



Awam Tibetan Buddhist Institute

Courses for Study & Practice

2024 - 2025

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Welcome to the Awam Tibetan Buddhist Institute

“Awam” (or Ewam or Evam) in Sanskrit means “thus” or “such.” Symbolically, it represents the union of the female principle (A – “é”) of wisdom, and the male principle (wam) of compassion. Wisdom and compassion are like the two wings of a bird; both are essential to soar!



HH Khenchen Lama
Rinpoche

We teach Tibetan Buddhism, helping householders (non-monastics) improve their practice and lives, thus benefiting others as well. We are committed to the householder yogi tradition that goes back to Shakyamuni Buddha in India and Padmasambhava in Tibet. Many of the great Mahasiddhas of India and Tibet practiced as householders. This is particularly appropriate today in the West, where most of us work for a living and may have families and other life commitments.

Our main focus is a very direct and thorough approach to study and practice based on the teachings of Padmasambhava and other masters, with a special focus on the Path of Great Perfection (*Dzogchen*). This includes a concise history of Buddhism in India and Tibet, followed by a complete cycle of teachings that include the Path of Individual Liberation, the Path of Altruism, the Path of Tantra, and the Path of Great Perfection, all leading toward the deep inner peace of *innate happiness* that we know as enlightenment, liberation, awakening, or realization. These are available in a very concise two-year program for those with limited time to study and practice. Several more in-depth courses are also available on Dzogchen. Supplemental teachings are also available on YouTube. Videos only are available free, see AwamInstitute.org.

Our classes include the best texts and teachings of Tibetan Buddhist lineages, as well as scholarly and scientific sources. We are based in Tucson, Arizona, but our courses of study and practice are available globally via the Internet. While most of our students have been in the United States, we have had students in Mexico, Europe, Africa, Australia, and Asia. In addition, we seek to build a community of practitioners through a variety of additional activities, practices and teachings available live, online and/or through YouTube videos. We want you to feel you are a part of our growing sangha.

Our Spiritual Director is His Holiness Khenchen Lama Rinpoche (Khenchen Lama), who currently resides in York, England, and teaches at centers around the globe. Our President and resident teacher is Yogi Khenpo Drimed Dawa (Dr. Dean Pielstick) or “Khenpo Dean”.

Khenchen Lama named him President during Losar in 2007 and gave him the extremely rare title of “Khenpo” during Losar in 2009, a title normally given to the head of a monastery or “shedra” (Buddhist college) “in recognition of special qualities such as profound knowledge and extraordinary skill in helping to teach others.”



Yogi Khenpo
Drimed Dawa



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Core Curriculum Course Descriptions

Our **core curriculum** is called *The Essentials of Tibetan Buddhism* and consists of eight 6-session classes over two years covering the history of Buddhism in India and Tibet, basic principles, the Path of Individual Liberation, the Path of Altruism, the Path of Tantra, and the Path of Great Perfection. It is a complete series of teachings on the ethics, meditations, and wisdom of each path. The course material is presented in videos for our online students and includes regular practices to be done weekly throughout the course of study, along with a daily meditation journal. Convenient breaks allow students time to “catch up” or master more challenging practices when needed. Online students may proceed at their own pace.

Essentials of Tibetan Buddhism provides is a very thorough program for those who wish to learn, but have limited time to practice. To supplement these, we also invite master lamas to give empowerments and teach on specialized topics and texts in Tucson.



The teachings by Khenpo Drimed Dawa are all on video, supplemented with the text and some printable handouts. This program is organized around a very concise series of practices taught by Padmasambhava in his *Six Bardo Teachings* and is supplemented by similar concise practices from other masters. These practices are particularly appropriate for householders as most take little time to learn or master and were taught specifically for such practitioners. Together they form a carefully crafted set of incremental steps leading to the deep inner peace of *innate happiness* of enlightenment or liberation.

More specifically, the teachings are divided into an introduction and four main paths of practice that are sequential within Tibetan Buddhism: (1) the Path of Individual Liberation, (2) the Path of Altruism, (3) the Path of Tantra, and (4) the Path of Great Perfection. Within each path, the courses follow a teaching by the Buddha called the *Three Trainings*: (1) ethics, (2) meditation, and (3) wisdom. So within each path, the courses cover that view of ethics, its main meditation practices, and its view of wisdom. In the end, there is a review and focus on the realization of the deep inner peace of the *innate happiness* of enlightenment or liberation. The text for this course is *Innate Happiness: A Direct Guidance Manual for Householder Yogis and Yoginis* by Khenpo Drimed Dawa (Second Edition, 2018), available as an eBook or paperback from Amazon.com and other outlets. This text was written specifically for this course, as well as to benefit others who might read it.

