



THE WHEEL OF TIMES

KAGYU E-VAM BUDDHIST INSTITUTE NEWSLETTER

Buddhism: Religion or Spirituality?

Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche

This is the second of the three talks given by Traleg Rinpoche at the 2010 Buddhist Summer School held at Maitripa Contemplative Centre, Healesville.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Channeling the Inner Yak – Travels through India and McLeod Ganj
- Sri lankan Journey
- 28th Buddhist Summer School
- International News
- Upcoming Activities at E-Vam Melbourne and Maitripa Centre
- Maitripa Centre News
- New Titles at Akshara
- Yeshe Nyima – Sydney
- E-Vam Institute New York
- Nyima Tashi – NZ



We have been discussing the question posed by many people as to whether Buddhism is a form of spirituality or a religion. I think that the notion of religion and spirituality should go together. They should be in harmony, particularly if we follow our religious traditions properly. That's the whole key, because we know that 'religion' is full of contradictions. Religion promotes violence and promotes peace. Religion says you should feast, and religion says you should fast. Religion says you should be socially engaged, and then it says be socially disengaged, live in isolation, become a hermit, grow your own vegetables or whatever. But religion says all of those things, that's the truth. Religion says feast on your senses, and religion also says don't feast on your senses, senses are bad, you will get distracted, you will go astray with what you see, smell, taste, touch. Religion does say all those things.

So as Buddhists, we have to try to work out how to deal with that issue basically as

religious people and as spiritual people. And we can do that, because as I mentioned in the previous talk, the religious aspects themselves are not to be blamed for all the bad things that go on in the world. Because certain people are very religious and they are caught up with certain fundamentalist belief systems or whatever, it is not because of the religion, but it is because of how religion itself has been incorporated or appropriated by the individual, because they have lost sight of the spiritual aspect. And that's the whole thing. When one is becoming too religious, worshipping this god or that god, one is forgetting one's inner self. The inner nature is forgotten and we are too focussed on the external, for example the sacred book we are reading. As we read the bible or sacred text, we then take the passages literally. We don't go further, we don't try to understand what those passages mean, you know, what it's all about, we don't do that. We read the Bhagavad Gita and just take it literally: we say, oh, the Bhagavad Gita is talking about fighting and violence, you

know, and so that's what it's all about.

So a spiritual person always tries to understand and learn the traditional literatures in a deeper way, they always try to go behind the written word. That is the truth. If you really want to understand your own religious tradition, if you are serious, you would do that, you won't just be satisfied with what you find in a written book, and say, 'Well this is what the holy book says: the holy book says beat up your next door neighbour'. You might want to actually think about that one, and ask: 'What does that mean? Who is the next door neighbour? And as you would find out, in Buddhist tradition, in the literatures, often the language used is metaphorical, and things like that. Symbolic language, metaphorical language is used liberally in all religious literatures, and particularly so in Buddhism, I believe.

So that is something really to be taken seriously, I think, and if we do that, then we can get a deeper understanding of the ritual practices that we talked about in the previous talk. In religion, we do all kinds of rituals, and I also mentioned that ritual is a part of what we do anyway as human beings. We cannot not do ritualistic things. One example I mentioned in the previous talk was even when you want to take somebody out for dinner or whatever, that you dress up, and why do you do that? Why not just not shower and smell bad. Some people might get turned on by that, but anyway I'm not going to go into that, that might be a form of ritual too. We really do these things because ritual is part of everything that we do, and as I said to you before, there is nothing wrong with it, and it is a good thing.

If we do ritualistic things as a means to an end, we would be better off, but we don't do that. When we become too religious, the rituals themselves become the end, and the holy scripture becomes the end in itself, because we can recite certain passages from the Bible or from the Koran or from the Dharmapada or the Bhagavad Gita then we think this is it, this is the truth. If we already think we've got the truth, there is no journey, there is no journey of the soul. Because you already have worked it out, you already know what is the truth, because the truth is in what is written. If we spent a bit of

time reading the scriptures properly, and tried to go behind the written words, we would come off richer, with a better understanding. The truth is in what you are doing ritualistically, even in terms of abstinence or indulgence or whatever it might be. If you are a sadhu, you might be smoking 'ganga' or 'bom shankar'- and it is permitted by the way, religiously this is permitted, seriously. And so that is the thing.



So how to integrate it is the question, and I want to talk about that in the next talk, but for now, I just want to say that we become more spiritual when we are not so fixated on the rituals and all kinds of other things, even in terms of ethics, morality and social agendas. To develop as a spiritual person, one cannot have fixed ideas, fixed notions about anything. This does not mean that morally one is not saying something is not good or bad, but one does not get fixated on what is good or bad. Because when you get fixated, often it has nothing to do with whether it is

really good or not, it has more to do with your own psychological state. You think it's bad, so it becomes bad. It is almost as simple as that, sorry to say. But really, it is like you think it is bad, so it is bad, so you don't want anybody else to do that. But it is not like that, so if we are not thinking like that we will be more open in terms of what we think is more beneficial, more helpful.

In Buddhism, for example, we talk about what brings more benefit and happiness to people, as the Dalai Lama keeps on saying, rather than what we think is right, or just, or something. Sometimes, what we think is right or just, actually brings unhappiness to other people. This is true. We think we are on the side of the righteous and we become the moral crusader, saying, 'you should be like this', and telling people in the third world countries how they should behave, and how they should live, and 'if you behave this way then you will no longer be living in poverty, in abject poverty, you won't be killing each other' and whatnot. Really it is not like that.

I hope I am making some sense, really this is true though. Sometimes even when we become too preoccupied by what we care about, the environment and things like that, we can go on like that. But if we become moral from the Buddhist point of view, where there is some kind of openness, then we can work with this. We can never develop, we can never really grow if we already have worked out the solution: it is already pre-empted. If we are approaching any kind of issue where we think, I've got the solution and now all you have to do is just follow my instructions and we will be living in a wonderful world, everybody will be singing with joy. It is not like that, of course. That's the thing.

So what Buddhism says is really that the imperfection of the world is the reason why we need to do all the things that we need to do – show compassion, love, all of that. We have to be moral and ethical because of that. If we already have the answers we don't need to be moral. There is nothing to fix, or its like we already have got the answers. But we don't have all the answers. Even the people who want to implement certain things to make things better, we don't

really have the answers, we are only guessing. And that is the wisdom that comes from the notion of interdependence, which I will talk about in the next talk.

But anyway, so there is the moral issue and the social issue. Buddhism does not deny being part of society. People ask: 'Should one be a hermit or should one be engaging with people, live in normal society and lead a normal life? What should one do?' And of course in Buddhism we have many stories told about hermits. But Buddhist hermits are actually very different to what you might think of as hermits. Our Buddhist hermits are ubiquitous, they pop up everywhere. They are more like what you might consider 'homeless', rather than those people who in the worst sense of the word 'hermit' that just hate people and do not want to consort with anyone, that kind of thing. Because Buddhist hermits disappear and then they pop up in the most unlikely places. And this is true, really in all of Asia that this is how the Buddhist hermits live and a lot of the Indian sadhus and so forth they live that way also. They don't shy away from people, they are quite happy to be with others. They'll do that and they'll do other things too, but I don't want to go into that in case somebody gets offended, they do all kinds of things. So that's the thing.

So what I am trying to lead the discussion towards, since we are talking about Buddhism and spirituality and religion, what I am trying to say is that feasting and fasting, abstinence and indulgence and all of that really can be reconciled. And that is so because even in terms of people who we believe are living this lifestyle of total restraint, a renunciant's life, we see that actually they are not really living the renunciant's life as you might think. Buddhist renunciants, sometimes fast sometimes they feast. So even the retreatants who live in caves they have feast days when they gorge themselves and then they fast. But this is really important, if you really think about it in the spiritual way, because it is about exercising, like building oneself up in terms of strength. You have to be strong as a person. Buddhism teaches that you have to be strong. To develop spiritually

you have to be a strong person, you cannot be a weak person. If you are weak then you will suffer from all kinds of malaise, but if you are strong then you develop quicker, that is true.

So feasting and fasting, and restraint and indulgence, going back and forth, back and forth, builds you up. If you are behaving in only one particular way, then you become habituated in that way, so then it is not helpful. But if you are going back and forth, it is more dangerous, but it builds you up, because you feast and then you fast, because normally you could get used to eating too much and be constantly eating or whatever, or if you fast and don't eat then you may become emaciated and anorexic or something. But moving between these things really



is helpful and that is what Buddhism teaches. And the same thing with social engagement. I don't know how you will relate to this, but I really do believe that what Buddhism says is that politically we should take interest, we should be engaged, but on the other hand we should also be disengaged.

