

27th KAGYU MONLAM

prayers for world peace & the environment



PROGRAM GUIDE

TEACHINGS

Tergar Monastery, Bodhgaya • December 20–22, 2009

MONLAM PUJA

Mahabodhi Temple, Bodhgaya • December 24–31, 2009

NEW YEAR'S DAY PROGRAM

Tergar Monastery • January 1, 2010

ENGLISH

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

TEACHINGS AT TERGAR MONASTERY

LETTER TO A FRIEND

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2009

I 9:00–11:00 AM Teaching

II 3:00–5:00 PM Teaching

MONDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2009

I 9:00–11:00 AM Teaching

II 3:00–5:00 PM Teaching

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2009

I 9:00–11:00 AM Teaching

MONLAM PUJA AT THE MAHABODHI TEMPLE

1

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2009

I 6:00–8:30 AM Sojong vows, Twenty-Branch Monlam

II 9:00–11:00 AM Teaching on *The Life of Milarepa*

III 1:30–3:00 PM King of Aspirations, Maitreya's Aspiration

IV 3:30–5:00 PM The Twenty-Branch Monlam

2

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2009

I 6:00–8:30 AM Sojong vows, Twenty-Branch Monlam

II 9:00–11:00 AM Teaching on *The Life of Milarepa*

III 1:30–3:00 PM King of Aspirations, Way of Bodhisattva

IV 3:30–5:00 PM The Twenty-Branch Monlam

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SATURDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2009

I 6:00–8:30 AM Sojong vows, Twenty-Branch Monlam

II 9:00–11:00 AM Teaching on *The Life of Milarepa*

III 1:30–3:00 PM King of Aspirations, Sukhavati Prayer

IV 3:30–5:00 PM The Twenty-Branch Monlam

4

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2009

I 6:00–8:30 AM Sojong vows, Twenty-Branch Monlam

II 9:00–11:00 AM Teaching on *The Life of Milarepa*

III 1:30–3:00 PM Aspirations for the Removal of Obstacles

IV 3:30–5:00 PM The Twenty-Branch Monlam

5

MONDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2009

I	6:00–8:30 AM	Sojong vows, Twenty-Branch Monlam
II	9:00–11:00 AM	Teaching on The Life of Milarepa
III	1:30–3:00 PM	Removal of Obstacles
IV	3:30–5:00 PM	The Twenty-Branch Monlam

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TUESDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2009

I	6:00–8:30 AM	Sojong vows, Twenty-Branch Monlam
II	9:00–11:00 AM	Milarepa Empowerment
III	1:30–3:00 PM	Prayers for the Well-Being of Tibet
IV	3:30–5:00 PM	The Twenty-Branch Monlam
	7:00 PM	Milarepa Feast

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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2009

I	6:00–8:00 AM	Sojong vows & Medicine Buddha puja
	8:00 AM	Kangyur Procession
II	8:30–11:00 AM	Kangyur Reading
III	1:30–3:00 PM	Akshobhya ritual and Dharani Sutra
IV	3:30–5:00 PM	The Twenty-Branch Monlam
	8:00 PM	Akshobhya purification ritual

8

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2009

I	6:00–8:30 AM	Sojong vows, Twenty-Branch Monlam, and the Sixteen Arhats puja
II	9:00–10:00 AM	Lama Chöpa
	10:10 PM	Alms Procession
III	1:00–2:30 PM	Lama Chöpa
IV	3:00–5:00 PM	Sponsor Appreciation and Special Address
	7:30 PM	Marme Monlam (Lamp Prayer)

NEW YEAR'S PROGRAM AT TERGAR MONASTERY**FRIDAY, JANUARY 1, 2010**

	11:00 AM	Midday Repast for the Sangha
	6:00 PM	The Life of Milarepa Theatrical Performance

Day

1

12/24/2009

Thursday

SESSION I ☸ 6:00–8:30 AM

Mahayana Sojong Vows	
Sanskrit Prayers (separate text)	
Refuge and Bodhichitta and following	24–35
Praises from the Rashtrapala Sutra and following	47–72
Praises from The Sutra of Ornamental Appearances	36–46
The Sutra in Three Sections and following	74–110

