

# Welcome to Jang Chup Chopel Buddhist Centre

This is **Jang Chup Chopel** ( place of Enlightenment ) Buddhist Centre - PRETORIA. Contact Gyalten Nyima

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## About Gyalten Nyima



About 18 years ago I believe I experienced a spiritual awakening. I was about 30 years old when I awoke one morning with the feeling inside me that there was much more to life than just the ordinary appearances we daily perceive and observe. It was like a veil that opened for me just in a split second that I could have a glimpse through it. I was always in search of spiritual truth since I was a child. I grew up in a Christian family and thought if I search deeper into religion I will find answers.

I even studied theology for 5 years to get answers and try to understand the concept of a loving god. What mostly puzzled me was human suffering and why even so-called good people suffer and bad people have good lives and knew there had to be deeper underlying reasons why people on this planet are suffering so much and religion teaches compassion, love and grace, although not really evident to me. At this stage my life I was also in turmoil, caught in a bad marriage with a beautiful little baby daughter.

I actually tried everything in my life from bad to worse to obtain happiness and failed miserably so even in religion I could not find any grounding and happiness. The morning of my apparent awakening I decided not to go to class but to a movie instead, very funny! That day I saw the movie Kundun, the life story on the Dalai Lama. It touched me deeply and I really felt all that I saw on the screen was very familiar to me. The next day in bible class we received a little booklet on the Buddha's teachings, we were studying world religions and that little booklet was supposed to refute the Buddha's teaching in comparison with the bible, but it had the opposite effect on me. The Buddha's teaching on the 4 noble truth and the path to cessation of suffering made quite a lot of sense to me, and the rest was history.

I started meditation and retreats at a Taiwanese Buddhist temple and even got to live and work there for a year. It was a great experience for me learning walking and sitting meditation from great teachers, although I was not really totally ready for the experience staying in a monastery with strict rules and all. I also went through a divorce at the time and had lots of opposition from conservative family and church and actually got excommunicated from the institution because I chose to meditate. I really started to understand the law of karma and that every cause has an effect. Although I did not really understand how purification of these effects worked I just knew meditation practice made me feel better and helped me to deal better with life's problems.

Later on I made my connection with Tibetan Buddhism when a Karma Kaguy lama visited South Africa. I received my refuge from him and became an official Buddhist. The week he was here was one of the best weeks of my life and I received many empowerments and blessings from him, and thus I began studying and practicing different types of meditation and chanting practices, although I still went through a lot of difficulties and problems. In my life at that stage things started to make more sense to me although this was a long process of healing and purification. I was also involved in little home Buddhist groups, started teaching here and there. Once we were at a Christmas function where an open minded lady started calling me a Buddhist boer because of my culture and that I was Afrikaans speaking, very unique for this conservative culture of mine.

Up until today I still have family not associating with me because of my choice. So from there many years of ups and downs, studying and practicing. I always had a great wish to start a Buddhist centre here in my town Pretoria. This wish was in my heart for a long time, over many years, and my search for Tibetan teachers and a lineage that would support this idea, as I live in a conservative town, not many of these lineages wanted to bite on this idea not even my refuge lineage Karma Kaguy. Although there are little meditation groups no centres were founded here, although there are some in Johannesburg, Cape town and Durban. I knew I was on my own in this venture. I did my first trip to India two years back where I met the 17th Karmapa the second highest lama in Tibetan Buddhism although he said maybe one day he will visit SA I could not get any clarity from him or direction on a centre for our town. The man is also very busy and I think he probably will not even remember me. I received Chod teachings and empowerments from him that was really great.

So my search went on, studying and teaching the Dharma. I had a brief stint with another Buddhist group here in SA that I thought could help, and they did a bit of teaching here in my city, but saddening to me I found out that this group was highly political and had certain problems with the Dalai Lama. Also the problem was that they were very territorial and cultish. Although their political issues carry some merit I found this was not the way forward as we are just interested in practising Dharma without politics. The best thing that I learned there was about a great teacher called Je Tsongkhapa, a great scholar and simple monk in the middle ages in Tibet who taught on the sutra and Tantra teaching of Buddha, wrote numerous commentaries on the complete path of lam rim, and was also the founder of the Gelug lineage in Tibetan Buddhism. In addition he found and started many monasteries like Je Sera in Tibet which is now also in India.

A miracle happened at last, when last year I got invited to India to attend a great empowerment called Yamantaka and the Jamyang Choekor Tantric Cycle, which the latter only occurs every 20 years or so. How blessed I felt as the causes and conditions came together for me to go. I met my Guru and teacher there, Lama Choden Rinpoche and Geshe Gyelten. How wonderful! In short it was a great connection and good karma as I finally got support to start a Dharma centre here in my city Pretoria. The most wonderful thing that happened is that I got granted ordination as a monk and from there my new name Venrable Gyalten Nyima, which means shinning like the sun.

My spiritual guide gave our centre the formal name "Jang Chup Chopel", which means "Place of Enlightenment". We are so fortunate and I really hope many people will pass through here to follow and practice a complete path of Sutra and Tantra, receiving blessings and cultivating permanent inner peace

May Buddha bless you all

Ven. Gyalten Nyima - aka (Buddhist Boertjie)