In other words, to develop spiritually from a Buddhist point of view, engagement and disengagement should go together all the time. So we are engaged and we are disengaged. It may sound like a peculiar thing, but it is not, because if we get too engaged, we get too upset about something or other and then we lose perspective, and if we are too disengaged we lose interest. So it makes

sense that we should be engaged and disengaged at the same time.

So it is like that, that's what I said from the social level, from the moral/ethical perspective and the sensory level, what we smell, taste, touch, feel, all of them, the same principle applies: engaged but disengaged. And if we do that then we grow as a spiritual person. If we don't do that, we don't grow, because we become fixated. We become fixated on whatever it is, like 'I don't want this, I don't want to deal with this, I don't like this, I don't like that, or I like this, I like that', this kind of thing. As you know, in Buddhism we talk a lot about how we feel. Buddhism is really based on that. Buddhism is always talking about how we feel: our likes; dislikes; desires; anger; resentment; jealousy; and pride.

So as spiritual people we have to try to deal with it in that way, because how we engage on the social level, how we engage with people on the moral/ethical level, and how we engage with people psychologically in every way is based on that. As I said before, even with the notion of morality, often it comes down to what we like or don't like, or what we approve of, and what we don't approve of and things like that. It's not about what is beneficial, what is helpful, because as I mentioned already, what is right may not be beneficial, and that is the Buddhist view and I hope that makes sense because often I think we in the West tend to think that what is right is right, and that should be good for everybody. But what is right is not necessarily beneficial. What is beneficial may not be right but it is still beneficial. I hope that makes sense.

And so as a spiritual person then you have to keep on learning, that's what I am trying to say, that's why Buddhism talks about path and stages of development. If everything is worked out in advance, you don't have to learn anything, even in the Buddhist teachings about the path and stages, the teachings say these are just guidelines. You don't take them literally, like this is exactly how it is going to pan out. They are just guidelines that you follow, and then you learn on the path, as you develop, that's the truth. So you keep on learning, but you have to have some kind of guidelines and that is what Buddhist teachings provide. ■

Channeling the Inner Yak

Travels through India & McLeod Ganj

7-20 November 2010

INDIA

It is as if some enormous cataclysm has struck and the entire joint is being feverishly rebuilt for your arrival but unfortunately, you've arrived early. They're still working on it.

Hygiene is still related to prayer; once the appropriate prayers have been offered, it's now respectable. If you happen to get sick, that's obviously your karma at work.

An orange mist of pollution and dust lies trapped under the huge layer of cold air flowing off the Himalayas, holding the murky haze in place. Each morning, pressed further down by the cool night air, the haze has thickened and sunk lower. As the day warms, the gritty fog gradually rises to swallow more of the sky. The sun sets not over the horizon but sinks in the late afternoon, swallowed by the red swamp of haze.

Delhi

At the centre, the magnificent Connaught Circle showed signs of time's desolation, dishevelment hovering over the pavement which in parts is crumbling back to earth, a blur of low clouds draped above the scene.

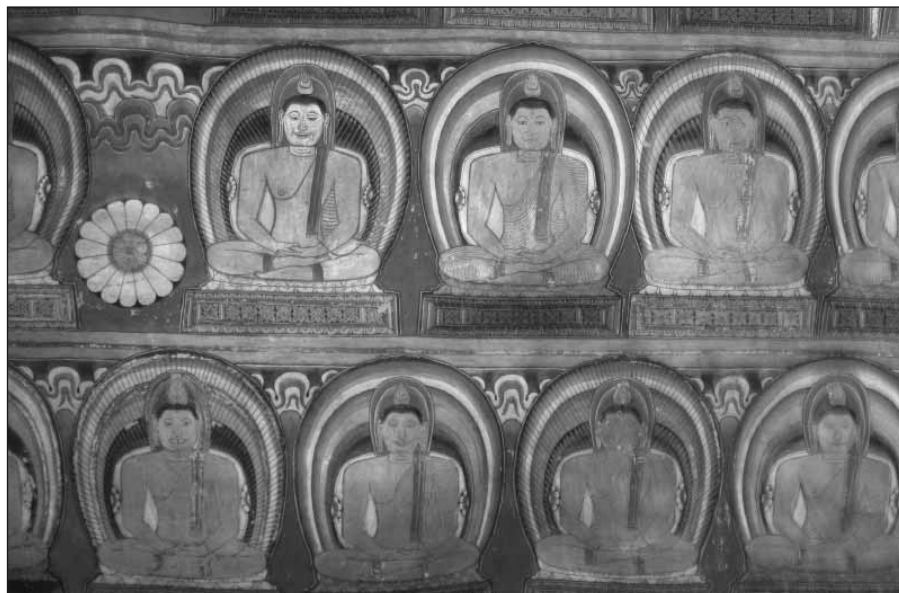
Quick metro ride, security entrance, soldier with rifle, bag goes through airport type scanner. No photos allowed! Passengers obediently queue in tidy lines on the platform, stationed where the carriage doors will halt.

Old Delhi looks exactly as I remember it, just more motorised.

McLeod Ganj

Taxi drivers are expert at negotiating the narrow roads up to McLeod Ganj. When the car in front realises the one behind is more powerful and eager to overtake, at an appropriate spot of road where there's room, the front car pulls over to the left (the Raj brought left-hand drive to India) and then indicates with its right-side blinker to tell the car behind, now you can overtake.

Beggars congregate at the end of the day and go off as a group. From my hotel window at the Surya in McLeod, I'd



watch the beggars arrive on Temple Road in the morning, a ragged bunch who'd move off singly to their chosen spot for the day. No such thing as a sole beggar.

A delightful old Tibetan lady, swinging her hand prayer-wheel, sold me a wrist string. I wanted the purple one but she insisted I had to take the orange as well and went to tie it around my left wrist. I remonstrated that I wanted it on my right wrist. She very firmly but kindly pointed out that the orange went on the left, the purple was for my right wrist.

I'd buy an apple from the Muslim fruit and veg shopkeeper, take it back to the hotel for washing, then go to the dining room to borrow the sharp knife so I could cut, peel and core the apple. Sitting there looking at the view while I ate apple provided amusement for the hotel staff.

After several days in McLeod Ganj, apart from the lack of oxygen at 1770 metres that made walking uphill a struggle for my tobacco polluted lungs, I noticed the air was so dry that my lips were cracking. I applied lip balm until I realised the knuckles on the back of my hands were also very dry, so dry that my skin became like parchment. The slightest knock against any surface and my red knuckles would crack and bleed. I put lip balm on my knuckles.

Walking up Temple Road one evening, a tap on my shoulder and it was Anil, one of the receptionists at the Surya. He found amusement by watching my amusement walking along in the glow of shop-lights with the gaggle of families taking the evening air, smiling at me snapping pics.

Shoes

The Indian chap who ran the shoe-shine stall at the junction of Temple and Hotel Bhagsu roads had been there for 16 years, coming up by bus from below Dharamsala each morning. I noticed he could not only shine shoes but had laces, replacement soles, stitching gear and various paraphernalia. I asked if I could have my shoes shined and he offered me some sandals to wear while I was waiting. My besocked feet slid into the slip-ons. As he went to take the laces out of my shoes before cleaning them, I had the thought: Oh, don't take the laces out! Because they are so tricky to relace. I hadn't worked out why but it was inordinately difficult to thread the laces through the holes, the plastic ends kept catching on the leather. Before I could say anything, he held up a shoe and pointed out something I had never, in three years of owning these excellent clodhoppers, noticed.

Lifting the side flap, he revealed that the lace holes had metal liners on the inside but only bare leather on the outside. From his collection, he produced a small round tin and displayed its contents; metal eyelet liners. His suggestion was to remove all the inner liners and replace them with his pairs of inner-and-outer. In a matter of minutes, pulling the old ones off with pliers and banging the new ones into place with a little hammer, he'd done the job. Only then did he turn to polishing my boots which he did as if they belonged to someone important. My brown shoes shining like some crazy diamond, I strode up the road, beaming with pleasure. When I arrived back at the hotel, I realised another impossible occurrence only India can conjure: my shoes were not only shiny with gleaming brass eyelets, they were incredibly more comfortable!

