

Annual Report 2023 | Celebrating 20 Years

BUILDING THE SANGHA BUILDING FORTITUDE



Sravasti Abbey
A Buddhist Monastery
Creating Peace in a Chaotic World



A Message from Founder & Abbess Bhikshuni Thubten Chodron

Sravasti Abbey's 20th anniversary was cause for celebration, yet 2023 gave us little time to bask in the achievement. The year overflowed with activity: more ordinations than ever in one year, opportunities to exchange with ordained sangha around the world, meeting obstacles including the death of resident and teacher Geshe Dadul Namgyal, and the ongoing construction of the Buddha Hall. It was quite a year.

Building Sangha

The Abbey's primary mission is to support, train, and grow a flourishing monastic community so that Buddha's wisdom on nonviolence, love, and compassion are preserved and shared with the world.

In 2023 we had abundant opportunities to cultivate and collaborate with sangha in this altruistic venture.



Geshe Dadul Namgyal offers instruction for two newly ordained monks. Master Jian Hu (center) served as preceptor.

At our founding in 2003, I was the only monastic until Ven. Tarpa ordained in 2006. Ordinations followed steadily at about one a year for a long time. However, 2023 saw six ordinations—two new monks, Venerables Thubten Gyatso and Thubten Konchog; and two new nuns, Venerables Thubten Puntsok and Thubten Pelgye. All are Abbey residents, bringing our monastic community to 23. Also, Ven. Karya from the Dharmadatta Nuns Community, who

took novice precepts with us two years ago, returned to receive the siksamana trainings. On top of that, Ven. Pema took bhikshuni (full) ordination in Taiwan.

Ven. Samten led a workshop about Abbey monastic training for the 18th Sakyadhita International Conference in Korea, and three Abbey nuns took leading roles in the International Bhikshuni Varsa at the original Shravasti in India. They shared about the rites and responsibilities of a bhikshuni sangha with 137 nuns from 10 countries. About 40 of them had received full ordination in Bhutan in 2022.

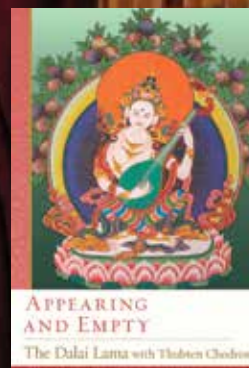
At year's end, along with Venerables Damcho and Konchog, I joined 2,000 monastics at the three-day International Sangha Forum in Bodh Gaya, India. His Holiness the Dalai Lama gave the opening address on "Bridging Traditions, Embracing Modernity: A Dialogue on the Buddha's Teaching in Today's World." I was honored to speak to this distinguished assembly.

All these experiences affirmed Sravasti Abbey's vital role in sharing the Dharma in the 21st century and preserving it for future generations. This is what you generously support.

Sharing the Dharma

We offered 13 retreats and courses at the Abbey and gave over 100 talks or courses to outside groups, both in person and online. The list is too long to publish, but highlights are on the following pages. I was especially pleased to end the year with a long teaching trip that began in Seattle and included talks in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Taiwan, and India. The dedication of Friends of Sravasti Abbey in Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia especially amazes and humbles us.

Our in-house weekly teachings continued as Ven. Sangye Khadro, Geshe Dadul Namgyal, and I taught from several different texts. A special treasure was Geshe la's thorough and detailed talks on the first 21 verses of Chapter 9 of Shantideva's *Engaging in the Bodhisattva's Deeds*. Meanwhile, Geshe Yeshe Thabkhe's precious commentary on *The Rice*



Geshe Dadul Namgyal

1959-2023



Generous, insightful, and immersed in the Dharma, Geshe Dadul Namgyal strove to benefit others. He leaves a rich Dharma legacy, and we rejoice at the time we shared with him.

Seedling Sūtra and *The Diamond Sūtra* (hosted by Jewel Heart) nourished us. Like all Abbey teachings, these are freely available on our YouTube channel. We also met weekly with Professor Jeffrey Hopkins for most of the year.

Wisdom Publications released *Appearing and Empty*, Volume 9 in The Library of Wisdom and Compassion, in October while I was working on the text of Volume 10, *Vajrayāna and the Culmination of the Path*, which will be the final book in the series. This decades-long collaboration with His Holiness the Dalai Lama has been indescribably rich. We trust these books will benefit Dharma students far into the future. I was happy to offer Volume 9, the third of three volumes on the profound view of emptiness and dependent arising, in person to His Holiness in December.

