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Awam Tibetan Buddhist Institute

May All Beings Be Happy



Awam Tibetan Buddhist Institute

Courses for Study & Practice

2024 - 2026

Revised February 26, 2024

Welcome to the Awam Tibetan Buddhist Institute (AwamTBI)

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



Khenchen Lama

We teach Tibetan Buddhism, helping householders 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. 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.

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 HH Khenchen Prachhimba Dorjee Rinpoche (Khenchen Lama), who currently resides in York, England, and teaches 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



OM AH HUNG HRI



Core Curriculum Course Descriptions

Our **core curriculum** is called *Natural Liberation* and consists of eight 6-week 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.

Natural Liberation provides a very thorough 8-part program for those who wish to learn, but



have limited time to practice. *Natural Liberation* is a direct approach to study and practice divided into eight, 6-week parts. The teachings by Khenpo Drimed Dawa are all on [video](#), supplemented with printable handouts. This program is organized around a very concise series of practices given by Padmasambhava in a text translated as *Natural Liberation* and is supplemented by similar concise practices from other masters. After an introduction to the history of Buddhism in India and Tibet, the practices follow a sequence known as the *nine vehicles*. 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 concise set of incremental steps leading to the deep inner peace of *innate happiness* or enlightenment.

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. At the end, there is a review and focus on the realization of the deep inner peace of the *innate happiness* of enlightenment. The text for this course is *Innate Happiness: Realizing Compassion Emptiness* by Khenpo Drimed Dawa, available as an eBook from Amazon.com. This text was written specifically for this course, as well as to benefit others who might read it.

Natural Liberation 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.

Natural Liberation 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.

Natural Liberation Part 3—The Path of Tantra begins with the ethical view of tantra and the “common” preliminary practices: 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.

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

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

Natural Liberation 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.

Natural Liberation 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*.

Natural Liberation 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 enlightenment.

Advanced Curriculum Course Descriptions

Our **advanced curriculum** is currently focused on the Path of Great Perfection – *Dzogchen*. This includes five rigorous college-level classes with two 8-week parts each, which require watching videos, reading, study, homework, and practice. We require that students attempting this curriculum complete the core curriculum or the equivalent prior to beginning this curriculum. The Tucson schedule may include days off when local teachings are scheduled with visiting lamas. Students who complete this series of courses may be able to continue on into an online master’s degree in Dzogchen Studies from a European university that is currently in the proposal stage.

Improving Your Practice – This 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. 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.

Introduction to Dzogchen – Dzogchen or the Great Perfection is the highest level of the Vajrayana teachings. It deals directly with self-liberation into our innate Buddhature, abiding in the state of *rigpa*. 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.

Khorde Rushen – Khorde Rushen is the separation of samsara (delusion) from nirvana (non-delusion). These are a series of practices designed to help the yogi 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), *Yeshe Lama* by Vidyadhara Jigmed Lingpa (restricted text), and *The Supreme Source: The Fundamental Tantra of the Dzogchen Semde Kunjed Gyalpo* by Chogyal Namkhai Norbu and Adriano Clemente.

Dzogchen Trekcho – 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.

Dzogchen Tegal – *Tegal* 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 enlightenment. Students will learn the practices of *tegal* 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.

Restricted Teaching-Dharma Course Descriptions

We also provide a **restricted teaching-dharma curriculum** (space is very limited) of guided study of the full path, as well as leading practice, teaching dharma, and leading dharma centers for those seeking to become dharma teachers. This curriculum includes 18 full-semester courses, each divided into two 8-week parts. Advanced courses may include video or audio files, text(s) and supplemental reading(s), homework assignments, quizzes, daily meditation practice, and a daily meditation journal. Courses are organized by week. Students with extensive understanding and experience in a particular course may complete that requirement by passing a written *and* oral examination on the course content. Students who complete the full course of study and practice will be awarded a *Ger Gen* or Dharma Teacher certificate.



These classes provide more detailed study and practice for serious practitioners. They are online self-study courses with periodic mentor support available from Khenpo Drimed Dawa or other advanced practitioners. Although these are self-paced courses, students are normally expected to complete homework and practice assignments on a weekly basis. Please contact

Khenpo.Drimed.Dawa@gmail.com to discuss admission to the teaching-dharma program and scheduling of courses.

Survey of Tibetan Buddhism – This course is designed to provide advanced practitioners without a comprehensive background an overview of Tibetan Buddhism. The course includes background and history of Buddhism in India and Tibet, basic principles, and the practices of the main lineages within the tradition. There is a daily meditation practice as well. Text: *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism* by John Powers.

The Bodhisattva's Way of Life – Bodhicitta, the altruistic wish to help all sentient beings attain enlightenment, is at the heart of all advanced Buddhist practices. The most highly regarded and popular text for these is *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life* by Shantideva, which is supplemented by the practice text “The Sun of Brilliant Clarity: A Step-by-Step Guide to Meditating on the *Bodhicaryavatara*” by Patrul Rinpoche. These include the core practices of the Six Perfections: generosity, ethical discipline, patience, diligence, meditative concentration and wisdom. Text: *No Time to Lose* by Pema Chodron and *Practicing Wisdom* by H.H. the Dalai Lama.

Mipham's Ngondro – These are the incomparable foundational or preliminary practices upon which all others are based. Essential to establishing our attitude and motivation are the Four Thoughts that Turn the Mind. Our mental obscurations, afflictive emotions and other mental fixations are systematically addressed through refuge, bodhicitta, Vajrasattva purification, mandala offerings, and Guru Yoga. In addition, these practices provide a solid understanding for advanced Vajrayana practices. Text: *The Words of My Perfect Teacher* by Patrul Rinpoche.