Tibetan Astrologer

The Men-Tsee-Khang complex on the road down to lower Dharamsala is the Tibetan Medical and Astrology Institute, astrology being considered part of medicine. The consultation with the Tibetan woman astrologer, Tsering Chozom, was nothing short of mind boggling. I said nothing. She began by telling me the key elements of my life up to now. I could only gawp. Then she told me my future. I was having, she said, "a good life." Then she told me a story. A man came to her, she read his chart and told him he would have a good life. So he went out in great glee and had the wildest time and in effect, wasted his life. He came back to her to complain. She threw her hands in the air, illustrating for me how she had received him, and said, "I can't do anything." Then she gave me a solid look and impressed upon me that my good life was thoroughly dependant on my doing good works!

I did ask her if I'd ever fall in love again and she laughed, shaking her head "Can't be so specific." Though very good works could prolong the timing when I would likely die as a matter of simple fact but love was beyond her ken.

My story about Sonam: i

In 1973 I visited India for the first time. I'd left Australia with my wife at the time, Wendy, departing Sydney in January 1972 and eventually arriving in London in May 1973. Travelling through

Timor, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Burma before flying to Calcutta and going straight up to Kathmandu for 3 months in Nepal. We finally came down from Pokhara, entering India by land on 1 January 1973. We spent three months in India, most of that time in Uttar Pradesh going to Bodh Gaya then Varanasi on the way to Sarnath.

But something very strange began to happen to me and I became concerned at my odd confusion. At a Varanasi eating place one day, I met a young Tibetan lad about my age (I was then 23) named Sonam and we became friends. He'd dropped out of the monastery at Sarnath and was now studying at Varanasi University. When we visited Sarnath, the change from the frenetic bustle of Varanasi was obvious and we wondered if we could stay there. However at the time, Westerners were not allowed to stay in Sarnath, there was no accommodation for tourists, only for pilgrims.

However Sonam came out with us and spoke to the Tibetan woman running the Tibetan Hotel opposite the Tibetan temple. Due to his urging, she agreed to let us stay in a storeroom, clearing it out for us. There was actually a Westerner living above the storeroom but he was studying Buddhism, had contacts locally, clearly how he'd managed to stay. And now we were staying in Sarnath too. We spent about 6 or so weeks there and I went through whatever was the strange experience.

When it came time to leave, Sonam and I hugged and I promised I'd write. Without his help, who knows what might have befallen me. We ended up in Bombay where we happened upon a group of people going to a meditation course and at Wendy's urging, we joined them. So straight after my odd experience in Sarnath, I found myself doing a ten-day Vipassana course with Goenka-ji, who founded the whole ten-day thing.

Wendy and I separated in London, she returning to Australia. I remained in the UK for five years. I did write to Sonam for the first couple of years, sending small amounts of money when I could. And he would write back, telling me he was now married and had moved north. But came a time I couldn't afford to send him any money, guiltily I wanted it for more beer and I was so embarrassed that I stopped

writing. So our connection lapsed and for 35 years I had no idea what had happened to my young Tibetan friend.

THE ATC TOUR

When I discovered myself booking in for the "Dharamsala Tour", at the back of my mind was the thought, maybe I can find Sonam.

The Australia Tibet Council, with World Expeditions, a marvellous organisation, had auspiced our trip to McLeod Ganj. We were ably guided by Alison from the Victorian ATC and Paul, Executive Officer of National ATC. So we had entrée to various Tibetan groups and organisations and were able to visit centres and speak with Tibetans about how life was for them in India. This was both revealing and humbling. As well as Tibetans born in India, here were folk who had walked over the Himalayas. They hadn't arrived in economy luxury on Singapore airlines. They'd walked over the highest mountain range in the world in winter to avoid patrols because what they were doing was forbidden.

(Please see Jill's blog at <http://www.atc.org.au/> for the real highlights of our journey.)

My story about Sonam: ii

At a dinner at the Surya hotel for representatives of various Tibetan NGOs, I found myself seated beside Dhardon Sharling, the Research and Media Officer with the Tibetan Women's Association. I idly told her the story of my friend Sonam and she became interested. Funnily, I had never forgotten his full name, Lhasa Sonam Nyandak. Dhardon said the surname was Tibetan but not very common so she volunteered to see if she could discover anything.

The following night we had another dinner, this time just with the six executive members of the TWA. As the ladies rose to introduce themselves, it finally came to the turn of the solitary male with their group: "I'm the TWA driver."

Dhardon already had news for me: Sonam had passed away 2 or 3 years ago. I had difficulty with the meal. As soon as I had eaten, I went to my room, seeking solitude. Once there, I wept. I had left it too long, I was too late; if only I'd acted on this wish in 2005 when I flew to London, my first visit back there in

decades. But having taken 37 years to return to India, time had stolen Sonam.

Dhardon had kindly given me her email. I wrote to her asking for details of Sonam's family. Maybe there was someone I could try to repay the enormous favour Sonam did me in 1973, enabling me to be safe in Sarnath while the world flew upside-down and the clouds carried me away.

On our penultimate day in McLeod Ganj, we were invited to the TWA office for morning tea. On arrival, Dhardon came to me and explained that she had read my email and had further information. In fact, Sonam had died 7 or 8 years ago, so even 2005 would have been too late. Sonam indeed lived in this area. He had married an Indian-Tibetan woman but they had no kids. Things had been rocky for him towards the end, his wife leaving him; she was now in the States or Canada. Sonam did have a brother but he was a wealthy Tibetan, owned a shop in Dharamsala. There was no family I could give anything to. But I still wanted to do something.

Over breakfast in the hotel one morning, a member of our group, Nigel who had been trying to assist at the Tibetan Old Folk's Home, said that they had need of a washing machine. Some people didn't want their clothes washed with certain others, a reasonable preference. Some folk refuse to kill lice; better Buddhists than me.

So I thought maybe I could give something towards the washing machine, do it in Sonam's name. I sorted that with a visit to the ATM and on receiving my donation, Nigel informed me that they would paint on the side of the machine, "From Jon in memory of Lhasa Sonam Nyandak."

I sent Wendy, with whom I've remained friends, an email telling her that Sonam had died. Wendy replied, very briefly but clearly upset. So I collared Nigel and asked for the sign on the washing machine to read "From Jon and Wendy." Wendy doesn't know it yet but she's going to be making a donation to the Tibetan Old Folk's Home in McLeod Ganj. I know she'll leap at the chance."

At the end of the morning tea at the TWA office, Dolkar Kirti, President of the TWA, and about the same height as my mum, shy of my shoulder, came over and hugged me. She assured me that everything was alright, they were Buddhists and knew that Sonam had

gone to his next life and she wanted me not to be sad or worry. I replied that I knew that to be the case and simply hoped that next time we meet, I could repay the favour directly to him.

Events on the way

We attended a public audience at Gyuto temple with the Karmapa. He gave each of us a blessing string.

At Tushita centre above McLeod Ganj, we attended a teaching given by Venerable Robina, a Buddhist nun hailing from Melbourne, a real knock-out.

Also attended a teaching by Geshe Sonam Rinchen translated by Ruth Sonam; it was absolutely marvellous & hilariously profound.

Shaking Hands with Chenrezig

At breakfast on our last day at the Surya Hotel in McLeod Ganj, Paul informed us that His Holiness the Dalai Lama had returned to India from an overseas conference and was opening an exhibition on the Friday at the Indian Habitat Centre in Delhi. It was possible that tomorrow, our final day in India, we could stand and wait to greet him as he walked from one building to the next. Glee was high.

We took the Thursday night train back to Delhi, ready for flying out on the Friday night. Around midday Friday, there's the 18 of us lined up with our khatas in our hands, standing outside the entrance to one of the buildings in the sprawling complex. His Holiness strolled through the doorway, walked up to Paul, put the khata around his neck and shook his hand. As he went to do the same for Alison, next in the queue, a senior monk realising that this was all going to take too long, came smoothly along the column of baby boomer ockers, lifting the khata from our hands to place it around our neck. All we needed now was the handshake from His Holiness.

I had been rehearsing on the bus ride what I would say but I was so nervous, on the last word of my greeting I stumbled over the 'm' sound and I'm really not sure if my lips managed to open properly for the final word. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama shook my hand, I blurted, "G'day Your Holiness, mate."

For a brief almost imperceptible moment, he paused. His head tilted back momentarily to gaze. Then smiling, he moved on to the next handshake.