SESSION II ☸ 9:00–11:00 AM

Teachings on The Life of Milarepa	
The Great Aspiration and Dedications	151–170

SESSION III ☸ 1:30–3:00 PM

The Noble Aspiration for Excellent Conduct	111
Maitreya's Aspiration	124

SESSION IV ☸ 3:30–5:00 PM

The Accomplishment of True Words	309
Joy and Comfort for Beings	313
The Aspiration to the Stages of the Path	317
The Indestructible Garland of Vajra	175
Long Life Prayers (separate text)	
Offerings to the Protectors	431–436
Aspiration for the Well-Being of Tibet	382
Verses from The Sutra Requested by the Deva	191
The Dharma Blaze Aspiration	171
Prayers to Accomplish the Truth	215

Day

2

12/25/2009

Friday

SESSION I ☸ 6:00–8:30 AM

Mahayana Sojong Vows	
Sanskrit Prayers (separate text)	
Refuge and Bodhichitta and following	24–35
Praises from the Rashtrapala Sutra and following	47–72
A Praise of Manjushri	221
Praise of Noble Avalokiteshvara	223
The Sutra in Three Sections and following	74–110

SESSION II ☸ 9:00–11:00 AM

Teachings on The Life of Milarepa	
The Great Aspiration and Dedications	151–170

SESSION III ☸ 1:30–3:00 PM

The Noble Aspiration for Excellent Conduct	111
The Aspiration from The Way of the Bodhisattva	130

SESSION IV ☸ 3:30–5:00 PM

An Aspiration for the Dharma of the Shangpa Kagyu	319
The Thirty Aspirations	327
The Aspiration to the Stages of the Path	317
The Indestructible Garland of Vajra	175
Long Life Prayers (separate text)	
Offerings to the Protectors	431–436
Aspiration for the Well-Being of Tibet	382
The Auspiciousness of the Twelve Deeds	184
The Dharma Blaze Aspiration	171
Prayers to Accomplish the Truth	215

Day

3

12/26/2009

Saturday

SESSION I ༄ 6:00–8:30 AM

Mahayana Sojong Vows	
Sanskrit Prayers (separate text)	
Refuge and Bodhichitta and following	24–35
Praises from the Rashtrapala Sutra and following	47–72
Brahma’s Crown: A Praise of Maitreya	228
The Sutra in Three Sections and following	74–110

SESSION II ༄ 9:00–11:00 AM

Teachings on The Life of Milarepa	
The Great Aspiration and Dedications	151–170

SESSION III ༄ 1:30–3:00 PM

The Noble Aspiration for Excellent Conduct	111
The Sukhavati Prayer “I prostrate with respect”	143

SESSION IV ༄ 3:30–5:00 PM

The Aspiration of Avalokita	336
The Aspiration to the Stages of the Path	317
The Indestructible Garland of Vajra	175
Long Life Prayers (separate text)	
Offerings to the Protectors	431–436
Aspiration for the Well-Being of Tibet	382
“May he who utterly conquers greed...”	181
The Dharma Blaze Aspiration	171
Prayers to Accomplish the Truth	215

Day

4

12/27/2009

Sunday

SESSION I ༄ 6:00–8:30 AM

Mahayana Sojong Vows	
Sanskrit Prayers (separate text)	
Refuge and Bodhichitta and following	24–35
Praises from the Rashtrapala Sutra and following	47–72
The Praise “Beautiful Ornament of the Earth”	244
Praise of Shri Samantabhadra with Aspirations	246
The Sutra in Three Sections and following	74–110

SESSION II ༄ 9:00–11:00 AM

Teachings on The Life of Milarepa	
The Great Aspiration and Dedications	151–170

SESSION III ༄ 1:30–3:00 PM

Removal of Obstacles: Prayers to Tara and Sarasvati	259–284
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SESSION IV ༄ 3:30–5:00 PM