Building Fortitude

The Abbey community also faced challenges in 2023. Due to a forest fire raging two miles from our buildings, the community evacuated in a moment's notice. We are incredibly grateful to our supporters for, on the spur of the moment, housing 23 people and four cats for a week until the sheriff gave us the all clear to return. Thankfully, the Abbey didn't suffer any damage. Unfortunately, many of our neighbors lost their homes.

Then, about two weeks later, everyone except two people came down with Covid within a 24-hour period. Again, our supporters came to the rescue, preparing nutritious and delicious meals for the entire community.

After many years of annual teachings, and visits that grew longer and longer, Geshe Dadul Namgyal officially joined our community in late 2022 upon retirement from Emory University. Bringing a Lharam Geshe's precise knowledge, his own vast wisdom, his gift with Tibetan and English languages, ardent practice, whimsical humor and pure Dharma joy, we welcomed him wholeheartedly. His sudden disappearance in November and his death pronouncement at the new year have affected our community in a way that we have yet to fully grasp. At the same time, his legacy continues to teach and inspire us. We rejoice in the astonishing accomplishments and merit he created in this life and pray to meet him and receive the nectar of his teachings again in the future.

Building the Buddha Hall

Through it all—hundreds of guests, countless hours of meditation practice, wildfire smoke, our wonderful anniversary celebration, interfaith dialogues, prison work, scores of Search & Rescue volunteers swarming the property, forest maintenance—the Buddha Hall construction teams were at work. There's a Buddha Hall report on page 5. We hope to rejoice in the final result of these labors in 2024.

Teachings on impermanence and dependent arising tell us that one moment passes seamlessly to the next as appearances arise in dependence on myriad conditions that are also momentary. That means nothing comes without a cause, and even as it appears, its results are already changing. In truth, there's no tidy, discrete package containing the contents of any single year.

Still, your gifts, prayers, course attendance, personal practice, volunteer hours, good wishes, and love came together as critical conditions for the Abbey's activities in 2023 and for the very existence of the Abbey.

After twenty years, we're still creating peace in a chaotic world and welcome you to join us in this meaningful endeavor. Thank you for your good heart and your support. Together, we will keep the light of the Dharma alive in our own hearts and, therefore, in the world for the benefit of all.

Bhikshuni Thubten Chodron

Publications

NEW RELEASES



Appearing and Empty
Volume 9 in The Library of Wisdom and Compassion

The Dalai Lama and Ven. Thubten Chodron
Wisdom Publications



365 Gems of Wisdom

Ven. Thubten Chodron and Sravasti Abbey Monastics | Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery free distribution publications



Living the Vinaya: An Introduction to Karmans and Skandhakas

Bhikshuni Master Wuyin Shih and the Nuns of Luminary International Buddhist Society
Sravasti Abbey Publications



Articles by or about Abbey monastics appeared in more than a dozen print and online publications.

TRANSLATIONS



The Basket without Words, The Illuminator's Matrix Sutra

into English by
Ven. Thubten Damcho, 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha



Working with Anger into French (*Transformer la Colère*) by Karine Guillemette, Sravasti Abbey Publications



