
Monks and Nuns of Kopan Monastery and Khachoe Ghakyil Nunnery

Nuns of Khachoe Ghakyil

Kopan Monastery had its beginnings in the Solu-khumbu region of the Himalayan mountains. In 1971 Lama Zopa Rinpoche, the reincarnation of the Lawudo Lama, a yogi of the tiny hamlet of Lawudo, fulfilled the promise of the previous Lawudo Lama to start a monastic school for the local children. The school was called it Mount Everest Center. Twenty five monks moved down from the mountain to Kopan in 1971 - prompted by the harsh climate at an altitude of 4000 am, which made study barely possible in winter.

Kopan Monastery (foto by Tom Bates)

Khachoe Ghakyil Ling - the Kopan Nunnery

In 1979 Lama Yeshe invited nuns to study at Kopan, an uncommon practice in Tibetan monasteries. There are now 320 nuns, most of whom are Tibetans living in their own monastery nearby, who participate fully with the monks' philosophical studies and debate as well as following their own practices.

The Kopan Monastery

Just north of the ancient Buddhist town of Boudhanath is the Kopan hill (pictured left), rising up out of the terraced fields of the Kathmandu valley and visible for miles. Dominated by a magnificent Bodhi tree, it was once the home of the astrologer to the king of Nepal. It was to this hill that these lamas came with their first Western students in 1969.

Now Kopan is a thriving monastery of 360 monks, mainly from Nepal and Tibet, and a spiritual oasis for hundreds of visitors yearly from around the world. Nearby is Khachoe Ghakyil Ling Nunnery, home to 380 nuns. Both the monastery and the nunnery are under the spiritual guidance of Lama Zopa Rinpoche, and the care of the abbot, Khen Rinpoche Geshe Lhundrup Rigsel. And it is the wellspring of the FPMT, a network of some 140 centers and activities world-wide, themselves expressions of the Buddha activity of Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

All facilities, board, and education at the monastery are totally free for all monks and nuns, to give an opportunity to all those who wish to follow the religious life. This is financed through the program of meditation courses for foreign visitors as well as through a sponsorship scheme in which people who are supportive of the goals of the monastery sponsor the living cost of a monk or nun.

Khen Rinpoche Lama Geshe Lhundrup Rigsel

Lama Geshe Lhundrup Rigsel,
former abbot of Kopan and artist on the Album
"Mantra" by Existence
(foto by Tom Bates)

Rinpoche Lama Lhundrup died recently in the night from 7th to 8th September 2011 of throat cancer.Â

He was a very special person to all who knew him.Â

He served as the Abbot of the Kopan Monastery for 40 years.

He was the teacher and inspiration to Hilary Dirlam, who in turn was a teacher and inspiration to our mixing engineer, Tom Bates.Â

Tom, visited Lama Lhundrup at Kopan a number of times and recorded both the readings of Lama Lhundrup and the chant and song of both Tibetan Nuns and Monks.Â

Tom produced and recorded the readings of Lama Lhundrup in a special CD entitled "Prayers For The Time of

Ways to help:

Make a donation directly to Kopan Monastery at
<http://www.kopan-monastery.com/donations.html>

Visit the Kopan Monastery Shop:
<http://monasteryshop.org>

Nun of Khachoe Ghakyil on Tour

Nunnery of Khachoe Ghakyil

Not surprisingly, once given access to scholastic training, the nuns have shown an intense determination to excel in their studies. They take part in the complete study program alongside their brother monks from Kopan. Their studies include Tibetan and English language, mathematics, philosophy, meditation, debate, rituals, chanting and art, along with other teachings and practice of the Buddha. Their goal is to become qualified Dharma teachers so that they may teach others, and to become economically self-sufficient.

The nuns on tour in British Columbia, by Canadian photographer Martin de Valk

Kopan has already established a geshe study program (the geshe degree is the monastic equivalent of a Doctor of Divinity), and the nuns at Khachoe Ghakyil are enrolled in this program - one of the few nunneries in India and Nepal to offer such an opportunity to their nuns. This is an especially welcome development! Every year selected nuns now participate in the annual one month debate, in which several nunneries challenge each other in debating skills, with the venue being rotated amongst the various nunneries every year.

Nuns of Khachoe Ghakyil (foto by Tom Bates)

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Albums and recordings with monks and nuns of Kopan and Kachoe Ghakyil, available at the Kopan Monastery shop
<http://monasteryshop.org>

Prostrations to the 35 Buddhas

Prayers for the Time of Death

Chod

Chants from Amitabha

Tara Puja

Choyang 2

Bliss Whirl

The complete Lam Rim

Choyang 1

In Praise of Chenrezig

Dhakang - Tantric Chants

Guru Puja

Mahamudra Meditations

Medicine Buddha Puja

Traditionally, ritual arts and scholastic study have been a prerogative of Tibetan Buddhist monks, with their ordained sisters receiving little or no training in these areas. In Khachoe Ghakyil Nunnery, however, this is not the case.Â

The nuns of Khachoe Ghakyil Nunnery have had the doors of the classical Buddhist education opened to them. They are provided with highly trained scholars to teach them, and are now instructed in classical Tibetan debate, the performance of ritual music, the creation of sand mandalas, and other ritual arts.

Nuns of Khachoe Ghakyil (foto by Tom Bates)

The Incense Factory "Pure Land Incense"

The nunnery is funded mainly by donations from kind benefactors, and offerings received for prayers performed. A permanent food fund has been set up to secure the future of the nunnery and its residents. An additional source of income is the incense factory that was established in 1997.Â Tibetan style incense is hand made by the nuns. The incense has become quite popular and is available in several fragrances and presentation. You can support the nunnery by ordering this incense.

During several tours to USA and Europe the nuns have also shown their proficiency in ritual arts, chanting and monastic dance to the wider public and were welcomed with open arms; another tour to Europe is planned for 2006. The main purpose of the tours is to raise fund for the building fund.

Nuns of Khachoe Ghakyil during Sand Mandala Painting

CDs with the monks of kopan monastery
at Costa Verde Production

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