Twenty Aspirations of Taklungthangpa	343
The Aspiration of Trophu	348
Tsangpa Gyare’s Aspiration	355
The Aspiration to the Stages of the Path	317
The Indestructible Garland of Vajra	175
Long Life Prayers (separate text)	
Offerings to the Protectors	431–436
Aspiration for the Well-Being of Tibet	382
“The sublime teacher is worthy of worship...”	180
The Dharma Blaze Aspiration	171
Prayers to Accomplish the Truth	215

Day

5

12/28/2009

Monday

SESSION I ༄ 6:00–8:30 AM

Mahayana Sojong Vows	
Sanskrit Prayers (separate text)	
Refuge and Bodhichitta and following	24–35
Praises from the Rashtrapala Sutra and following	47–72
Praise of the Six Ornaments and Two Great Beings	250
The Sutra in Three Sections and following	74–110

SESSION II ༄ 9:00–11:00 AM

Teachings on The Life of Milarepa	
The Great Aspiration and Dedications	151–170

SESSION III ༄ 1:30–3:00 PM

Clearing the Path of Obstacles	285
Spontaneous Fulfillment of Wishes	297
Requested Prayers for the Removal of Obstacles	

SESSION IV ༄ 3:30–5:00 PM

Yelpa's Aspiration	358
The Barom Aspiration	359
Phagmodrupa's Aspiration	362
The Aspiration to the Stages of the Path	317
The Indestructible Garland of Vajra	175
Long Life Prayers (separate text)	
Offerings to the Protectors	431–436
Aspiration for the Well-Being of Tibet	382
“With excellence, like a mountain of gold...”	179
The Dharma Blaze Aspiration	171
Prayers to Accomplish the Truth	215

Day

6

12/29/2009

Tuesday

SESSION I ☸ 6:00–8:30 AM

Mahayana Sojong Vows	
Sanskrit Prayers (separate text)	
Refuge and Bodhichitta and following	24–35
Praises from the Rashtrapala Sutra and following	47–72
Supplication of the Twenty-Five Chariots	253
The Sutra in Three Sections and following	74–110

SESSION II ☸ 9:00–11:00 AM

Milarepa Empowerment	
The Great Aspiration and Dedications	151–170

SESSION III ☸ 1:30–3:00 PM

Prayers for the Well-being of Tibet (separate text)	
Long Life Prayers for H.H. the Dalai Lama and H.H. Sakya Trizin Rinpoche (separate text)	

SESSION IV ☸ 3:30–5:00 PM

The Tsalpa Aspiration	364
The Uncommon Dedication and Aspiration	370
The Aspiration to the Stages of the Path	317
The Indestructible Garland of Vajra	175
Long Life Prayers (separate text)	
Offerings to the Protectors	431–436
Aspiration for the Well-Being of Tibet	382
“May he who utterly conquers greed...”	181
The Dharma Blaze Aspiration	171
Prayers to Accomplish the Truth	215

Day

7

12/30/2009

Wednesday

SESSION I ༄ 6:00–8:00 AM

Mahayana Sojong Vows	
Sanskrit Prayers (separate text)	
Medicine Buddha Offering Puja (separate text)	

KANGYUR PROCESSION ༄ 8:00 AM

SESSION II ༄ 8:30–11:00 AM

Mandala Offering	
The Praise of the Twelve Deeds	62
Reading of the Kangyur	
The Great Aspiration and Dedications	151–170

SESSION III ༄ 1:30–3:00 PM

The Short Vajradhara Lineage Prayer	255
The Akshobhya Mandala Ritual (no English text)	
Reading the Akshobhya Sutra (separate text)	

SESSION IV ༄ 3:30–5:00 PM

An Aspiration for Birth in Abhirati	387
An Aspiration for Birth in Sukhavati	397
The Aspiration to the Stages of the Path	317
The Indestructible Garland of Vajra	175
Long Life Prayers and Prayers for Rebirth (separate text)	
Offerings to the Protectors	431–436
Aspiration for the Well-Being of Tibet	382
“The sublime teacher is worthy of worship...”	180
The Dharma Blaze Aspiration	171
Prayers to Accomplish the Truth	215

