

A Guide to the Gompa



SHANTIDEVA
CENTER

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Introduction

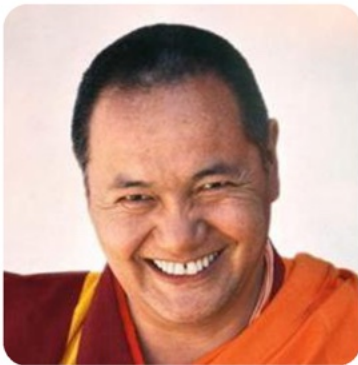


Welcome. This booklet introduces the images and statues found within the gompas. The sacred images within this gompas are more than works of art. The Buddha statues, thangkhas, and lineage teachers each embody the wisdom, compassion, and teachings of the Buddhist tradition. They serve as reminders of the path to awakening and inspire reflection, mindfulness, and kindness.

May this booklet bring insight and inspiration.

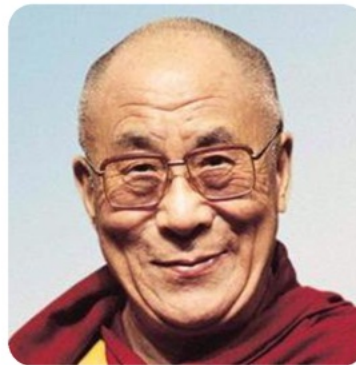
Lineage Teachers

Shantideva Center practices Tibetan Buddhism in the Gelug tradition. Our teachers are holders of the Mahayana Buddhist lineage, which began with Shakyamuni Buddha and has been passed down through an unbroken succession of realized masters from generation to generation. The Center is affiliated with the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT), an international organization dedicated to preserving and transmitting the Mahayana Buddhist tradition of Lama Tsongkhapa. Tsongkhapa was an influential Tibetan Buddhist monk, philosopher, and tantric yogi whose activities led to the formation of the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism. This tradition was brought to the West by our founders, Lama Thubten Yeshe and Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche. His Holiness the Dalai Lama serves as our inspiration and spiritual guide. Through this living tradition, we preserve and share the authentic teachings of the Buddha.



Lama Thubten Yeshe

Lama Thubten Yeshe (1935-1984): was a Tibetan Lama who, while exiled in Nepal, co-founded Kopan Monastery (1969) and the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (1975).



**His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama,
Tenzin Gyatso**

The 14th Dalai Lama is the incumbent Dalai Lama, the highest spiritual leader and head of Tibetan Buddhism. He served as the resident spiritual and temporal leader of Tibet before 1959 and subsequently led the Tibetan government in exile represented by the Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamsala, India.



Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche

Lama Zopa Rinpoche (1945-2023) was a Tibetan Buddhist scholar and meditator who, for 39 years, oversaw the spiritual activities of the extensive worldwide network of centers, projects and services that form the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana

Altar



A Tibetan Buddhist altar is a sacred space that represents the enlightened qualities of the Buddha, Dharma (the teachings), and Sangha (the spiritual community). It typically includes images or statues of the Buddha, offerings such as water bowls, flowers, or candles, and sacred texts, such as a sutra.



Water Bowl Offerings: Water offering bowls are sacred vessels used in Tibetan Buddhist practices to accumulate merit, cultivate generosity, and reduce greed by making daily offerings to the Buddha. Typically set in groups of eight, these bowls are usually made of brass, copper, or silver and filled with fresh water (or the following categories of offerings) every morning: water for drinking, water for bathing, flowers, incense, light, perfume, food, and music.



The Prajnaparamita Sutra: The Prajnaparamita Sutra (“Perfection of Wisdom Sutra”) is a genre of Mahayana Buddhist scriptures focusing on sunyata (emptiness) and the wisdom required to reach enlightenment. Written between 100 BCE and 600 CE, these texts emphasize understanding that all phenomena lack.

A Sutra is a discourse or teaching attributed to the Buddha or a great Buddhist teacher that preserves the wisdom and guidance of the Buddhist path. In Tibetan Buddhism, sutras are considered sacred texts that contain teachings on topics such as compassion, wisdom, ethics, meditation, and the path to enlightenment.