Essentials Part 1— A **survey** of Buddhism in India and Tibet, an overview and introduction to key Vajrayana principles and practices, and the first part of the **Path of Individual Liberation**: ethics and *shamata* meditation – single-pointed calm abiding.

Essentials Part 2—Continues the **Path of Individual Liberation** with *vipassana* meditation (special insight) regarding “self” and “other” and the early view of wisdom; followed by the **Path of Altruism** (Bodhisattva): ethics, practices of the Six Perfections, *Tonglen* (giving and taking) and *Metta* (lovingkindness) meditations, and the Bodhisattva view of wisdom – the Perfection of Wisdom literature, Buddhature, and the Middle Way.

Essentials Part 3—The **Path of Tantra** begins with the ethical view of tantra and the “common” preliminary practices (*ngondro*): precious human birth, impermanence, suffering of samsara, and karma; followed by the “uncommon” preliminary practices: refuge and *bodhicitta*, Vajrasattva purification, mandala offerings, and Guru Yoga.

Essentials Part 4—Continues the **Path of Tantra** with the generation stage practices of “deity yoga” – generating yourself as the “deity” (a buddha).

Essentials Part 5—Continues the **Path of Tantra** with the completion stage practices: inner heat (*tummo*), channels-winds-drops (*tsalung*), illusory body, and dream yoga to become a buddha in this lifetime.

Essentials Part 6—Continues the completion stage practices of the **Path of Tantra** with clear light, sexual yogas, the *bardos* of dying, *dharmata*, and becoming, and the transference of consciousness; followed by the tantric view of wisdom.

Essentials Part 7—Begins the **Path of Great Perfection** with the ethical perspective, the preliminary practices for separating samsara from nirvana called *khorde rushen*, and the practice of *trekcho*.

Essentials Part 8—Concludes the **Path of Great Perfection** with additional training in the practices of *trekcho* and *togal*, as well as the view of wisdom of the Great Perfection and a **summary** of the Buddhist views of liberation.

Advanced Curriculum Course Descriptions

Our **advanced curriculum** is currently focused on the **Path of Great Perfection – Dzogchen**. This includes five rigorous college-level classes, most with two 8-sessions each, which require watching videos, reading, study, practice, and a journal. We require that students attempting this curriculum complete the core curriculum (see above) or the equivalent prior to beginning this curriculum. The Tucson schedule may include days off when local teachings are scheduled with visiting lamas.

Introduction to Dzogchen 1 & 2 – Dzogchen or the Great Perfection is the highest level of the Vajrayana teachings. It deals directly with self-liberation into our innate Buddhanature, abiding in the state of *rigpa* (pure awareness). This overview describes the three branches of Dzogchen teachings—the mind series, the space series, and the special instructions (including *trekcho* and *togal*). Text: *Quintessential Dzogchen: Confusion Dawns as Wisdom* translated and compiled by Eric Pema Kunsang and Marcia Binder Schmidt and *The Golden Letters* translated, introduction and commentaries by John Myrdhin Reynolds. This course is divided into two 8-session classes.

Khorde Rushen 1 & 2 – Khorde Rushen is the separation of samsara (delusion) from nirvana (non-delusion). These are a series of practices designed to help the yogin realize and *directly experience* the difference between samsara and nirvana by transforming the mind, i.e., our way of seeing the world. Khorde Rushen is sometimes referred to as the Dzogchen preliminary practices. Texts: *The Great Perfection*, Vol. II by the Third Dzogchen Rinpoche (permission required), *The Supreme Source: The Fundamental Tantra of the Dzogchen Semde Kunjed*

Gyalpo by Chogyal Namkhai Norbu and Adriano Clemente, and selections from *Yeshe Lama* by Vidyadhara Jigmed Lingpa (restricted text). This course is divided into two 8-week classes.