Courageous Compassion into Spanish (*Compasión Valerosa*), Ediciones Amara



Searching for the Self into Spanish (*¿Quién SOY yo?*), Ediciones Amara

Online Outreach



YouTube Channel

685 teachings posted
818,558 views
33,818 subscribers



Insight Timer Meditation App

382,161 listens



2023 Retreat from Afar

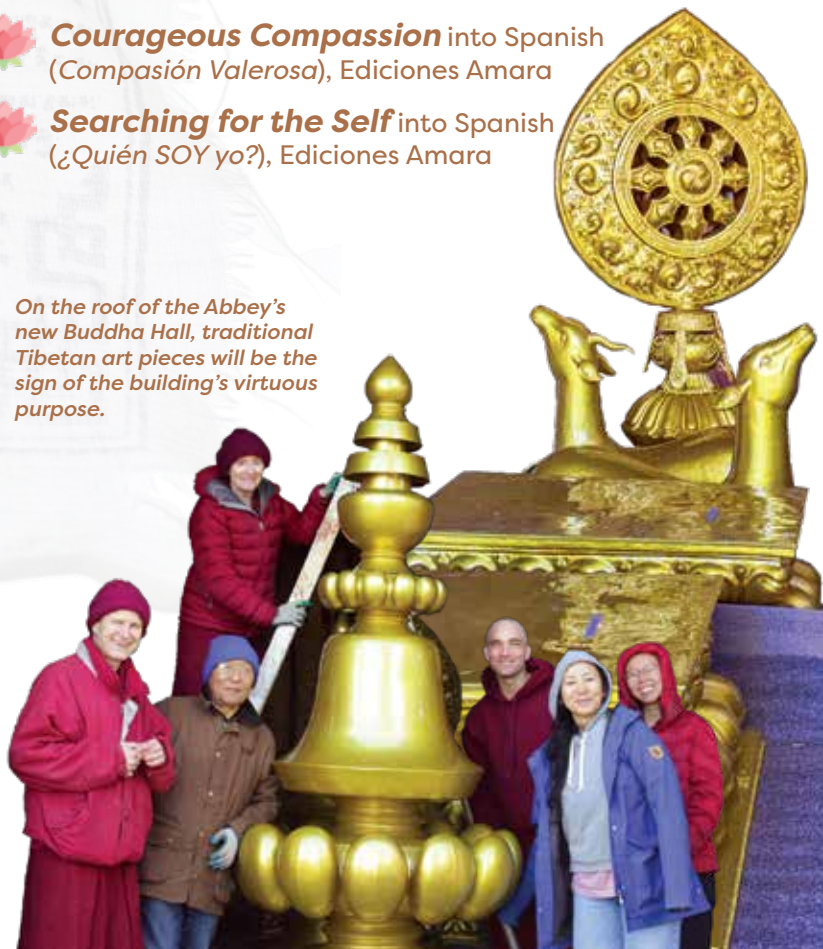
455 participants, including Dharma friends in Russia, Ukraine, and in U.S. prisons



Sravasti Abbey Friends Education Program

325 participants

On the roof of the Abbey's new Buddha Hall, traditional Tibetan art pieces will be the sign of the building's virtuous purpose.





Together, we'll finish the Buddha Hall!

The continued goodwill, merit, and resources from people like you are building this temple devoted to creating peace in a chaotic world. Your help is essential as we finish the Buddha Hall.



For 20 years, Sravasti Abbey has grown a monastic community and shared Buddha's teachings freely, often with people who had never heard them before. And their lives are transformed.

The new Buddha Hall strengthens that altruistic aim. It will expand teaching and practice space, improve online offerings with updated technology, and house a huge collection of precious Dharma texts.

Construction began in July 2022. By the end of 2023, the Buddha Hall was roughly 70% complete. We still need to finish and paint the interior, and install plumbing, lighting, flooring, etc. Outside, we'll pour walkways, do landscaping, and mount the roof ornaments. Once the hand-crafted altar goes in, sculptor Peter Griffin will finish the magnificent statues in the main hall. We aim to finish in 2024. We'll set consecration plans in a few months.

Soon, young seekers and long-time practitioners, Buddhists and non-Buddhists, monastics and lay followers will visit the Buddha Hall. They'll practice ethical conduct and non-violence, grow their kind hearts, and deepen in wisdom. Imagine their impact on others as they cultivate these qualities day by day. That's one way your support contributes to peace in a chaotic world.





Building the Sangha

by Sharing the Dharma

2023 Retreats & Courses at the Abbey

-  **2023 New Year's Vajrasattva Retreat**
Ven. Sangye Khadro
-  **Four Establishments of Mindfulness Winter Retreat**
-  **Peaceful Living, Peaceful Dying Retreat**
Ven. Sangye Khadro
-  **Good Karma Memorial Day Weekend Retreat**
Ven. Thubten Chodron
-  **Young Adults Explore Buddhism**
Ven. Thubten Chodron
-  **Working with Afflictive Minds Retreat** (Pt. 1 & Pt. 2)
Geshe Dadul Namgyal
-  **Exploring Monastic Life** - Ven. Thubten Chodron
-  **Four-Armed Chenrezig Retreat** - Ven. Sangye Khadro
-  **Perfection of Ethics Labor Day Weekend Retreat** - Geshe Dadul Namgyal
-  **Good Grief Retreat** - Ven. Sangye Khadro
-  **Nyung Ne Retreat** - Ven. Tenzin Tsepal
-  **Refuge Ngondro & Four Noble Truths Winter Retreat** (2023-2024)
-  **2024 New Year's Vajrasattva Retreat**
Ven. Sangye Khadro & Ven. Thubten Jigme
-  **Monthly Sharing the Dharma Day & Offering Service Saturday**

Monastic training includes weekly Vinaya classes, bi-monthly Posadha, a winter Vinaya training course; our annual winter Varsa retreat concluding with Pravara and Kathina; and ongoing personal instruction in monastic ethics and comportment.