Farewell McLeod Ganj

Towards the end of the final week in McLeod Ganj, one day out walking I met a Nyingma monk in the street. Maybe in his 40's, hard for me to tell! It was clear he was eager for English conversation. He suggested we go to the LHA building where we could have a chat. I wanted to but I was running out of energy and felt exhausted. I was having trouble getting enough oxygen to breathe and walk at the same time plus my body was struggling to cope with the business of eating in India. I could not oblige him. So I said no.

However, the visit to McLeod Ganj has left such a profound impression on me that I am determined to return, especially now that I realise I am confident to attempt India on my own.

I shall go back to McLeod Ganj for a couple of weeks each November as and when I can afford it. And I will look for that Nyingma monk and his friends. And I will have English conversations with Tibetans each afternoon before enjoying the ritual of beer o'clock at McLlo's rooftop bar.

And maybe one day, I shall find myself talking with a young person who I met in their previous life.

Signs of India

Going to the gents in an upmarket restaurant, noticed the doors in the corridor labelled: Toilet; Accounts Office; Trees and Flowers; Lhamo Opera; Connaught Hotel menu – Trifle Pudding

In tourist taxi, written on the dashboard: First Aid Box and Complaint Book with Driver

Road signage: If Married, Divorce to Speed

On wall of medical laboratory, specimen list for testing: blood, urine, stool, sputum, semen.

On train toilet door: A journey towards clean travel has begun.

Large warning in train included: consumption of alcoholic drinks Prohibited; in case of theft, robbery and dacoity ...

On a taxi roof, emblazoned across the roof racks: SAVE HEARTS AVOID GIRLS

Connaught Circle notice: Please do not deface the walls by writing and sticking bills.

Jon Clarke

Sri Lankan Journey

Receiving a wedding invitation is usually cause for some excitement but receiving an invitation to a close friend's wedding in Sri Lanka gave me the justification I needed to splurge and finally visit some of the sacred Buddhist sites I had long hoped to see. In July 2010, I was able to do just that.

Sri Lanka has always been a source of fascination for me. In years past, friends have returned with stories of beautiful beaches and lively jungle villages, friendly people, fabulous food and the lure and wonder of the sacred Buddhist sites. In more recent times, they have returned with stories of the devastating force of the 2004 Tsunami, opportunistic terrorist attacks, war crimes, and overcrowded detention camps for displaced people.

Modern day Sri Lanka has commonly been associated with an extended and intractable civil war, which has inevitably produced immense suffering and a high rate of civilian mortality. Yet, in spite of centuries of war, aggressive invasions and colonisers of different faiths, of all the Buddhist nations, Sri Lanka is considered to have the longest uninterrupted history of Buddhism.

Buddhism was officially introduced to Sri Lanka in the 2nd century BCE by the Venerable Mahinda, son of the ruling Emperor of India, Ashoka. The reigning King of Sri Lanka at this time, King Devanampiyatissa, subsequently sponsored the establishment of the Sangha and monasteries. Sanghamitra, the daughter of the Indian Emperor Ashoka brought to Sri Lanka the gift of a cutting from the original Bodhi Tree in Bodhgaya. This was planted in Anuradhapura, today considered the most significant ancient capital of Sri Lanka. Later, during the 1st century BCE, the oral tradition of the Tripitaka or Pali Canon was first committed to written form by an assembly of monks at Aloka Vihara in Sri Lanka.

The Sangha in Sri Lanka has managed to exist in an unbroken lineage since first established in the 2nd century BCE. The Sri Lankan Sangha has experienced some periods of decline over the centuries but through strong bonds with Sangha



communities in Myanmar and Thailand, the Sri Lankan Sangha was revived during difficult periods. The Sri Lankan Sangha also wear robes of several different colours: orange; maroon; mustard; dark brown; or tan. During a conversation with a long term Buddhist practitioner at the wedding celebrations, I learnt that the different robes represent those Sangha originally dispatched to Sri Lanka from other Buddhist nations over the centuries, particularly from Myanmar (brown robes, originally forest-dwelling Sangha) and Thailand (orange robes).

Following three days of wedding celebrations, which culminated in a mesmerising Buddhist blessing with the commanding trumpet of a conch shell, the presence of bejewelled and cloaked elephants and Theravadan monks chanting in Pali, I set off to investigate and experience some of the most highly revered sites on this tiny teardrop island.

My first stop was a visit to the Dambulla Rock Temple. This tourist foray was made all the more enjoyable by arriving early enough to avoid the busloads of socked and sandalled European tourists who descended as I was departing – phew! These five special caves sit atop a 150 metre high rock, and it is said that there are more than eighty caves in the surrounding area. Originally, these rock caves gave refuge to King

Valagamba who fled the capital Anuradhapura in the 1st Century BCE. The monks practising in the caves protected the King from his enemies, and when he eventually returned to his throne, he had the caves carved into rock temples as an act of gratitude to the monks. Although some of the statues and paintings in these particular caves are thought to date back to this period, many paintings actually date from the 11th, 12th and 19th centuries. There are over 150 statues of the Buddha and several statues of Vishnu and Sri Lankan kings.

I think the first cave was my favourite. Sometimes referred to as the “Cave of the Divine King”, it was small but filled with a 14 metre-long reclining Buddha carved out of the rock. At his feet was a statue of Ananda, and the cave walls were painted with images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Although dark and damp, the cave seemed to have a powerful energy of its own, which I did not sense in the remaining four caves, as beautiful and inspiring as each cave was.

The second cave contained the most amazing frescoes on the walls and ceiling, and contained fifty six statues of the Buddha. Sixteen of these statues were standing and forty were seated, which served to create a commanding presence in the much larger cave.

The following day I climbed Sigiriya, a



200 metre high volcanic rock which is thought to have housed Mahayana and Theravadan monastic settlements between the 3rd century BCE and the 14th century. The rock itself is surrounded by a mandala-style setting of symmetrical gardens, pools and gates. Inscriptions carved into some of the rock caves denote their use as a monastic dwelling. The highlight of climbing this rock is not just the stunning view during the climb and from the summit or the sense of achievement as you leave a trail of sweat in the sweltering humidity, but the stunning frescoes on a large sheltered wall of the rock. Long considered depictions of asparas (sky dancers) or even ladies of the Royal Court, the most recent studies have concluded that these frescoes could not date back to the 5th century, and are most likely representations of Tara.

Later that day I was quite literally and lovingly shoved onto the correct bus to Anuradhapura by a kind and pushy Sri Lankan 'Aunty' who was also waiting at the bus stand. In Anuradhapura, I spent a full day visiting the important sites of sacred dagobas (stupas), various monastic and palatial ruins, and – most importantly – Sri Maha Bodhi. In the years that I had longed to visit Sri Lanka, I had always considered that visiting Sri Maha Bodhi would be the highlight of my trip. I wasn't disappointed.

Sri Maha Bodhi is thought to have been planted in Anuradhapura between

288 and 249 BCE, and is claimed to be the oldest flowering tree in the world. It grew from a cutting from the original Bodhi Tree in India, and a cutting from Sri Maha Bodhi was sent back to India 120 years ago to replace the original bodhi tree which had died. This new cutting was planted in the exact spot the original tree occupied in Bodhgaya.

As I walked towards Sri Maha Bodhi, the significance of this particular tree swept over me, and I was in awe of the majesty and the presence of this large and beautiful tree. There are several bodhi trees surrounding Sri Maha Bodhi, and the long branches of the tree are supported by props. I stood under the tree gazing up at the branches for a considerable time, before undertaking a circumambulatory walk around the railings and structure protecting the trees. During the walk I passed by an open temple where pilgrims were making offerings and receiving blessings. A Buddhist teacher in his white robes waved furiously at me to come forward, and then proceeded to bestow a blessing and tie a blessing cord to my wrist.

After sitting in the shade of the temple and experiencing the atmosphere surrounding this precious tree for quite some time, I reluctantly left the grounds at closing time.

After Anuradhapura, I travelled to the sacred sites and ruins at Polonnaruwa, where the capital of Anuradhapura was relocated to during the 11th Century. The highlight of Polonnaruwa is Gal Vihara, beautiful rock carvings of four separate Buddha images cut from the same long slab of granite in the 12th century. Whilst the images and their detail are impressive, a metal roof has since been constructed over the statues which somewhat detracts from their splendour.