Stupa: A stupa is a sacred Buddhist monument and hemispherical, mound-like structure designed to house relics of the Buddha or other venerable monks, acting as a focal point for meditation and veneration. Symbolizing the Buddha's mind and path to enlightenment, stupas often feature a base, a dome (āṇḍa), and a spire.



Shakyamuni Buddha: Siddhartha Gautama (literally, “the awakened one”), was a wandering ascetic and religious teacher who lived in the eastern Indo-Gangetic Plains during the 6th or 5th century BCE and founded Buddhism. According to Buddhist legends, he was born in Lumbini, in what is now Nepal, to royal parents of the Shakya clan, but renounced his home life to live as a wandering ascetic. After leading a life of mendicancy, asceticism, and meditation, he attained nirvana at Bodh Gaya in what is now Bihar, India. The Buddha then wandered through the lower Indo-Gangetic Plain, teaching and building a monastic order (sangha). Buddhist tradition holds he died in Kushinagar (in modern day Uttar Pradesh, India) and reached Parinirvana (“final release from conditioned existence”).



Amitayus: Amitayus (Sanskrit: Amitayus, “Infinite Life”) is the Sambhogakaya (apparitional body) aspect of Amitabha Buddha in Mahayana and Tibetan Buddhism, specifically embodying longevity, merit, and wisdom. Often depicted holding a long-life vase.



White Tara: White Tara (Sita Tara) is a revered female Buddha in Tibetan Buddhism representing compassion, long life, healing, and serenity. Born from Avalokiteshvara’s tears, she is often called the “Mother of Compassion” and features seven eyes – on her face, palms, and soles – to see all beings and suffering across the universe.



Yellow Dzambhala: Yellow Dzambhala is the most popular Tibetan Buddhist deity of wealth, prosperity, and generosity, embodying the manifestation of Buddha Ratnasambhava. He is depicted as a stout, yellow-colored figure holding a mongoose (Nahule) that spews jewels in his left hand, often sitting on a lotus, sun, and conch shell. He helps eliminate poverty, obstacles, and illnesses, allowing practitioners to focus on spiritual growth.



Three Buddhas of Long Life:

Amitayus (Top): Amitayus (Sanskrit: Amitayus, “Infinite Life”) is the Sambhogakaya (apparitional body) aspect of Amitabha Buddha in Mahayana and Tibetan Buddhism, specifically embodying longevity, merit, and wisdom. Often depicted holding a long-life vase.

White Tara (Left): White Tara (Sita Tara) is a revered female Buddha in Tibetan Buddhism representing compassion, long life, healing, and serenity. Born from Avalokiteshvara’s tears, she is often called the “Mother of Compassion” and features seven eyes – on her face, palms, and soles – to see all beings and suffering across the universe.

Namgyalma (Right): Namgyalma (Tibetan: Tsuktor Namgyalma; Sanskrit: Ushnishavijaya) is a prominent female deity in Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism embodying longevity, purification, and deathless wisdom. As one of the Three Long-Life Deities (along with Amitayus and White Tara), she is worshipped to eliminate disasters, increase vitality, and prevent lower rebirths, with her powerful mantra often used to purify negative karma.



Relic of Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche:

Following the passing of Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche in 2023, his kudung (holy body relic) has been a focus of devotion, with ceremonies including circumambulations and prayers held at locations like Kopan Monastery. Rinpoche taught that relics are manifestations of a Buddha's actions, designed to bless sentient beings, and they can multiply when treated with faith.



Relic of Lama Thubten Yeshe: Following the passing of Lama Thubten Yeshe in 1984, precious relics (ringsel) were found among his cremation remains, which are considered sacred symbols of his enlightened mind. These relics, were preserved and are, in part, enshrined in a stupa at Kopan Monastery. Relics were also distributed by Lama Zopa Rinpoche to various FPMT centers.

Thangka



A thangka is a traditional Tibetan Buddhist painting, usually created on cotton or silk, that depicts Buddhas, bodhisattvas, deities, mandalas, or important spiritual teachers. Thangkas serve as objects of devotion and meditation, helping practitioners visualize enlightened qualities and deepen their understanding of the Buddhist path.