Dzogchen Trekcho 1 & 2 – The *trekcho* instructions are part of the special instruction series. This course will examine these instructions, particularly through the writings of the highly regarded master Longchenpa. Students will also further develop their actual practice. *Yeshe Lama* or comparable empowerment required. Texts: *Yeshe Lama* by Vidyadhara Jigmed Lingpa (restricted text), *Dzogchen: The Heart Essence of the Great Perfection* by H.H. the Dalai Lama, and *A Treasure Trove of Scriptural Transmission: A Commentary on The Precious Treasury of the Basic Space of Phenomena* by Longchen Rabjam. This course is divided into two 8-session classes.

Dzogchen Togonal 1 & 2 – *Togonal* is the advanced and often secret teaching of the special instructions of Dzogchen. This practice leads to attaining the Rainbow Body, enabling one to help other beings achieve liberation or full awakening. Students will learn the practices of *togonal* and how to apply them. *Yeshe Lama* or comparable empowerment required. Texts: *Yeshe Lama* by Vidyadhara Jigmed Lingpa (restricted text), *The Way of Abiding* by Longchen Rabjam, and *Treasures from Juniper Ridge* by Padmasambhava. This course is divided into two 8-session classes.

Khandro Nyingtik – The final class in the advanced curriculum provides a review of the full Dzogchen path from Padmasambhava's teachings, described by Longchen Rabjam in the *Khandro Nyingtik*, the Dakini's Heart Essence. The text for the class is the *Precious Golden Garland of Instructions on the Khandro Nyingthig* by Longchenpa, translated by Eric Fry-Miller. This course is 8 sessions.

Other Courses

From time-to-time, we also provide other selected dharma courses on topics of interest to our students and sangha. These might include basic courses open to all or advanced courses requiring empowerments such as Vajrayogini or Guhyagarbha.

These classes provide more detailed study and practice for serious practitioners. They are online self-study courses including video teachings with periodic mentor support available from Yogi Khenpo Drimed Dawa or other advanced practitioners. Although these are self-paced courses, students are normally expected to complete practice assignments on a weekly basis. Courses may be started at any time. Free videos are also available on YouTube. Watch our website at AwamInstitute.org or sign up for our newsletter for notification of the availability of these courses in Tucson, AZ.



Basic General Courses

These courses are suitable for all, though some background such as the Essentials of Tibetan Buddhism courses or other Vajrayana background would be helpful in understanding the principles and terminology.

Mindfulness: The Four Foundations of Mindfulness & Mindfulness with Breathing - This class focuses on mindfulness as a practice. The root of the teachings will be based on the *Sattipatthana* and *Anapanasamyutta* Sutras, as taught by several different sources, as well as the related *jhana* (Pali) or *dhyana* (Sanskrit) practices. Comparisons will also be drawn with *shamata* and similar Dzogchen practices. There are no texts for this course, but detailed notes are available for download as a PDF. Four sessions. As a general course, there is no homework or specific practice requirements. Nevertheless, students are encouraged to engage in each of these practices for 7-30 days each in order to actually benefit from them. Study is fine, but practice is everything! (4 sessions, \$40)

What Did the Buddha Say? Exploring the Sutras – This course explores some of the documented stories and teachings of the Buddha, primarily from the Sutras (from Pali, Sanskrit, Gandhari, Chinese and other sources), as well as commentaries by the authors. The intent is to give Vajrayana practitioners a fuller understanding of selected foundational texts of the tradition, as well as to challenge some of our assumptions and understandings. The course will include presentation and discussion. Sources include: *Buddhism: One Teacher, Many Traditions* – The Dalai Lama & Thubten Chodron, *The Dhammapada* – Gil Fronsdal, *The Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha: Early Discourses, the Dhammapada and Later Basic Writings* – E.A. Burtt (Editor), *In the Buddha's Words: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pali Canon* – Edited and introduced by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Buddha before Buddhism: Wisdom from the Early Teachings* – Gil Fronsdal, *Stars at Dawn: Forgotten Stories of the Women in the Buddha's Life* – Wendy Garling. [Unfortunately, we were unable to record the rich discussions of the participants for the online presentation of this course.]

The 37 Bodhisattva Practices - In the Path of Altruism (Mahayana), those who have the courage to undertake the profound change of attitude required to develop true compassion are called Bodhisattvas. They consider others' needs as paramount, and thus strive to attain liberation for the sake of all sentient beings. The root text is a training manual composed in the 14th century by the Buddhist hermit Ngolchu Togme. We will use *The Heart of Compassion* commentary by HH Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche for the text and commentary. The course is designed for 4 sessions of study and practice. Students are encouraged to do the actual practices described each week to the fullest extent possible for the greatest benefit. These will then continue into the rest of your life.