Before leaving Sri Lanka, I decided to travel to Kandy in order to visit the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic, known as Sri Dalada Malaga. Considered Sri Lanka's most significant Buddhist relic, the revered tooth is said to have been taken from the funeral pyre of the Buddha in 543 BCE, and it was smuggled out of India into Sri Lanka following unrest in India during the 4th century. In some ways, the relic came to be considered an important symbol of the sovereignty of Sri Lanka, as invaders and colonisers tried to gain custody of the

tooth or attempt to destroy it. Sri Lankan Buddhists highly revere the relic, and many make regular pilgrimages to the site from their home villages in the far corners of the island.

From the late 17th century and into the 18th century, the Kandyan kings constructed the original Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic as part of the royal palace complex, where it is still housed today. The relic itself is contained within a glittering dagoba-shaped gold casket, and is housed in a heavily guarded shrine room which only opens during puja times to briefly provide a glimpse of the casket from afar. Fortunately for me, I happened to stumble into the complex as a puja was beginning, and was able to gain a three second glimpse of the casket as I filed past the shrine room door at the right moment.

The temple was overflowing with tourists and Sri Lankan Buddhists who intermingled in a swirling sea of colour and a soft babble of sound. Many carried intricate floral offerings and had small children clinging to their legs, while most foreign tourists wondered aloud at the intricate carvings on the interior wooden temple and the paintings on the walls and ceilings. I slowly wandered through the temple complex and into the gardens in the warm evening, with the fairy lights that decorated the temple lending a gentle charm to the atmosphere.



As I left the temple that night, I reflected on the very special opportunity I had been granted to visit these wonderful and inspiring sites of immense Buddhist heritage. During my trip, I certainly learnt a lot about the context in which the dharma has evolved in Sri Lanka. I was also fortunate to spend time with knowledgeable and generous people and dharma practitioners who gave me answers to my many questions. It was a very special trip. ■

Julie Blythe

28TH BUDDHIST SUMMER SCHOOL

15-20 JANUARY 2011

Maitripa Centre, Healesville

HEALTH & WELLBEING IN BUDDHISM

Traleq Rinpoche

Even though it is not known very well in the West, Buddhism provides an overall perspective on an individual's wellbeing. Buddhist teachings include guidance on physical exercises, dietary regime, and the ingestion of medicinal properties.

Traleq Rinpoche will give an overview of these topics and how we can apply Buddhist teachings on wellbeing in our daily lives.

GENJO KOAN:

An Approach to Zen Study

Ekai Korematsu Osho

Ekai Korematsu Osho will discuss the text *Shobogenzo Genjo Koan* by Zen Master Dogen. Koans or 'case studies' are a type of Buddhist education system that is unique to the lineage of various schools in the Zen tradition, not only the Rinzai School. Its prime concern is transcendence and freedom from ordinary human mind, which is dualistic, habitual and dominated by thinking.

Ekai Korematsu Osho is resident teacher of Jikishoan Zen community in Melbourne. He is a transmitted teacher in the lineage of the Soto Zen tradition in Japan and has taught meditation in Japan, India and the USA for over 30 years.

THE BUDDHIST APPROACH TO EMOTIONAL TRANSFORMATION

Ayya Dhammananda Bhikkhuni

Ayya Dhammananda Bhikkhuni will provide an overview of the Four Brahma Viharas meditational practice, which is used to transform our emotional experience. The first session will be an introduction to Metta, or 'loving-kindness' meditation, the second session will be on Karuna, which means 'compassion meditation'. This will be followed by an introduction to Mudita, which can be translated as 'sympathetic joy' and the last session will provide an overview of Upekkha, or equanimity. There will be an

opportunity to practice the meditation techniques during the sessions.

Ayya Dhammananda is a Theravada Buddhist nun (Bhikkhuni) originally from Vietnam. She has trained in both Burma and Sri Lanka, and has studied a variety of meditation techniques under the guidance of several renowned Burmese Buddhist masters. She has also completed an MA in Buddhist Philosophy and Psychology, and a PhD in Buddhist Studies.

INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHIST MEDITATION

Garrie O'Toole

This course will introduce the basic theory and practice of meditation as practiced in the Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. We will explore issues of posture, mental attitude, obstacles to meditation and their antidotes as well as commonly experienced stages along the path. The course will introduce a number of difference meditation techniques including Tranquil Abiding meditation and Insight (Vipassana) meditation. The course involves discussion and practical exercises.

INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY

Garrie O'Toole

Garrie O'Toole will provide an overview of the fundamental concepts common to all Buddhist traditions such as karma, rebirth, the nature of suffering, and the possibility of overcoming the causes of suffering. We will look at the Buddhist understanding of the spiritual path and how we

can develop the tools needed to progress on that path. Suggested Reading: *The Essence of Buddhism* by Traleg Kyabgon, Shambhala Publications.

Garrie O'Toole has been involved in Buddhist practice and study since 1978. He has been a student of Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche for two decades and is a meditation instructor at

E-Vam Institute. He has completed a Master of Arts degree in Buddhist Studies.

SPACIOUS PATH OF BLISS

Khenpo Orgyen Chowang Rinpoche

This text by the great Mipham Rinpoche explores the variety of meditation experiences that can occur as we travel toward enlightenment. Describing the entire path, from the experience of someone just starting to practice up to the experience of liberation, Mipham Rinpoche offers practical advice to help us overcome obstacles to our meditation and our happiness at every stage, and to ensure that our spiritual practice progresses smoothly and is always spacious and blissful.

REALISATION, MEDITATION, AND ENLIGHTENMENT IN THE NYINGMA TRADITION

Khenpo Orgyen Chowang Rinpoche

Khenpo Orgyen Chowang Rinpoche will explain the Nyingma teachings on the nature of reality, the way to discover that through our own realization, the way to maintain that through meditation, and the enlightened experiences that ultimately occur once our realization is deep and our meditation is mature.

Rinpoche is a meditation master in the Nyingma lineage of the Buddhist tradition. He studied for ten years at Larung Gar in Serta, eastern Tibet, with his teacher, the great Jigmed Phuntsok Rinpoche, who is widely acknowledged as one of the greatest Dzogchen masters of the 20th century. Orgyen Chowang Rinpoche lives in the San Francisco Bay Area and is the founder and spiritual director of Atiamrita (www.atiamrita.org), an organisation dedicated to promoting happiness, inner peace, and enlightenment. He offers seminars and lectures throughout North America and is currently completing work on his first book.

LINEAGE AND DEVOTION:

Understanding the Student/Teacher Relationship Samuel Bercholz

The Buddhist tradition has always considered the lineage of wisdom and realization as passed down through living teachers. This course will explore how teachers play a central role in transmitting the paths of study and practice to their students. Aspects of the student-teacher relationship will be considered through various perspectives: trust in the teacher and teachings, faith in the wisdom that resides within oneself, and the resulting devotion that understands the entire phenomenal world as teacher.

ART IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Samuel Bercholz

Genuine art has the power to awaken and liberate. Chögyam Trungpa, the renowned Tibetan Buddhist teacher, called this type of art “dharma art”—any creative work that springs from an awakened state of mind characterized by directness, unselfconsciousness, and nonaggression. The course will explore how the principles of dharma art extend to everyday life; any activity can provide an opportunity to relax and open our senses to the phenomenal world.

Suggested reading: *True Perception: The Path of Dharma Art* by Chögyam Trungpa

Samuel Bercholz is a senior teacher in the Kagyu, Nyingma, and the Shambhala lineages of Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche. He has taught Buddhist meditation and philosophy courses and Shambhala Training courses throughout North America, Europe and Australasia since the early 1970s.

DISMANTLING DELUSION AND DISCERNING THE MIDDLE WAY

Jakob Leschly

The Buddha taught that to see our world for what it is ends the suffering of samsara. The Buddhist path of vipasyana – insight – is to strip away delusion and to further cultivate this freedom through meditation. *The Wheel of Analysis and Meditation* and the *Profound Instruction on the View of the Middle Way* are two profound teachings on dismantling

delusion and seeing the Middle Way beyond conceptual constructs. This perspective provides certainty about our path, and how to integrate wisdom in concentration and ethics.

The author of these short pith instructions has often been described as one of the most brilliant luminaries Tibet ever saw. Mipham Namgyal Gyantso’s (1846-1912) immense vision arose naturally from a vast realisation, and he established in his lucid teachings the quintessential nonsectarian Rimey vision of the unity of all the Buddha’s teachings.

Jakob Leschly began his studies of Buddhism in 1974 and has studied with numerous great teachers, particularly Kyabje Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, Dudjom Rinpoche and Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche. Jakob completed a three year retreat in 1984 and has since worked as a translator and interpreter as well as a philosophy and meditation instructor. He has also completed a BA in Tibetan Studies.