Day

8

12/31/2009

Thursday

SESSION I ☸ 6:00–8:30 AM

Mahayana Sojong Vows	
Sanskrit Prayers (separate text)	
Refuge and Bodhichitta	24–25
Blessing the Ground	26
Prostrations and Offerings to the Sixteen Elders (first part)	421–422
“For each and every being...”	31–35
“Peerless, the sight of you never satiates...”	423–429
“The best of flowers...” and other branches	
“Arya arhats, emanations of the Buddha...”	429–430

SESSION II ☸ 9:00–10:00 AM

Offerings to the Gurus (separate text)	
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ALMS PROCESSION ☸ 10:00 AM

SESSION III ☸ 1:00–2:30 PM

Offerings to the Gurus (separate text)	
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SESSION IV ☸ 3:00–5:00 PM

Appreciation of the Sponsors	198–208
Special Address	
The Great Aspiration and Dedications	151–170
Mila’s Aspiration and the Aspiration for the Well-Being of Tibet	382–386
Lord Marpa’s Song of Auspiciousness	209
“With excellence, like a mountain of gold...”	179
The Dharma Blaze Aspiration	171
The Auspiciousness of the Great Encampment	211
Prayers to Accomplish the Truth	215

MARME MONLAM ☸ 7:30 PM

*Questions &
Answers
About Prayer
and the
Kagyü Monlam*

What is the reason for reciting aspiration prayers?

The purpose is that just as a drop of water that falls into the ocean is not used up until the entire ocean is used up, our merit will not be wasted. Just as a driver steers a car, aspirations can transform the merit we have accumulated into the cause of unexcelled enlightenment. Just as a small seed can produce bountiful fruit when good, favorable conditions are present, even a small virtue can grow greater and greater if joined with good aspirations.

What motivation should one have when praying?

In general, the extent of the intention determines the extent of the result. In particular, our aspirations should be as strong and vast as possible, such as, “May I awaken to buddhahood today!” If we only aspire to minor purposes or our own benefit, the prayer is limited, but if we pray for vast benefit for ourselves and others, unexcelled enlightenment, benefit for beings and Dharma, world peace, and so forth, the prayer is extremely vast. In brief, our prayers must not be bound by our own selfish, temporary intentions; we should pray with the altruistic wish to shoulder the responsibility of helping others.

Why prayer is important for Buddhists?

There is a saying among Buddhists: “Two activities: one at the beginning, one at the end.” For every activity, at the beginning we have a motivation and at the end we

make dedications and aspirations. Whatever we do, it is important for us to have a good motivation when we begin it. This is because whether our actions will turn out good or bad depends upon our motivations, it is said. At the end, reciting dedications and aspirations prevents the virtuous acts we have done from coming to nothing. This is why aspiration prayers are considered important.

What is the difference between praying on our own and in groups?

When one person prays individually and when a group prays together, there is a difference in the power of the prayer. It is like sweeping with a single piece of straw and a bunch of straw. Additionally, when a group recites aspiration prayers together, it brings happiness to the whole group, but single person gathering merit only brings that one person happiness. In particular, when men and women gather and recite aspiration prayers together, the prayers will be fulfilled more quickly because both wisdom and means are present. If the fourfold community of bhikshus, bhikshunis, men who hold the five precepts, and women who hold the five precepts gathers, any aspirations they make will be fulfilled.

What is the distinction between aspiration and dedication prayers?

A dedication prayer is making an aspiration when there is some virtue to be dedicated. An aspiration prayer is when although there may be no virtue to dedicate, one has the wish, “May it be so.”

What is the history of the Kagyu Monlam? How did it come about?

The name “Kagyu Monlam” originated five hundred years ago in Tibet when the Seventh Karmapa Chödrak Gyatso established an annual prayer festival in order to restore the Vinaya discipline that had grown lax among the sangha, to make offerings to the buddhas, and to inspire sincere faith among those who saw or heard it through the grandeur of the Buddhist teachings and the individuals present. Held during the first lunar month, the month of the Teacher’s miracles, great gatherings of over ten thousand members of the sangha assembled at the Monlam and under the guidance of the Karmapa performed the liturgy of The Twenty-Branch Monlam that he himself had compiled. They prayed for beings to complete gathering the accumulation of merit, to dispel obstacles and unfavorable circumstances, for there to be harmony in the world, and for freedom from all suffering and misfortune. This established the basis for the custom of holding Monlam gatherings that has continued without interruption until the present day.