Improving Your Practice – This 8-session course draws from traditional Buddhist views of mind and Western scientific research, reflecting recent interest in the exchanges and collaborative research between Western scientists and Buddhist scholars. The class will address the difficulty of staying focused and other common obstacles to successful meditation and ways to deal with them through the theory and practice of attention, emotion and consciousness from Western scientific and traditional Vajrayana Buddhist points of view. This course is based on audio recordings by Dr. Dusana Dorjee. Texts: *The Attention Revolution: Unlocking the Power of the Focused Mind* by B. Alan Wallace, *Destructive Emotions* by Daniel Goleman, and (recommended) *Train Your Mind, Change Your Brain* by Sharon Begley.

The 100-Day Ngondro Retreat (Preliminary Practices for Vajrayana) – This class will be divided into two 7-session parts, completing the entire 100-day practice, and is a prerequisite for most advanced Vajrayana practices. The *ngondro* (preliminary practices) provide a very important foundation for the practices of tantra or Vajrayana, yet the high number of repetitions (500,000) often required can become a serious barrier to lay practitioners. The great master Longchenpa shows us an alternative way to accomplish this in a more compact package. This course is also an excellent refresher for advanced practitioners who have completed the *ngondro* practices previously. They get even better through repetition.

Ngondro is essential to establishing our attitude and motivation through the Four Thoughts that Turn the Mind. Then, our mental obscurations, afflictive emotions and other mental fixations are systematically addressed through contemplations on the Four Immeasurables, Guru devotion, Bodhicitta, and the Six Perfections. In addition, these practices provide a solid understanding for advanced Vajrayana practices. This class is based on a book by His Eminence Lopon Natsok Zugchen *The 100-Day Ngondro Retreat* as described by Longchenpa, along with *The Words of My Perfect Teacher* by Patrul Rinpoche (optional text). Completing *ngondro* practices is required for most other Vajrayana practices.

Padling Tersar Ngondro (Preliminary Practices) – Padling Tersar Preliminary Practices are based upon the Nyingma instructions found in *The Words of My Perfect Teacher* by Patrul Rinpoche, the source text that will be used for this course. It is divided into two parts: (1) the common preliminary practices and (2) the uncommon preliminary practices. These are considered preliminary to entering the Path of Tantra. Following instructions on the proper way to listen to dharma teachings, the common preliminary practices consist of contemplations of (1) precious human birth, (2) impermanence of life, (3) the defects of samsara, and (4) karma (the principle of cause and effect). These are followed by brief instructions on the benefit of liberation and how to follow a spiritual teacher.

The second part addresses (1) refuge, (2) bodhicitta (the mind of enlightenment), here divided into two sets of practice instructions, (3) Vajrasattva purification, (4) mandala offerings, (5) and Guru Yoga. (The text includes brief instructions on Chod and Phowa practices that are not included in this set of instructions.) Each set of instructions will include expectations for doing the practices as described daily and keeping a record, followed by at least 30 days of additional sets of daily practice, completing a full 100 days of practice. Brief prayers or mantras may be done daily thereafter.

White Lotus & the Four Roots: The Dzogchen View - White Lotus is a commentary by Mipham Rinpoche on the Seven-Line Prayer to Guru Padmasambhava, revered by all lineages of Tibetan Buddhism, including the ***Padling Tersar*** lineage of HH Khenchen Lama Rinpoche. It explains the contents of the prayer in great detail regarding the outer literal meaning, the hidden meaning on the path of liberation, the path of skillful means, the Secret Mantra, the Great Perfection, and the pith instructions of the paths of liberation and skillful means, as well as giving a practice sadhana for Seven-Line Prayer Guru Yoga. This will be followed by a discussion of the Dzogchen view with instructions on how to do sadhana practices from the Dzogchen view.

Then, we will look at each of the Four Roots practices (Guru, Yidam, Dakini, and Protector) in HH Khenchen Lama Rinpoche's *Treasure Meditation Book*. We will examine each of the four sadhanas: (1) Secret Rigpa Guru Yoga, (2) A Sadhana of the Reverend Lord Manjushri, (3) The

Method for Accomplishing Tara, and (4) The Swift Infusion of Blessings - A Guru Yoga of the Great Embodiment of Unchanging Awareness Wisdom.