WORKING WITH IMPERMANENCE AND DEATH

Dr. Kathleen Gregory

The most immediate and direct experience of impermanence is in relation to our own ageing and death. However, in the West the natural process of death has not only become absent for many of us from our everyday life but we have become a culture dominated by the idea of ‘anti-ageing’. Drawing on a chapter for an upcoming book on *Spirituality and Healthcare* (Oxford University Press); this course will contrast Western and Buddhist approaches to ageing and death. Including meditation and contemplative exercises, the emphasis in Buddhism is on developing in our life a ‘healthy attitude’ to the inevitability of our own decline.

Dr Kathleen Gregory is a psychologist, academic, and a Buddhist practitioner for over sixteen years. She has an MA in Psychoanalytic Studies and a PhD in Comparative Philosophy. She coordinates the Master of Counselling program at La Trobe University, works in private practice, and has been a regular presenter at the E-Vam Institute on Buddhism and Psychotherapy.

MINDFULNESS AND SELF-COMPASSION

Heather Marriott

Buddhism says that compassion starts with the self. When we have love and acceptance for ourselves we will then naturally extend that to all sentient beings. Recent research emerging from the mindfulness movement shows that people with high levels of self-compassion are less anxious and depressed. They are also more emotionally resilient and altruistic. This course will discuss ways to cultivate self-compassion so that we can enrich our own lives and those of others.

Heather is an experienced psychotherapist, supervisor and educator and works in private practice in Clifton Hill. She has been a practicing psychologist for twenty-two years working at some of the largest counselling and psychotherapy agencies in Melbourne. Heather has been a Buddhist practitioner under the guidance of the Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche for fifteen years.

Bookings and Arrangements

There will be a relaxing and fun evening entertainment program for Summer School participants, and early morning walking meditation in the beautiful bush setting for those interested.

Affordable meals and snacks will be available for purchase, and Barista style lattes and cappuccinos are available at Dogen’s Café onsite at Maitripa Centre.

Simple live-in accommodation is available at Maitripa Centre and will be allocated on a first-in, first-served basis with preference to those attending the whole summer school. disappointment. ■

Phone the KEBI office (03) 9387 0422

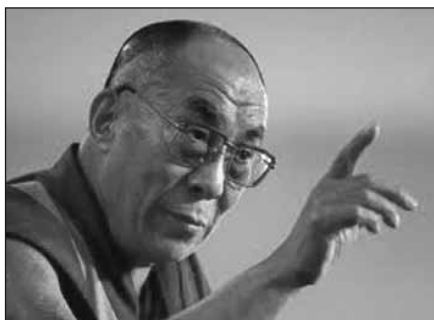
Fax: (03) 9380 8296

office@evaminstitute.org

www.evaminstitute.org.au



INTERNATIONAL NEWS



HH DALAI LAMA IN AUSTRALIA 2011

His Holiness will teach at the Melbourne Convention Centre on the Queen's Birthday long weekend from Saturday June 11 to Monday June 13 on Shantideva's 'A Bodhisattva's Way of Life'. His Holiness will explore the six perfections that provide the basis for the Bodhisattva's way of life – generosity, ethics, patience, zeal, meditative concentration and wisdom. His Holiness sees this text as a seminal influence in his life and has stressed many times the benefits of its study.

His Holiness will also visit Canberra on June 14, Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast from June 15 to 17, and Perth on June 19.

See www.dalailamainaustralia.org for more information and bookings.



TALK ABOUT NOTHING AT THE RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART

In November 2010, Traleg Rinpoche participated in a dialogue at the Rubin Museum of Art with internationally renowned film and documentary maker Ken Burns. Burns has been producing films for over 25 years. His award winning documentaries include: *The Shakers: Hand to Work and Heart to God*; *Statue of Liberty* and the *Civil War* series.

The dialogue between Traleg Rinpoche and Ken Burns went extremely well with both speakers contributing to an intriguing discussion about art,

meditation, the practice of seeing and the equalizing aspect of emptiness, which makes it all possible. Far from a talk "About Nothing," the dialogue was a fresh exchange of Western and Eastern ideas on the art of perception and creativity. Two short films about the philosopher and artist William Segal and the fast-paced and incisive dialogue that followed riveted participants. It was obvious to all that Traleg Rinpoche and Ken Burns were enjoying the dialogue and everyone was sorry when it came to an end. We all felt the speakers were really starting to warm to their subject and were waiting to hear what they would say next. The event was a big hit with both audience and organizers. It was a capacity crowd and many of Rinpoche's own students missed out on the opportunity to attend because tickets sold out early. We all hope the Rubin continues to host events such as this as it proved to be an exciting exchange of ideas.

The interview with Rinpoche will be included as part of a series of programs being produced for American Television.

THE KAGY MONLAM DECEMBER 2011

In December, His Holiness, the Gyalwang Karmapa directed the 28th annual International Kagyu Monlam Chenmo prayer festival at the sacred site of Bodhgaya, India. Senior Kagyu figures, 6,000 monks and nuns and 6,000 pilgrims as well many people accessing the live webcasts from around the world participated in the proceedings, which included His Holiness teaching on Atisha's 'Lamp for the Path' and 'The King of Aspirations: The Noble Aspiration to Excellent Conduct'.

In an interview on November 29th, 2010, the Gyalwang Karmapa explained that the theme of the 28th Monlam in 2010 was 'The Well-being of the World', which means the physical world and all sentient beings. This was because there have been many natural disasters, particularly the earthquake in Jyekundo, Tibet, likewise the landslide in Drugchu, and the flash floods in Ladakh, India. Prayers and activities were offered to benefit those who died, those who lost loved ones and for the survivors so that they will be able to rebuild happy lives in the future.



His Holiness, also led the International Kagyu community in launching 'Karmapa 900' a grand year-long celebration devoted to the protection of the Karma Kagyu teachings received from Dusum Khyenpa, the first Karmapa, who was born 900 years ago. Dusum Khyenpa instituted the practice of intentionally reincarnating in a way that disciples could recognize—a practice that forms the backbone of Tibetan Buddhism as we know it today.

His Holiness spoke of the importance of the lineage in his November 29th interview: "Particularly in the case of the reincarnation lineage of the Gyalwang Karmapas, it's a lineage not just in words but in meaning. In addition, if we ourselves are to uphold the wisdom of Mahamudra and the unfettered great compassion in individual minds, we must generate and cultivate them in our own beings, continually making efforts to do this and increase enlightened activities. It will only be possible for the lineage to remain if we do so. Otherwise, if we uphold the lineage only in words and in the practise of rituals, there is the danger that the lineage will decline."

A puja to commemorate the 900th anniversary of Dusum Khyenpa's birth was held at the KEBI Centre in Melbourne and at the annual retreat in NSW on December 8.

See His Holiness the Karmapa's official website for more information, recordings and photos:

<http://www.kagyuooffice.org/> ■

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES AT E-VAM MELBOURNE AND MAITRIPA CENTRE



THE ORAL AND REVELATORY 'TERMA' TRADITION

Khenpo Orgyen Chowang Rinpoche

Dates: 21-23 January

Times: Friday 7.30pm, Saturday
10.30-12.30pm, & 2.30-4.30pm,
Sunday 10.30am-12.30pm.

Location: E-vam Melbourne

In this course Khenpo Orgyen Chowang Rinpoche will provide an overview of both the oral tradition in the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism as well as the tradition of revealed teachings known as 'terma'. There will be particular emphasis on the wisdom teachings of Guru Rinpoche, Padmasambhava, on transforming, empowering, and bringing all enlightened experiences into our lives.

E-VAM SHEDRA:

A Study Group for Under 35s Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche

Time: Saturdays 3.00 – 5.00 pm
(except for the first Saturday of the month)

Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche will teach on all the classic Buddhist texts, starting with Mipham Rinpoche's Gateway to Knowledge. Studies will include abhidharma, madhyamaka, and yogacara. The course requires a commitment to four years of study, with an option to continue for an extra four years. Students are expected to attend classes regularly, complete assigned homework on a weekly basis, and expand their Dharma vocabulary in English, Sanskrit and Tibetan.

To apply, write to Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche at the postal address below, explaining why you would like to take part in the course, and expressing your commitment to complete the course. Please call the E-Vam Institute office on 9387 0442 if you have any further

queries. Postal address for applications:
673 Lygon Street, Carlton North, Victoria
3054.