Shakyamuni Buddha: Siddhartha Gautama (literally, “the awakened one”), was a wandering ascetic and religious teacher who lived in the eastern Indo-Gangetic Plains during the 6th or 5th century BCE and founded Buddhism. According to Buddhist legends, he was born in Lumbini, in what is now Nepal, to royal parents of the Shakya clan, but renounced his home life to live as a wandering ascetic. After leading a life of mendicancy, asceticism, and meditation, he attained nirvana at Bodh Gaya in what is now Bihar, India. The Buddha then wandered through the lower Indo-Gangetic Plain, teaching and building a monastic order (sangha). Buddhist tradition holds he died in Kushinagar (in modern day Uttar Pradesh, India) and reached Parinirvana (“final release from conditioned existence”).



Vajrasattva: Vajrasattva (Tibetan: Dorje Sempa) is a central figure in Vajrayana Buddhism embodying the purity of all Buddha families, primarily practiced for purifying negative karma, obscurations, and broken vows. He represents the “Diamond Being” or “Thunderbolt Being,” often visualized as a white deity holding a vajra and bell to cleanse body, speech, and mind.



Lama Tsongkhapa: Tsongkhapa, meaning, “the man from Tsongkha” or “the Man from Onion Valley”, (c. 1357-1419) was an influential Tibetan Buddhist monk, philosopher, and tantric yogi whose activities led to the formation of the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism.



Padmasambhava: Padmasambhava was also known as Guru Rinpoche and the Lotus Guru. He is regarded as the founder of the Nyingma tradition, the oldest of the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism.



Manjushri: Manjushri is the Mahayana Buddhist bodhisattva embodying transcendent wisdom (Prajna), often depicted as a youthful prince holding a flaming sword to cut through ignorance and a lotus supporting the Prajnaparamita sutra. As one of the four principal bodhisattvas, he represents the realization of ultimate insight, making him central to Mahayana and Vajrayana, especially in Tibetan and Chinese traditions.



Avalokiteshvara: Avalokiteshvara is the Mahayana Buddhist Bodhisattva of Great Compassion, embodying the mercy and love of all Buddhas. Known as the “Lord who looks down” with compassion, he vows to postpone enlightenment until all beings are liberated. He is popularly known as Guan Yin (China), Kannon (Japan), and Chenrezig (Tibet), often manifesting in multiple forms, including female, to aid the suffering.

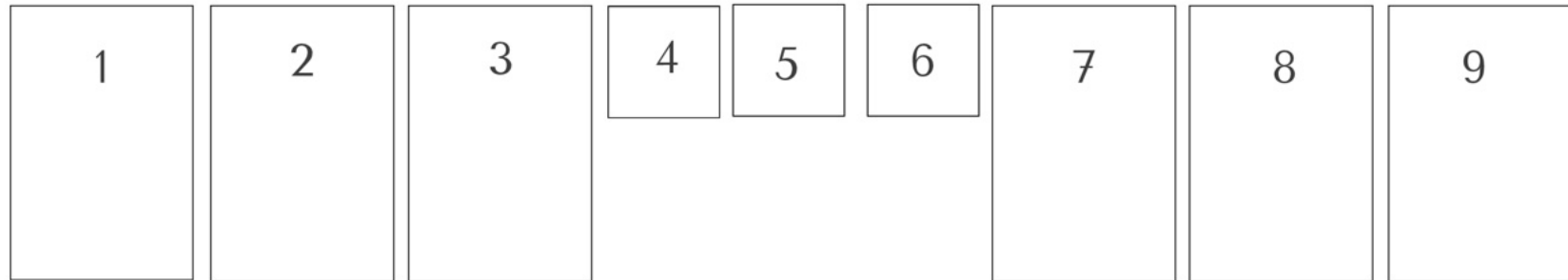
Final Thoughts

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this gompa booklet. Special thanks to George Cuesta for his writing, Donna Svennevik for providing the majority of the photographs, and Katelyn MacKenzie for her editing. Your time, talent, and generosity made this booklet possible.

Thank you to Yogis & Yoginis for sharing the space.
May we all find peace, compassion and wisdom.