In 1983, Kalu Rinpoche held a Monlam to recite *The Aspiration for Excellent Conduct* one hundred thousand times in Bodhgaya at the spot where our Teacher awakened to complete and perfect buddhahood, planting the seed for holding the Kagyu Monlam in the Noble Land of India. In 2004, the Gyalwang Karmapa took responsibility for the Monlam. Following the example of the dharma activities of the great beings of the past, he re-

structured the event and compiled a new prayer text, reflecting the splendor of this timeless tradition, making the Monlam ever more glorious, meeting the needs of today's international Buddhist community as much as possible, and benefitting an even greater number of people.

Does it make a difference where you make a prayer?

It is said that if you make an aspiration while remembering the Lord Buddha with faith at the sacred sites where he took birth, awoke to buddhahood, turned the wheel of Dharma, and passed into nirvana, this will lead to rebirth in the higher realms of happiness and purify inexpressible karma. In particular, Bodhgaya is the place where the Buddha tamed the four maras and awakened to buddhahood, so if you do Dharma practice here, you will have few obstacles and accomplish it without difficulty.

What is the logo for the Kagyu Monlam, and what does it represent?

The Gyalwang Karmapa designed this logo in 2007 out of his feelings of closeness with the natural world and of a special connection with the elements. We have used the earth heavily from the time it formed up to the present. The earth has provided us immeasurable help, but we have not done anything to actually help the earth in return. We never think of loving or protecting the world, and so now we have come to time where the earth is scowling at us. We are approaching a situation where the earth is going to give up

on us, but neither the earth nor the beings who live in it should forsake each other. Instead, they should join hands together. As a symbol of this, the insignia takes the shape of two hands clasping. Since the Kagyu Monlam is an occasion where we pray for peace and happiness on earth and for the earth to remain for a long time, this sign is now the logo of the Kagyu Monlam as well a symbol of our affection for the earth and our wish to protect it. Wearing it regularly indicates not only a feeling of a particular connection with the natural elements but also a great affection for the earth. Since both the body and mind are strongly connected to the unaltered, natural elements, it can probably also provide some protection against dangers from the natural elements of the external world.

What is the importance of reciting prayers in Tibetan?

Most of the Mahayana Dharma was first in Sanskrit, but Tibetan writing was invented for the purposes of translating Buddhism, so it has a very close affinity to Sanskrit. Tibet also originated out of the compassionate wishes bodhisattvas have for sentient beings, so if one recites prayers in Tibetan, they have great blessings. Another reason to recite in Tibetan in the context of the Kagyu Monlam is that it is easiest if we all recite in the same language.

About the Precepts of Mahayana Sojong

During the Kagyu Monlam, you have the opportunity to take mahayana sojong vows every morning. Taking the vows is not required, but you may take them if you wish. If you decide to take them, you should observe the eight precepts from the moment you take the vow until the next morning at dawn. The eight precepts of mahayana sojong are:

1. Not killing,
2. Not stealing,
3. Not engaging in sexual activity,
4. Not lying,
5. Not consuming intoxicants,
6. Not sitting or lying on high seats or beds,
7. Not eating at inappropriate times, and
8. Not wearing perfume, jewelry, or ornaments, and not singing or dancing.

Not sitting or lying on high seats or beds means not sitting on seats or beds that are fancy, expensive, large, or higher than one cubit or ca. 38 centimeters. However, there is an exception if there is no place to sleep except on a bed that is too high.

Not eating at inappropriate times means not to consume any food from noon until sunrise the next day. You are allowed to drink tea or translucent liquids in which you can see your reflection. However, you may eat if you are sick, and you may take medicine. Since the mahayana sojong vows come from the kriya tantra, cleanliness and purity are of utmost importance. You should therefore abstain from eating meat of any kind, eggs, onions, and garlic during the period you have taken the vows.

Not wearing jewelry or ornaments means not wearing jewelry or ornaments that you do not normally wear. If you normally wear a ring, pendant, or other piece of jewelry, you may continue to wear it while observing the vow.