the MSB member mailing list. MSB Sangha announcements can be viewed on the member website, and it's highly encouraged to check this page on a regular basis. You can also access the member website from our home page by clicking on the "Members" link. Enter the password *wisdom* when prompted.

STUDY AND PRACTICE REPRESENTATIVES

Well before participating in the Sangha Ceremony, it is vital that one has a firmly established relationship with a Study and Practice Representative (SPR). SPRs are practitioners experienced with the practice of the four immeasurables meditation, who serve as mentors for new students entering the Mangala Shri Bhuti Sangha. The main responsibilities of the SPRs include supporting students to learn the basic meditation that focuses on the four immeasurables, and being available to discuss general questions about Tibetan Buddhism and MSB. SPRs are not necessarily experts with all the answers, but are people who provide friendly support by sharing their own present understanding of the practice, teachings and organization. To establish a relationship with an SPR, select a person from the listing that is available online at:

http://www.mangalashribhuti.org/html/study_practice/studypractice.html

Simply contact the person, introduce yourself, and request the person to be your SPR. we recommend that you choose an SPR from your local area so that you can meet in person. Please contact Bob Reid at khenchungbob@mangalashribhuti.org if you have any questions about this process.

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Our aspiration is to reach 100% participation in monthly dues. The suggested monthly amount is \$50 per student. If you are unable to offer that amount, please donate any amount possible.

How to pay dues:

- ❖ Mail check to MSB, PO Box 4088, Boulder, CO 80306
- ❖ ACH automatic withdrawal, send email to treasurer@mangalashribhuti.org
- ❖ Credit card – email credit card number, exp date, and amount to treasurer@mangalashribhuti.org
- ❖ Online via the Support MSB webpage on the MSB website, http://www.mangalashribhuti.org/html/support_msb/index.html

RECOMMENDED TEACHINGS on MP3 CD

These teachings sets are available from our website: www.mangalashribhuti.org.

Bodhicitta: Guided Meditations on Relative and Absolute Bodhicitta

Includes the relative bodhicitta meditations on the four immeasurables (mentioned above) as well as five absolute bodhicitta meditations: one on Egolessness of Self (to be used just before the Sessions teachings), and four on Egolessness of Phenomena (for post-sessions students). In DigiPak packaging. Price \$20. 1 MP3 CD.

Note: This teaching is required for students planning to participate in the Sangha Ceremony.

Recommended Set I

Exposing Shenpa

Guiltlessness in Dharma Practice

Guided Meditations (Four Immeasurables and Bodhicitta)

Nyingma Summer Seminar 2005

Bodhisattvacharyavatara Chapters 1 - 6 (Rangjung Yeshe Gomde, 2005)

7 MP3 CDs - \$125

Recommended Set II: Garbha

Lojong: Seven Points of Mind Training (Vajradhara Gompa, 2001)

Lenchak (a collection of six talks)

Patience: Bodhisattvacharyavatara Chapter 6 (Lotus Garden, 2006)

Essential Buddhist Topics 2006: The Four Marks of Existence

Wisdom that Penetrates Modern Culture

Understanding Mind's True Quest

6 MP3 CDs - Price \$125

Recommended Set III: Prajna

Madhyamika: Open Door to Emptiness (Vajradhara Gompa, 2003)

Wisdom: Bodhisattvacharyavatara Chapter 9 (Rangjung Yeshe Gomde, 2007)

How to Progress on the Spiritual Path in Modern Times

Bodhisattvacharyavatara Chapters 1 - 5 (Lotus Garden, 2006)

5 MP3 CDs - Price \$125

SANGHA CEREMONY REQUEST LETTER

Your Eminence,

I would like to request to become a formal student of the Mangala Shri Bhuti Lineage. I understand the responsibilities of acceptance include committing to my daily practice, offering my service to the sangha and the lineage, attending teachings, transmissions, and group practices, and relating to Mangala Shri Bhuti financially by paying dues.

I have made a donation to Mangala Shri Bhuti of \$500 to symbolize my sincerity in requesting to enter as a formal student into this lineage.

MANGALA SHRI BHUTI SANGHA MANUAL PREFACE BY RINPOCHE

The purpose of this manual is to make clear the view and traditions of the Longchen Nyingthik lineage as I have passed them down to the students of Mangala Shri Bhuti. My hope is that students will reflect upon and integrate what is written here, as it represents the mindstream of our lineage.

This manual is the result of the inspiration of several students who have studied under my close guidance for many years. Having studied, contemplated and digested the teachings, they produced this manual in order to clarify, preserve and make them accessible to an ever-growing sangha.

As a teacher I find this manual encouraging. It communicates the teachings in a deep and accurate way. This reflects a clear understanding of the teachings and the ability to articulate them. I am touched by the longing of these students to help others through the Vajrayana Buddhadharma and the initiative and time they took to bring this project to fruition.