UNDER 35S VAJRASATTVA PUJA PRACTICE

Dates: First Saturday of each month

Time: 10.30 am

Location: E-vam Melbourne

Traleg Rinpoche has suggested the under 35's group practice this puja on the first Saturday of the month. This is free of charge and suitable for beginners and for those curious about practice within the Tibetan Buddhist system.

Texts of the practice will be available and also ritual implements will be available for purchase for those wishing to participate on a regular basis. However it is not necessary to have the ritual implements to participate in the group practice ■

**Contact E-Vam Melbourne for
program details on (61 3) 9387 0422
or email office@evaminstitute.org**

MAITRIPA CENTRE, HEALESVILLE

2010 has been a productive time at Maitripa Centre, Healesville with the Centre hosting a range of dharmic activities and also seeing various improvements being made to the facilities.

Highlights included: the very successful 27th annual Buddhist Summer School which was held for the first time at Maitripa; and the celebrations of the 30th anniversary of Traleg Rinpoche coming to Australia held at the end of the April retreat.

Maitripa Centre has been the venue for visits by many international teachers. From the USA came Junpo Dennis Kelly Roshi, whose retreat was attended by well over 70 people. Chagdud Khandro came from South America to run a week long Vajrakilaya retreat. The Buddhist Society of Victoria brought from the UK a traditionally trained monk of the Thai tradition. Maitripa has been utilised regularly by a variety of groups including

yoga/meditation groups such as Gertrude St Yoga, Aruna Giri, Land of Yoga, Ground Yoga and many others. Rigpa has also made frequent booking with us.

We've had very solid bookings at Maitripa Centre resulting in it being rare for the centre not to be booked over the weekend. To accommodate the growing demand for our facilities we've begun to arrange dual bookings at the centre with groups having the option of using the lower or upper hall. The renovations at Maitripa have seen the facilities becoming more accessible to people from a variety of backgrounds; this has included a large percentage of professional clientele.

Dogen's kitchen has been a much appreciated addition to the centre. Bill Howes has done an excellent job as a barista, serving Lygon st calibre coffee and chai latte to our discerning guests.



MAITRIPA CENTRE
TIMELESS WISDOM FOR
THE CONTEMPORARY MIND

Retreatants have enjoyed the wonderful atmosphere of the café and many retreat leaders have commented that the café has enhanced their retreat experience. Rinpoche has recently kindly provided a

White Zhambhala statue for the cafe, which was installed by Dave Bennett.

Maitripa's Bookshop continues to offer retreatants an opportunity to expand their knowledge and mediative experience. We continue to stock a broad variety of books on topics including Tantra, Dzogchen, Mahamudra, Mahayana, Theravada, mindfulness and psychology, Taoism, Hinduism, and much more. The Maitripa bookshop also sells ritual objects such as malas, dorjes and bells. People are always impressed by our selection and we have something to offer the diverse range of people using our facilities.

Monthly working bees have been

carried out at Maitripa by the under 35's group who have done a first-rate job of contributing to maintaining and enhancing the Maitripa Centre. Ian Ward has once again proven to be pivotal in the maintenance of Maitripa fixing problems that even professional contractors weren't able to solve. Ian has also repaired the existing fountain at Maitripa and has also installed a second one in the driveway. Mike Tahana has been a dedicated hard worker at Maitripa, doing a great job maintaining our large grounds and carrying out other maintenance.

The dining room will be renovated by

early January. Bill Cornish has done a superb job executing Rinpoche's vision. It was a very manually intensive and testing job with Bill Cornish, Bill Howes, David Bennett and others showing great persistence in completing the task. The renovated hall has been restored to something of its original state including a feature fireplace. This should be a great addition to Maitripa centre and will boost the already quality facilities we offer.

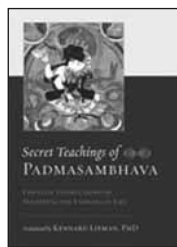
2011 is warming up to be a dynamic and even more productive year than last year.

Maitripa Centre will be hosting the annual Buddhist Summer School in

January, the Mindfulness and Psychotherapy Conference in March, and then the annual April retreat with Traleg Rinpoche. Maitripa will also be hosting an increased number of internal events run by Heather Marriott, Virginia Golding and Kathleen Gregory, These will be based upon Buddhist / psychotherapy principles. Maitripa will also be hosting a variety of yoga/meditation groups, including Ground Yoga, Gertrude St Yoga, Land of Yoga, Ihana Yoga and many more. Buddhist groups booked including Shambhala and Rigpa. ■

Jasper Eames

NEW TITLES AT AKSHARA BOOKSHOP



SECRET TEACHINGS OF PADMASAMBHAVA: Essential Instructions on Mastering the Energies of Life
By Padmasambhava

*Translated by Kennard Lipman, PhD
Shambhala Publications October 2010*

Reviews of Secret Teachings of Padmasambhava

"This volume nicely presents translations and commentary on a text from the Dzogchen Quintessential (nyingthig) cycle of Padmasambhava, dealing with yogic energies. It explores three key questions: what is the natural energy of the cosmos, how is this energy present in our human embodiment, and what role does sexuality play in healing and liberation? The translator, Kennard Lipman, is a seasoned scholar of Tibetan Buddhist texts who is also trained in traditional Chinese medicine. I recommend this work to scholars and yogis alike."

Steven Goodman, professor of Asian and Comparative Studies, California Institute of Integral Studies

"Here are Guru Rinpoche's precious words, sacred and secret, to be sealed in the heart, where, nourished by further commentary, they can become a basis for even greater understanding."

Anne C. Klein, professor, Rice University, and translator of Heart Essence of the Vast Expanse.



TAKING THE LEAP: Freeing Ourselves from Old Habits and Fears
By Pema Chodron
Shambhala Publications
December 2010

Reviews of Taking the Leap

"This short guide provides valuable tools for change in uncertain times."

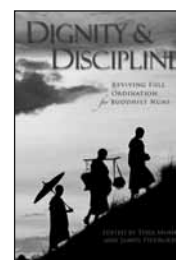
Publishers Weekly

Description of Taking the Leap

Best-seller Pema Chödrön draws on the Buddhist concept of shenpa to help us see how certain habits of mind tend to "hook" us and get us stuck in states of anger, blame, self-hatred, and addiction. The good news is that once we start to recognize these patterns, they instantly begin to lose their hold on us and we can begin to change our lives for the better.

"This path entails uncovering three basic human qualities," explains Pema. "They are natural intelligence, natural warmth, and natural openness. Everyone, everywhere, all over the globe, has these qualities and can call on them to help themselves and others."

This book gives us the insights and practices we can immediately put to use in our lives to awaken these essential qualities. In her friendly and encouraging style, Pema Chödrön helps us take a bold leap toward a new way of living—one that will bring about positive transformation for ourselves and for our troubled world.



DIGNITY AND DISCIPLINE: Reviving Full Ordination for Buddhist Nuns
Edited by Thea Mohr and Jampa Tsedroen
Wisdom Publications
2010

Description

This is a collection of essays taken from a global conference on nun's bhiksuni ordination from all traditions, that took place in Hamburg, Germany. The articles cover the breath of Buddhist traditions and convey the history and the vision for the future of the role of women as ambassadors and curators of the ordained Buddhist community. This book shows a shift toward granting women full ordination in all traditions of Buddhism.

Many of the issues surrounding bhiksuni nun ordination in Tibetan Buddhism are shared by other parts of the Buddhist world. While some regard the bhiksuni ordination movement to be largely driven by Western Buddhist converts, efforts to revive the female order have actually been initiated by various progressive Asian monks and nuns over the last century. New bhiksuni groups at various sites, including Korea, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, are now at varying stages of maturity. All of these groups are participating in an ineluctable movement across Buddhism, one that is ultimately to be connected to larger shifts in our contemporary global civil society. ■

YESHE NYIMA

Indo-Tibetan Yoga and Meditation Centre

We were excited at Yeshe Nyima that Traleg Rinpoche held his Integral Buddhism Retreat in the Blue Mountains at the end of the year. The retreat filled quickly and attendees looked forward not only to Rinpoche's daily teachings but also the other activities on the schedule. Traditional to Rinpoche's Australian retreats the mornings began with Tara puja and the days concluded with Chenrezig. Also, attendees participated in sessions of guided and non-guided meditation, Hatha Yoga and Tibetan Pranayama classes.

