

LAM RIM



MANDALA

YEAR 2010

Issue Number 15

Hello everyone

Firstly, apologies to those on the mailing list for the late arrival of last year's Issue 14 which should arrive with this issue (15), so plenty of reading to accompany your cuppa :-)!

A big 'Thank You' to all those who have contributed to this issue, without whom there would be no content. Please keep sending in items and ideas for the newsletter; all is most gratefully received and appreciated. A special '*Thank You*' to Margaret who managed to fit proof-reading into her horrendous task list at the moment!!

I hope you enjoy this issue.

Best Wishes,

Jan

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LETTER FROM GESHE DAMCHO-LA

Spring 2010

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year – this is the Year of the Iron Tiger -2137 a year of conflict and change. We sense the movement of transformation happening now in which we experience the stirrings of optimism together.

“YES WE CAN” – I really enjoyed hearing so many voices in unison all over the world repeating those three words, especially as we have all been affected by the economic downturn, global catastrophes and great sufferings. In spite of all this we each want our voice to be heard chanting for Peace and Altruism. We begin to recognize the potential power our collective voice has across our world. “YES WE CAN”.

Then, something unexpected happens – we suddenly experience the passing of a very dear friend or loved one and we stop – we are in shock and affected deeply with sorrow and pain. Why is this feeling so different? The answer is that we are so personally attached to our expectation of permanence. Actually it is not really permanent – just a passing of moment to moment, some negative, some positive depending on our mental changes.

At the beginning of March two dear friends passed away suddenly Alan Peck and James Sinclair – Len Sinclair’s eldest son. I had known Alan since 1976 when I taught in London, and I had also known James since he was a baby. Both were softly spoken, very gentle, kind men. Alan always made time to spend with you, he would listen carefully, reflect, then offer helpful advice. He bore many responsibilities of husband, father, son, friend, therapist, Tai Chi teacher, dharma student, and Trustee of Lam Rim Bristol Buddhist Centre. His life was full of engagement and suddenly... gone.

We need to recognize with the passing of dear friends and loved ones that we have the opportunity to make increased effort in our spiritual practice as we have closeness, and the awareness of suddenly being without them. However, they have given us an amazing opportunity to help them on their journey to their next rebirth. So practice. Then our karma will be connected again.

With my love and prayers to you all.

Ven. Geshe Damcho Yonten



Ladakh Part 4

The final part of the story of a visit to Ladakh.

By Caroline McCookweir.

Samstenling

The main road from Leh to the Nubra Valley passes over the formidable 'Khardung-la' and is billed as 'the highest motorable road in the world' (18,350ft). Over this must we travel to reach the monastery of Samstenling where Ven. Geshe Damchola was Abbot for 4 years some 45 years ago. In his day the journey would have been done on foot, or horseback and using a different pass. So, somewhat nervously, equipped with extra clothing (in case the vehicle breaks down), food supplies, including nearly 30 bananas (in case the vehicle breaks down) and Coca 30 – (a homeopathic remedy for Altitude sickness), we set off in a 4 by 4 taxi. The scale of this journey is epic and quite hard to convey in words. The road traces giant loops, a faint scrawl against the huge mountain, and slow, slowly rises higher. Leh shrinks, and the main range of The Himalaya expands as more of it becomes visible, until it becomes a sea of white peaks. As we near the pass, tarmac gives way to mud, ice and snow. For 8 months of the year the road is closed under heavy snowfall and tarmac would be impossible to maintain in such conditions. And so we experience the sensation, familiar when travelling in India, of being rattled and bounced around, coupled with the also familiar frisson when overtaking on blind bends, sometimes hard up against the mountain, sometimes terrifyingly with a drop of several thousand feet, just inches from the wheels. Luckily the speeds are slow and the driver excellent.

We feel the air thinning and by the time we reach the pass I feel quite light-headed. The clear, cold air is sharp to our lungs as we wobble across to the 'highest toilets in the world'. It is like walking on the moon – an alien landscape and atmosphere. The sky is an astonishing bright blue and across the Indus Valley stretch wave after wave of snow peaks, unreal in the clear light. We pose for photographs decked somewhat eccentrically in our extra layers. Geshe Damcho-la, on seeing the photos later, described us as looking like refugees. After a welcome chai we leave the pass with its thousands of rustling prayer flags, and head on. The journey down is even more extraordinary, partly because you cannot see the Nubra Valley until you are almost in it. The first part of the road bumps and turns through a snowy wilderness. After a few miles green terraced fields appear, clinging to the mountain; deep gorges falling away from them. At one point you can see the road for miles ahead; a thin line creeping along the massive mountain flank. The end of the road suddenly seems a lot further away when we grind to a halt behind a convoy of some 15 Army trucks 'parked' in the middle of the road. The far end of the Nubra Valley marks the border with Pakistan and there is a large Indian Army presence which needs to be resupplied. Unfortunately one of the trucks ahead had broken down and so they have all stopped; no-one is going anywhere. No-one that is until Paul patiently persuades driver after driver to pull over so that at least other vehicles have a chance to get by. Of course the broken down vehicle remains firmly in the middle of the road and as we approach we decide it wiser to exit our vehicle and then watch