▼ The sangha enters Varsa, our winter "snows retreat."



Online Teaching Series

-  **The Rice Seedling Sutra**
Geshe Yeshe Thabkhe
-  **Middle-Length Lamrim**
Ven. Sangye Khadro
-  **Engaging in the Bodhisattva's Deeds**
Ven. Thubten Chodron & Geshe Dadul Namgyal
-  **Taking Refuge**
Ven. Thubten Chonyi
-  **Samsara, Nirvana, and Buddha Nature**
Ven. Thubten Chodron & Geshe Dadul Namgyal

Interfaith activities become more precious as the world seems to become more fractious over religious issues. We regularly meet with local interfaith groups, give Sunday talks at local churches, and join interfaith events such as Spokane's Interfaith Pride Service.



Our 20th Anniversary Celebration brought together old and new friends to remember, reflect, honor, and rejoice in the Abbey's evolution, its influence in the world, and the thousands of people who have touched and shaped it.



The annual Young Adults Explore Buddhism course introduces meditation, Buddhist ethics, and the joys of service outdoors.



Ven. Thubten Chodron traveled to Seattle, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Taiwan, and India for in-person talks and gave dozens more teachings online for places in North America, Europe, Australia, and Asia.

Ven. Sangye Khadro taught at Thubten Norbu Ling in Santa Fe and gave online talks and courses for FPMT centers and others in Singapore, Scotland, France, India, Michigan, and Israel, plus in-person local teachings.

In addition, Abbey monastics gave dozens of in-person and online talks, including visits to Singapore and Atlanta, GA, as well as in local cities: Spokane and Newport, WA and Sandpoint and Coeur d'Alene, ID.



Abbey monastics join in an interfaith Vigil for Healing Earth's Waters in Spokane.

Twice-monthly prison visits have resumed at nearby Airway Heights Correctional Center, enhancing our ongoing Prison Dharma Program. More than 1,000 inmates read and share Dharma materials and publications from the Abbey, and hundreds join in the annual Retreat from Afar. We continue to serve on the board of Newport's Youth Emergency Services.

In addition to offering our annual Young Adults Explore Buddhism course, we spoke with young people in person and online at Agnes Scott College, California State University-LA, Emory University, Gonzaga University, Human Spirit Psychoanalytic Buddhist Institute (Israel), North Idaho College, Mt. Holyoke College, Parami University (Myanmar), Seattle University, Singapore Management University, Smith College, and Universiti Sains (Malaysia).

Mitigating Wildfires and Preserving the Land

The Oregon Road Fire, which burned nearly 11,000 acres and destroyed 137 homes, came within two miles of the Abbey, testing our wildfire readiness. Our evacuation plan worked well, and we learned ways to make it better. The kindness of the firefighting teams and evacuation hosts is incalculable.

The most recent buildings—including the Buddha Hall-in-progress—are made with Faswall, a fire resistant, green building product. We were confident that

our fire mitigation work around the buildings and in the forest had made the Abbey as safe as possible.

Wonderful volunteers help with forest and noxious weed management. So do the Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP) grants we receive from Washington State to support fire mitigation and preserve wildlife habitat. These funds help offset the cost of forest tools, labor, and supplies. We couldn't do it without our volunteers!



▼ During the fire evacuation, our monthly Zoom Medicine Buddha Puja went on as scheduled. Some community members gathered at one of our host homes to join online.





Supporting the Sangha

with your kindness

"I have received so much help from the teachings from the Abbey....life is so much better than it used to be. So I know that others who hear the Buddha's teaching from reliable teachers will also benefit and that is a wonderful thought."

—Francesca Okerlund
Spokane, WA

We value transparency in all our activities. However, we no longer think it's wise to publish financial reports or donors' names on the web. Write the office for a complete copy of the Annual Report that includes the financial report and benefactors.



The effects of your gift extend far beyond the current fiscal year. All donations received in excess of annual operating expenses are held in reserve for special purposes, like building the Buddha Hall, and saved to support the natural growth of the monastic community into the future.



Sravasti Abbey

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*Thank you for your good heart
and your support. Together, we'll
keep the light of the Dharma
alive in our own hearts and,
therefore, in the world
for the benefit of all.*