In July, Rinpoche visited Yeshe Nyima giving weekend teachings on karma and rebirth. The course was held at the Buddhist Library in Camperdown as the bigger gompa ensured all participants could be accommodated to hear these important teachings. As expected, the course was well attended and Rinpoche's teachings were both comprehensive and insightful. Rinpoche provided an historical context for the development of the theory of karma and rebirth. He then went on to explain how our intentions manifest in our actions and formulate our habits and interactions in the world. Rinpoche's teachings were presented in

a most profound and compelling way which is a catalyst for reflections on one's overall approach to life. We thank Rinpoche for these wonderful teachings this year.

After a short break in September, Yeshe Nyima's activities resumed and term three kicked off in early October with a fantastic weekend course conducted by Professor Geoffrey Samuels of Cardiff University in the UK, on 'Ritual in Tibetan Buddhism'. This fascinating weekend provided fresh insights into the use of ritual in Tibetan Buddhism. Rituals discussed included long-life, prosperity and protection practices. Also discussed was the incorporation of ritual in Buddhist practice to assist the practitioners on the path to enlightenment. It was a tremendously enriching weekend appreciated immensely by all who attended.

Indo-Tibetan Yoga and Meditation courses and weekend intensives continued through out term three with courses being held at Yeshe Nyima in Harris Park, Blackheath in the Blue Mountains, the Buddhist Library in Camperdown and for the first time at the

Woollahra Yoga School, near the ocean.

After a short break for Christmas, activities will resume at Yeshe Nyima mid – January 2011. We are looking forward to hosting some more wonderful teachers and speakers providing a range of special courses next year. For our more regular programs: we plan to expand the range of Indo-Tibetan Yoga and Meditation classes to include intermediate level classes. The Tibetan Pranayama classes and the Sunday Study Group will recommence in February and the Under 35's program and the Academic Series in March 2011. Yeshe Nyima has been in Harris Park for almost two years and already the Centre is too small to hold some of our courses, in particular in relation to Traleg Rinpoche's visits. We have begun the task of looking for a more suitable property large enough to hold Rinpoche's and other courses as well as being closer to the city, making it easier for people to get to. We will keep you posted on any developments regarding the relocation of the Centre. We wish everyone a happy holiday season and for much peace, harmony and prosperity for the coming year. ■

Felicity Lodro

E-VAM INSTITUTE NEW YORK

E-Vam Institute, NY had a busy second half to the year, with a number of programs. On the weekend of July 9–11 we had Jetsun Khandro Rinpoche teaching on the Mindrolling lineage of the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism. The Mindrolling has its own unique lineage of yogis and yoginis and a history that has maintained friendly and auspicious relations with all the lineages and schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Jetsun Khandro Rinpoche took a very clear and unequivocal approach to the concept of lineage, warning against the downfalls of sectarianism and pride. She covered the lineages that developed within Indian Buddhism from the time of the Buddha, giving a very insightful and



comprehensive historical overview of Buddhism before turning to the Mindrolling lineage itself and revealing its uniqueness within the history of Tibetan Buddhism. The course was very well attended with many students travelling great distances to attend it.

In late September, we hosted Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche at our premises in Manhattan, where Rinpoche gave a very interesting and comprehensive evening teaching on the Tibetan Yogas of Dream and Sleep. Rinpoche both informed and challenged his audience with a very organic and personal account of these practices. An accomplished scholar in the Bon textual traditions, Tenzin Rinpoche completed a rigorous eleven year course of traditional studies at the Bonpo Monastic Centre in

India, where he received his Geshe degree. He founded Ligmincha Institute in North America to preserve the religious teachings and arts of the Tibetan Bon Buddhist tradition in 1992 and has been living in North America ever since.

Felicity Lodro also spent the month of September at E-Vam Institute teaching Indo-Tibetan Yoga each weekend. After a very successful program at the Shambhala Centre in Philadelphia, Felicity came to upstate New York and presented a series of Indo-Tibetan Yoga programs at E-Vam Institute in Chatham and also at our premises in Manhattan. These courses were well attended and embraced very enthusiastically by students, many of whom travelled to attend both venues.

In October and November, Traleg Rinpoche's long-awaited return finally

arrived and his students were able to return to E-Vam to hear the fourth installment in the series on Mipham's Beacon of Certainty. The popularity of this course grows every year, while those students who have attended them all claim to be finding it easier to understand as they progress. This may be because of the text's increasingly practical orientation but it is also in no small part because of the ease and clarity with which Rinpoche is able to present this difficult material. Rinpoche also gave teachings at Karma Triyana Dharmacakra (KTD), His Holiness Karmapa's North American seat, on the topic of Dharma and Psychology and a stimulating and provocative discourse on Karma and Rebirth at E-Vam Manhattan.

Rinpoche finished off his teaching schedule for 2010 with a dialogue at the Rubin Museum of Art in New York City. This dialogue took place with the famous documentary film-maker, Ken Burns, which was billed as a 'Talk about Nothing.' However, at the last moment, it was changed to a discussion about the philosopher and artist William Segal.



Rinpoche was able to research the artist sufficiently to participate in an engaging and vibrant discussion with Mr. Burns and leave the largely secular audience calling for more.

In addition to these major programs, E-Vam continued to present a number of regular programs throughout the year. Sherab Gyaltzen led a regular meditation program at E-Vam in Chatham on Saturdays and at E-Vam Manhattan on Sundays and Dee Collings led a regular study group on Sundays in Chatham and a beginner's class on Thursday evenings.

They both took turns to lead an additional meditation class on Wednesday evenings. These classes run in a series of four-week blocks with a one or two week break in between; a format that has proven to be very resilient over the past two years. We also continued to host a weekly yoga class on Monday evenings taken by Christine Eaton, who is a trained Kundalini Yoga teacher. We also conduct daily pujas every morning and evening, which are open to participants in the local area.

E-Vam continues to host groups and individuals for retreats and workshops and we had a number of groups utilize our facilities in 2010. We hosted an anthroposophy group over a series of weekends in the summer, a Dharma group of Dr Reggie Ray's students from New York City and a group of Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche's students. All of these groups have expressed a strong desire to return frequently to E-Vam. In addition, we have a number of individuals using E-Vam for private retreats throughout the year. ■

Deirdre Collings

NYIMA TASHI, NEW ZEALAND



Nyima Tashi has been fortunate to close the year with such a prominent teacher as His Eminence Garchen Rinpoche, whose visit to the centre was one of compassion in motion as Rinpoche alluded to the practical spontaneous aspects of compassion while continually turning his mani wheel. Rinpoche's manner was one of solemnity tinged with warmth and kindness and his appraisal of Bodhichitta left many in tears.

In August, we were fortunate to host a visit by Za Choje Rinpoche from the Gelugpa tradition who offered us a practical, lucid understanding of The Four Noble Truths. Rinpoche touched on his experiences and illuminated the path out of Dhukka in such a clear manner that one was left empowered with the reality that we, if willing, could transcend this pervasive form of suffering.

Chagdud Khadro teachings touched on the cycles of life, death and transformation. Khadro-la provided an overview of the six bardos, with emphasis being given on the moment of death and the after death states. Those that attended the four day workshop were left with a sense of confidence and certainty and were very grateful to Khadro-la for her generosity and patience.

Each year we are privileged to have Traleg Rinpoche visit and although we have been blessed with many prominent teachers

from the various traditions of Buddhism, the growth and health of Nyima Tashi has been grounded in a clear and precise view that has been gifted to the students by Rinpoche.

In June, Rinpoche gave a clear presentation on karma and rebirth which put to rest the many falsities and myths concerning the subject matter. Rinpoche's insightfulness, humour and pervasive wisdom gave us all grounding in the practical aspects of karma-producing indulgences and how one can transcend these non-virtuous maladies of the mind.

Through the year we have been fortunate to have Lama Lobsang from Palpung instruct and guide the students through the various pujas. Lama Lobsang's patience and warmth are very compelling and we hope to see lama-la in the new year.

The heart of the centre would be in the students that gather religiously each Tuesday evening. At present we are studying from Traleg Rinpoche's 'Essence of Buddhism'. As many of you are aware the structure of Rinpoche's book offers an insight into the unfolding of the buddhist path, which has enabled the students to grow both in terms of understanding the path and the significance of daily practice.

Since Rinpoche's last visit in June, we have installed a new kitchen, begun on new paving, started new paint work and added a few modifications in the form of a garden setting. ■

Ani Jangchub



KAGYU E-VAM BUDDHIST INSTITUTE

Kagyu E-Vam Buddhist Institute Inc.
673 Lygon Street, Carlton North, Vic. 3054, Australia

POSTAGE
PAID
AUSTRALIA