rather nervously as the driver edges cautiously past; one wheel slipping over the edge sending stones plummeting into the void.

The first sight of the valley, which was once on the ancient silk route from China to India, is a blue, braided river far below us. The water flowing into this river is fed by snow melt and the volume increases as the summer progresses. It will separate the communities on either side of it, as bridges are few and far between but during the winter people cross on the ice.

Finally the hair-raising hairpin bends give way to a refreshingly straight road as we enter the valley. It is noticeably hotter here and we pass through villages and green fields and over the wide clear river before heading up the mountainside to Samstenling. The steep slopes above the monastery are dry and rocky but there is plenty of vegetation further down; wildflowers, crops, apricot trees and fearsome 'hedges' made of very prickly shrubs, laid, I think primarily to ward off wandering livestock.

Samstenling is beautiful. Gleaming golden-roofed and white-walled in the sunshine. There is a grand staircase leading to the main Gompa, and apricot trees and shimmering poplar grow within the courtyards. It looks out over the flat river plain, where wild Bactrian camel are still to be found, to a wall of mountains, one side of which are grey and snow-capped; riven with deep gorges which in certain lights gives them the appearance of elephant skin. They look ancient and implacable. Closer to us and standing alone is an extraordinary mountain, slashed with a vivid purple.

We have come here, John and Janine Allman, me and Paul Kirby because our teacher the Ven. Geshe D a m c h o Yonten lived here as Abbot for 4 years in the early 60's, having been invited to Ladakh from the refugee camps in India by the Ven. Rinzong Rinpoche. Geshe-la was to have travelled with us but on this occasion was too ill.



So here we are, 4 pilgrims tired and a little bone shaken. Such is the difficulty of communication between our self, Rinzong Rinpoche and here at Ladakh that the monks have only just learned of our arrival this morning. We are intending to stay 5 nights – but there is no guest accommodation. However, the monks have erected 2 tents on the grass outside the main school building and it is here we are led, somewhat bemused to a lovely lunch under a parachute and the curious gaze of the little school monks. As the reality of trying to live under canvas dawns (freezing at night, boiling by day) we discuss possible alternatives. Eventually the kind monks find us a 'hotel' in the next village. This is a rather wonderful old farmhouse, more family home than hotel. We are picked up by taxi and taken to the monastery for breakfast every morning and then returned after a late supper. The village

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has no electricity except for our house. One of my happiest memories of this trip is sitting outside on the steps every evening, watching the light slowly fade and the stars emerge behind the darkening mountain ridges. The air is silky-soft and warm. No cars, no TV's, no radios, no electric light, just a flickering fire in the distance and soft voices. Sitting outside is also pragmatic as the thick stones walls of the farmhouse radiate heat for a good hour after dusk, and it is too hot to sleep. In the mornings it is the mooing of cows and the clanking of their bells that wakes us (usually around 5am). Outside our window is a little row of white chortens which the beasts will have circumambulated by the time they've returned to their night shelter.

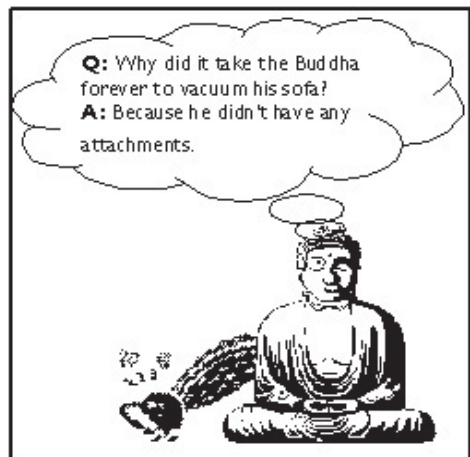
Our days here are spent in various ways. Janine and I walk down the hill to the village of Sumur on the first day. A lovely walk by the side of clear streams, past mani walls and chortens and the barley crops. Paul goes in the other direction trying to scale the stony ridge which looms sheer behind the monastery. On the third attempt he gains an ancient fort and can see over the ridge..... to another ridge! He finds fresh wolf footprints and his exploits gently amuse Ven. Kelsang, a lovely monk who teaches at the school and who, with his excellent English, looks after us. He tells us he's seen Yeti footprints above the Zoji-la, a pass in Zansker, Ladakh's wild neighbour. He also tells us that here in Nubra just 20 days ago a snow leopard took 30 goats.