Site Map for the Gompa

wall



1 Vajrasattva

2 Manjushri

3 Lama Tsongkhapa

4 Lama Thubten Yeshe

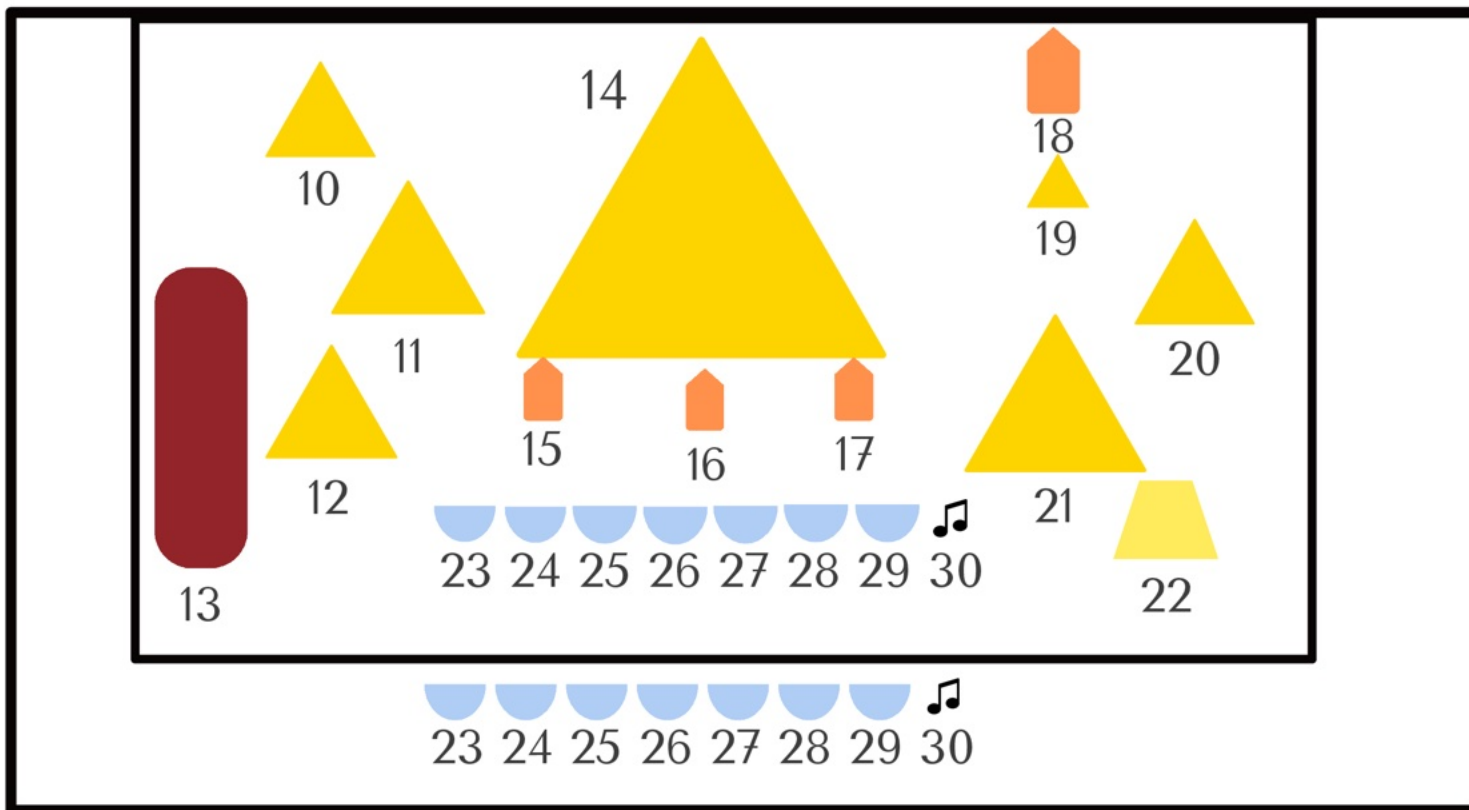
5 H.H. the 14th Dalai Lama
Tenzin Gyatso

6 Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche

7 Padmasambhava

8 Avalokiteśvara

9 Shakyamuni Buddha



Altar view from above

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