I encourage all students of Mangala Shri Bhuti to value this manual highly as it supports my intention and the intention of the lineage. If it is studied and integrated it can serve to keep us on the *same page* and prevent the vision from becoming diluted or watered-down. It can provide a consistent understanding of what we are doing as a Sangha. You should bring your questions and challenges to this manual and, in your own creative manner, try to resolve them. What you present to others should be rooted in this information and reflect its meaning.

In this way, one's view and activities will be in accord with the lineage. No one will merely be doing his or her *own thing*. Conversely, no one will be bound by the *words* of the teachings without understanding them or knowing how to apply them.

This work has given me confidence that the Dharma can be transplanted in the West. I hope it serves its purpose. But, of course, that's up to your own motivation.

Dzigar Kongtrul Jigme Namgyel

Mangala Shri Bhuti Study and Practice – Overview of Programs

Nyingma Summer Seminar

The Nyingma Summer Seminar is a public nine-day study program that introduces the progressive stages of the path, which can be categorized into the three *yanas* or *vehicles*: the Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana. The instructions that fall into these three categories are vast and innumerable and it would be impossible to study all of them in depth. Therefore, it is important that we rely on the teacher's oral instructions and transmissions of the most essential points that characterize each of the three vehicles as they relate to our path and lineage. The Nyingma Summer Seminar provides us with an opportunity to look at the path as a whole and its gradual unfolding. New practitioners gain an overview and older students deepen their understanding. This seminar is also an occasion where students can receive or renew refuge and bodhisattva vows.

Shedra

Although there are students in the West who have practiced the Dharma for many years, Rinpoche has found that Western practitioners, particularly in the Nyingma and Kagyu traditions, lack in-depth knowledge of the Dharma. Therefore, since 2001, Rinpoche has been educating students on a series of classical Buddhist texts in the traditional *shedra* style of training. A shedra is a monastic college of higher learning, with a course of study lasting from ten to thirteen years. Unlike most general Dharma programs, the shedra presents the teachings in much greater depth, using traditional textual structure and terminology. Rinpoche also stresses the importance of learning to explain or articulate the teachings as a way to actively process what we have heard. This is done through debate practice and question and answer sessions. This process helps us identify the weaknesses in our understanding, and see the clarity we have gained through study, producing confidence. The shedra is expected to continue for thirteen years, after which students who have attended all the programs, whether formally acknowledged or not, would possess the full shedra training.

Ngöndro Teachings

Rinpoche bases the entirety of the ngöndro teachings on the text *The Words of My Perfect Teacher* by Patrul Rinpoche. This text is the primary guide to the preliminaries for the *Heart Essence of the Vast Expanse* from the Great Perfection, the Dzogchen Longchen Nyingthik. Rinpoche gives the oral transmission for this text and the practice liturgy as a precursor for undertaking the practice. He strongly encourages the entire sangha to receive this transmission and teaching every year, regardless of our current level of practice. He reminds us that accomplishment in Dharma is like dyeing a red cloth. The first time the cloth is dipped into the dye it takes on a pinkish hue, the next time it becomes a bit more vivid, until finally, after immersing it repeatedly in the dye, the cloth becomes completely red. In the same way, by repeatedly receiving teachings and transmissions on essential topics, particularly on *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*, we become more saturated with the blessings of the lineage. This view of repeated participation is also emphasized for receiving sadhana teachings or other instructions that directly relate to any of the main practices.

Sadhana Teachings

Unlike the other teachings listed above, sadhana teachings are not open to the public. These teachings are restricted to students who have been formally accepted as students of Mangala Shri Bhuti, have either finished their ngöndro accumulations or are close to finishing them, have received the empowerments, and are ready to start the Rigdzin Düpa practice.

Dzogchen Teachings

These teachings are given at Longchen Jigme Samten Ling and require students to remain in retreat for designated periods of time. They are given to those who have finished their sadhana practice and who Rinpoche feels are ready to move further in the Longchen Nyingtik cycle.

Mahayana and Dzogchen Seminars

Rinpoche teaches two programs a year at Pema Osel Do-Ngak Choling in Vermont: the Mahayana Seminar, which focuses on relative and absolute bodhicitta; and the Dzogchen Seminar, which introduces the view of the Great Perfection. Rinpoche also teaches widely in the US and abroad. Students are encouraged to attend these programs whenever possible, as Rinpoche covers core texts, allowing our understanding to blossom further.

Group Practices

Twice a year Rinpoche leads a drupcho, or group offering practice, at Phuntsok Choling. Alongside Rinpoche, we make aspirations for world peace, the flowering of dharma, and the deepening of our individual practice. These are wonderful opportunities to experience the vision of bodhicitta and come together as a sangha, and all students are warmly encouraged to attend. Rinpoche has also begun a yearly Rangjung Pema Nyingthik/Riwo Sangcho retreat at Pema Osel for clearing obstacles, which, again, students are heartily invited to attend whenever possible.