

Himalayan Children's Fund News

Dear Friends,

We have our first official reports from Lodroe Nyima Rinpoche, the abbot of Thrangu Monastery in Tibet. It has been confirmed that 23 monks have lost their lives, and more than 100 are injured. Two main halls, a retreat center, a home for the elderly and all monks' residences have collapsed. In addition to their search and rescue efforts, the Chinese Government is tending to the immediate needs of survivors by providing tents and food. Freezing temperatures are adding to the difficulty of survival and people will be living in tents until new homes are constructed. Telephone and other means of communication have been disrupted. That means someone from the monastery has to travel a great distance to send messages and photos, so keeping up to date will continue to be a slow process.

Thankfully, the recently built nunnery and the Wencheng Princess monastery have not been affected.

Thrangu Rinpoche has spoken about the earthquake to the monks in Tibet and has shared his thoughts with students around the world. I include these speeches for you here. Please continue to visit Rinpoche's website for photos and updates. Many thanks to Lee Miracle for his quick and skillful efforts to keep everyone informed. <http://www.rinpoche.com/>

Donations can be made with a check payable to the Himalayan Children's Fund. Please designate the funds for the Thrangu Monastery Tibet relief effort. The option to pay online is also available on the website.

I am happy to report that in the first two days of our appeal HCF received more than \$10,000.00 for Thrangu Monastery. Please see the thank you letter from Thrangu Rinpoche below.

Many thanks to everyone for your kind concern and support.

Sincerely, Debra Ann

Dear Friends,

I like to thank you all very much for being generous, compassionate and being ready to help in this difficult time. I have been receiving letters of condolences, mourn and asking about how to help. I like to request all of you to help in any form you can, by donating or helping to spread information, collecting donations for relief and rebuilding or saying prayers for deceased ones that they may born in the pure land of Amitabha, for strength, relief from fear and food and shelter for the left ones.

Here in Boudha, Kathmandu all of us are saying aspiration prayers in front of Boudhanath Stupa, lighting lamps and collecting donations to send in Yushu. All the Sangha here are shocked and deeply saddened to hear the news about our dharma friends in Thrangu Monastery in Tibet and people of Yushu.

Once again I like to thank you all for your kind support in this difficult time. Your kind support for relief and rebuilding will be of great merits.

With appreciation,

*For Thrangu Rinpoche
Attendant*

Message from Thrangu Rinpoche:

There are many disasters caused by the four elements—earthquakes, wildfires, strong winds, and turbulent seas—and they also bring disease and illness. In such a time, we need to be careful and practice the Dharma as much as we can.

Jyekundo in Tibet is a small and sparsely populated area, but it is a place where there are many Tibetan people, and there are also many monasteries. At Thrangu Monastery in Jyekundo, many of the lamas and monks—both those abroad and those on site—have put in tremendous efforts for many years. These efforts have not just been in terms of external things; they have also put effort into spiritual practice. In terms of study and contemplation, a monastic college for the study of texts and philosophy was founded. It gradually grew and there formed a body of students and scholars, who are the foundation of the teachings. A primary school to provide basic education for young students had also been built.

In terms of meditation, a retreat center for the practice of the Six Yogas of Naropa was built where monks engaged in practice. Another retreat center for the practice of the deities who purify the lower realms, Sarvavid Vairochana and Protector Akshobhya, had been restored and retreatants were doing the practices of those deities. A Mahakala retreat center was built during the time of Karmapa Thekchok Dorje (1798-1868) and contained a statue of Mahakala. Here, daily practices had been held for many generations. In addition, there was a large new temple where daily services were held.

Now there has been the terrible earthquake in Jyekundo, Qinghai, and these structures have all been ruined. Additionally, many monks have passed away in the earthquake. This is a great tragedy and a great obstacle. Please think of this and make good prayers on the behalf of all those who passed away. If you gather merit by helping with the relief and restoration, it will be helpful for the world in general and in particular prevent the Dharma from disappearing. It is important that the lineage of teaching and practice not wane: Without a lineage of teaching and practice, the Dharma would perish.