Tibetan Book of the Dead – This course looks in detail at the *Tibetan Book of the Dead: The Great Liberation through Hearing in the Bardo (bardo todol)* by Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava) according to Karma Lingpa, translated with commentary by Francesca Fremantle and Chogyam Trungpa. The course will also look at a variety of other related practices and texts dealing with death and dying. Although this is an "advanced" course, there are no prerequisites and anyone with interest is welcome to participate. Nevertheless, some background in Tibetan Buddhism and its practices is highly recommended. For example, please see our *Essentials of Tibetan Buddhism* series of 8 courses.

Advanced General Courses

Guhyagarbha Tantra (Parts 1 and 2) - This course involves the study and practice of the core tantra of the Nyingma lineage from which all others may be understood. This course examines the root text, as well as different commentaries by Longchenpa and Mipham Rinpoche. A practice sadhana is also included in the course requirements. An empowerment is required (Guhyagarbha, Shitro, Bardos, or at least a Highest Yoga Tantra empowerment). Texts: *The Guhyagarbha Tantra: Secret Essence Definitive Nature Just as It Is* by Longchenpa and *Luminous Essence: A Guide to the Guhyagarbha Tantra* by Jamgon Mipham.

Rigdzin Dupa – Gathering of Vidyadharas: This class will study the *Rigdzin Dupa: Gathering of Vidyadharas* text and sadhana. It is a highest yoga tantra practice linked to the Guhyagarbha Tantra. It is a treasure text from the Longchen Nyingtik terma of Jigme Lingpa (1730-1798), a generation-stage practice with a Dzogchen (Great Perfection) view.

Vajrayogini is a Highest Yoga Tantra deity practice of Vajrayana or Tibetan Buddhism. She is a female Buddha who is the essence of all the Buddhas. In these practices, we visualize or imagine ourselves as the deity as a means of training our mind to become a fully realized Buddha. Such a practice is said to be faster than other forms of meditative practices. And, according to scholar Miranda Shaw, Vajrayogini is "inarguably the supreme deity of the Tantric pantheon. No male Buddha...approaches her in metaphysical or practical import." Vajrayogini is also a significant figure in some of the completion-stage practices of Vajrayana, such as the Six Yogas (or Dharmas) of Naropa. Participants should either have received a Vajrayogini empowerment (in one of her variety of forms), or at least some other form of Highest Yoga empowerment. We will be using the book *Vajrayogini: Her Visualizations, Rituals, and Forms* by Elizabeth English as the main text for this course (8 sessions).

Kalachakra is one of the most complex systems within tantric Buddhism. The Kalachakra tradition revolves around the concept of time and cycles. From the cycles of the planets to the cycles of human breathing, it teaches the practice of working with the most-subtle energies within one's body on the path to enlightenment. Since Kalachakra is time and everything is under the influence of time, Kalachakra knows all. *Vishvamati*, his spiritual consort and complement, is aware of everything that is timeless, not time-bound or out of the realm of time. In *yab-yum*, they are temporality and a-temporality conjoined. Similarly, the wheel is without beginning or end.

The Kalachakra deity resides in the center of the mandala in his palace consisting of four mandalas, one within the other: the mandalas of body, speech, and mind, and in the very center, wisdom and great bliss. The Kalachakra sand mandala is dedicated to both individual and world peace and physical balance. The Dalai Lama explains: “It is a way of planting a seed, and the seed will have karmic effect. One doesn’t need to be present at the Kalachakra ceremony in order to receive its benefits.” This class will examine the tantra and commentaries, along with practice text(s). Prerequisites: Generation and Completion Stage study and practice. Texts: *Ornament of Stainless Light: An Exposition of the Kalacakra Tantra* by Khendrup Norsang Gyatso (OSL).

Dharma Talks

Yogi Khenpo Drimed Dawa has also been giving dharma talks during our Sunday Meditation Hour on a variety of topics of interest to Tibetan Buddhist Practitioners. Some are single talks and others are spread over a few weeks. These are broadcast and recorded on Facebook Live and may be accessed through the Awam Tibetan Buddhist Institute’s Facebook page ([facebook.com/AwamTBI](https://www.facebook.com/AwamTBI)) under “videos”.



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