Generation Stage – In the generation stage practices of highest yoga tantra, one mentally generates oneself as the deity and one's surroundings as the mandala of the deity. Although all deity practices include generating the deity, this class of practices includes those with very complex visualizations as the principle focus. Chakrasamvara and Hayagriva are examples. This course provides a detailed understanding for these visualizations applicable to all generation stage deity practices and uses the Three Roots sadhana for practice (a Highest Yoga Tantra empowerment is required). Text: *The Generation Stage in Buddhist Tantra* by Gyatrul Rinpoche.

The Guhyagarbha Tantra – This is 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. 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.

Buddhanature – In the Third Turning of the Wheel, the Buddha taught Buddha Nature—our innate, Buddha essence. While this is among The Buddha's most advanced teachings, Gampopa said that when it is taught early in one's development one will advance more quickly. The course examines Maitreya's *Uttaratantra*, the classic Buddhist text on Buddha Nature. Text: *The Uttaratantra: A Treatise on Buddha-Essence* by Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche.

Madhyamaka: The Middle Way – The Buddha first taught the middle way between the extremes of indulgence and asceticism. Later, he taught the middle way between the extremes of permanence and nihilism. This latter teaching is the basis for what became the Middle Way in

Buddhism. The highly influential Madhyamaka or Middle Way school of Indian Buddhism was based on the teachings of the great Nagajuna, and were further elaborated upon by Chandrakirti (*Prasangika*) and Shantarakshita (*Shentong*). This philosophical approach emphasizes the negation of independent phenomenal reality (inherent existence) through logical reductionism in order to arrive at a true understanding of emptiness. This approach is comparable to that of Mahamudra and Dzogchen for understanding the ultimate nature of reality, void of all particular characteristics. Developmental meditations on emptiness are included. Texts: *Introduction to the Middle Way* by Chandrakirti and commentary by Jamgon Mipham and *The Adornment of the Middle Way* by Shantaradshita with commentary by Jamgon Mipham.

Improving Your Practice – This 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. 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.

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Dzogchen Togal – *Togal* 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 enlightenment. Students will learn the practices of *togal* 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.

Leading Practice and Ritual – This course provides guidance in how to prepare for and lead meditation practice, sadhana and prayer book recitations, as well as help a lama with the rituals related to empowerments and other practices. It will also help the student learn to teach ritual practices to others learning the practice.

Teaching Dharma – This course examines the best-practices for teaching in-person or online classes applied to teaching dharma. Students will learn how to plan and organize a teaching and support materials such as a text and handouts, as well as learning activities to sustain student interest and support learning.

Teaching Practicum – Students will practice teaching a course in-person or online under direction of an advanced teacher. The focus will be on strengths and opportunities for improvements.

Leading Dharma – Students will learn management and leadership principles applied to leading a sangha or dharma center.

Guided Retreat – This provides an extended opportunity for the student to review and engage in the practices in some depth. It may be incorporated into the daily life of the householder. This experience will also help to guide future students in retreat.

Guided Study and Thesis – This course provides an opportunity for the student to explore a particular deity or practice in some depth through study, contemplation, and meditation, which can then be brought into a teaching environment. Students will select a topic to be approved by the instructor, then engage in extensive study and practice, followed by a thoroughly developed paper detailing the focus and its practice.

Admission & Registration

There is no separate admission process for the **core curriculum** courses. Although it is best to take the courses sequentially from the beginning (Part 1), a student may begin with any of the eight parts. Starting fall 2014, online courses will be available on an open-entry basis, that is, students may begin at any time (subject to mentor availability). Please check our website to inquire about specific availability. Registration is available on our website under “Classes” (select online or Tucson).

The **advanced curriculum** courses require completion of the Core Curriculum or other similar background, the latter of which must be approved by Khenpo Drimed Dawa in advance. The course schedule depends upon mentor availability. Contact Khenpo.Drimed.Dawa@gmail.com for course availability. Registration is available on our website under “Classes” (select online or Tucson).

The **restricted teaching-dharma curriculum** has very few openings. Interested students must submit a detailed description of their background and interest in the program. The student must describe how they intend to use the knowledge and skills to benefit others. Students must

also describe how they will commit the time and effort required to complete the course of study. Any courses the prospective student wishes to challenge by examination should be clearly identified. Send completed documents to Khenpo.Drimed.Dawa@gmail.com.

Once you have been approved and assigned a mentor, you will be able to register for your course simply by going to our website at AwamInstitute.org to sign up under “Classes” (select online or Tucson), or you may register with the mentor in Tucson.

Payment for online classes is made via PayPal by credit or debit card. The **cost** is currently \$50 per course for each part of *Natural Liberation* and \$60 per part for each of the advanced curriculum courses. The cost of the restricted teaching-dharma curriculum classes is \$75 for each part. Books are purchased by students separately either at local bookstores or online.

Courses and cost are subject to changes without notification. For any other questions or information, please contact Khenpo.Drimed.Dawa@gmail.com.

Thank you for your interest in Awam Tibetan Buddhist Institute’s programs of study in Tibetan Buddhism. We sincerely wish you great success in your path to *innate happiness* for the benefit of all sentient beings!

Bodhicitta, the excellent and precious mind,
Where it is unborn, may it arise.
Where it is born, may it not decline
But ever increase higher and higher!