Sometimes people might think that temples and monasteries are not all that important. However, there are both transient sentient beings and the lasting external environment. With sentient beings, there might be many for a while, including great scholars and meditators. Great lamas might appear. There may be many members of the Sangha, but just as water flows downstream, fifty, sixty, seventy, or eighty years later they will all pass away and a new generation will come. When this happens, even if there were a strong lineage of Dharma in the previous generation, we do not really know whether that lineage would continue in the next.

The way that the lineage can continue from generation to generation is to have a good, stable outer environment. When there is the external environment of a monastery with a shrine, retreat center, and monastic college, then due to that place, the Sangha, great lamas, and great meditators might pass away but the continuity of their activity will remain present there.

This is why restoring monasteries is crucial. If the monasteries fall into ruins, the environment declines as well and the inhabitants gradually disappear. Buddhism would not be able to remain long in this world. But if a monastery continues to exist, the great lamas and masters can perform vast activity for the Dharma during their entire lives. A group of students will gather; the lamas will teach the students; and they will practice. Thus gradually the students will spend the first part of their lives studying and practicing the Dharma and the latter part upholding, protecting, and spreading Buddhism. When that generation comes to its end, a new generation can continue that work, upholding, protecting, and spreading the teachings, which can thus remain. This is why temples and the Sangha are so very important.

If sponsors can make contributions and help in either large or small ways, that would be wonderful. We spend this life gathering wealth and possessions, and sometimes this can be meaningful, but sometimes there is the danger that this might become the grounds for conflict and dispute. For that reason, I ask all the faithful benefactors to help in any way you can.

—Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche

A Letter from Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche to the Monks of Thrangu Monastery

We have been struck by an earthquake in our homeland and in particular at our Thrangu Monastery. The monastic college, retreat center, temple, and dormitories have all been destroyed. Many monks were killed. Many others have been injured and faced with great hardship. Despite this, when we comfort ourselves, we must remember that no one did anything to harm us, nor did we do anything wrong. Instead this is just the way the world is—it is a natural disaster. You are all sad and upset, but instead of wallowing in grief, pray to the Three Jewels. Make good aspiration prayers. Dedicate your virtue to those who have passed to nirvana or died. Doing this will be very good.

When I first heard the news yesterday, I immediately informed the Gyalwang Karmapa and Tai Situ Rinpoche. Both of them developed bodhichitta, recited prayers, and performed purification rituals. His Eminence Situ Rinpoche also performed the Thousand Offerings and many other virtuous rituals. They recited many prayers of aspiration and offering refuge, and so we have received their words of blessing.

A terrible thing has of course happened to those who passed away, but if they had died in another place, it would have been difficult to get such great masters like the Gyalwang Karmapa and Situ Rinpoche to recite prayers on their behalf. In this great disaster, not only did these masters recite prayers, they also regard them with their eyes of wisdom. This is a great fortune, and so all of you please think of this from a broader perspective.

This is of course a terrible event for us, but as the Bhagavan Buddha taught in the True Dharma, the characteristic of this samsaric world is that the end of birth is death, the end of meeting is parting, the end of gathering is using up, and the end of building is falling down. There is nothing that will not meet one of these four ends, he said. This is just the way this world of ours naturally is. This is nothing that anyone else has done to cause us problems, nor is there anything that someone has done wrong to cause this. It just happened naturally. Thus the most important thing is to go for refuge and make aspiration and dedication prayers; it is important to think about this from a wider perspective and do positive acts.

Although I would like to come there, it is a long way and I am old, so I am not able to come immediately. However, I will do as many prayers and aspirations as I can. The monastery has been destroyed, but in general, sometimes things wax, and sometimes they wane. Since this is just the characteristic of samsara, if we do not let ourselves get discouraged, it is not necessarily bad. We and others just need to do the best we can.

I have told the lamas at my overseas centers that they absolutely must go to see the situation, help recite prayers and aspirations for the deceased, and help care for the sick and injured. I have also asked them to examine the damaged monastery buildings and to do their best to work together with you until the monastery has been rebuilt. This is important, so I would like to ask all of you to cooperate with them in looking at the buildings, meeting with them, and accompanying them. Please make a connection with them. My own thought is that we will do whatever is best for the future. I cannot blame you for being sad and grieving now, but I do ask you to please look from a wider perspective and give yourselves courage.

Dictated by Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche after the devastating earthquake struck Jyekundo in Tibet on April 14, 2010.