We are slightly confused by the lack of elder monks until it is explained that they have travelled to another village to perform

pujas. Eventually the older generation do return and several enquire after Geshe Damcho-la. John and Janine sponsor a long life puja for Geshe-la and we sit in the old Gompa listening to the rise and fall of the monks' voices. It is quite beautiful, like listening to the sea.

Three years after this visit, in August 2009, Ven. Geshe Damcho-la was well enough to travel to Ladakh, visiting the monasteries and monks he hadn't seen for 45 years.....but as they say 'that's another story!'.

The end.



A few words from Mahatma Gandhi

The first lesson one must learn is to forget oneself, to give out in love all that is possible from within yourself, and it shall be returned to you. These things that Christ spoke about, and all the great teachers, all the great philosophers down through the ages was that man should forget himself, so that in return he might find himself.

When you lose yourself in a sea of love, then indeed do you find that you lap against the shores. It is as if you cast yourself in the cleansing power of the eternal sea of love. And you do not become drowned, but you become, as it were, lifted up, buoyed up by it, and you are carried by it. And in consequence your work then begins. And many a shore you may be cast upon, and you will enable others to find that which you have found.”

MEDITATION CORNER

Meditation Basics - Tips to get you started:

Choose a calm space and sit on a cushion, or upright chair with feet flat on the floor.

Be comfortable and relaxed with an upright spine.

Let your eyelids drop to minimise distractions and allow the internal chatter to quieten.

Focus your attention on the rhythm of your breathing.

Become aware of the tip of your nose with the breath flowing in and out.

Gradually the breath becomes fainter and fainter. Stay relaxed.

Thoughts arise – let them go. Do not engage with them but concentrate on the subtle breath moving in and out thro’ the nostrils.

Stay relaxed but alert.

This practice can last for 5 minutes and gradually build up to 20 minutes each session.

Try and practice at the same time twice each day, early morning, early evening,

Build up a meaningful practice. Then experience the benefits.



A Muse from Rinpoche

In October 2009, after a long and tiresome flight – eight hours from Delhi in India, Samten-la and I were much relieved to put our feet on the ground and to be warmly received by Ben and Mike at the airport. Mike most kindly drove us to Lam Rim Wales on a ‘superb M4’ which is much more comfortable than what we are used to in India; it has been a fantastic stay at Lam Rim since then.

The Lam Rim community, especially the Ven. Geshe Damcho Yonten, Margaret, Edita and John, have gone to an extraordinary length to make our stay one of great comfort. Providing us with a fully furnished apartment, all for us! This, in combination with beautiful surroundings, makes for a perfect setting for my studies and practices. Samten-la and I have the very good fortune to attend Geshe-la’s teachings and it has left a truly enlightening mark on us. It is so inspirational to experience Geshe-la’s authentic and practical presentation of Buddhist texts first-hand. This will certainly serve as an example for when I embark upon my teaching in the future. It’s a great revelation to witness the chanting skills of the Lam Rim community during the Lama Chöpa Puja we did together and also the daily Tara Puja. They have perfected the art of chanting and full credit for this goes to Geshe-la for training them and for individuals themselves on their hard effort to master it. In short Samten-la and I have never felt so taken care of and it has been an experience to remember.

In-between our stay here Samten and I went to London twice, and on both occasions Ben and Emma played gracious host to us and took us to a few of the most incredible museums. We were left very much impressed by the collections, especially on Buddhist historical items, for instance a large portion of exterior wall belonging to the ancient Kalachakra Stupa in Amravati, South India in the British Museum. On the lighter side we also enjoyed a ride on the London Eye and saw the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace. I also managed to catch up with a long-lost friend who was a classmate of mine in Loseling whom I haven’t seen for the past fifteen years and happened to be in London - surprise surprise! Later on, Sarah very helpfully drove us up to North Yorkshire to meet my Aunt and her young family and we had an enjoyable week-long stay there. During our stay, we went to see the old towns of Durham and York and retraced the footsteps of Captain Cook in Whitby.

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Unfortunately Samten-la had to return home to India due to compelling circumstances in India. Sarah was very considerate in being so flexible with her own travel plans to India in order to accompany Samten-la on his return back home.

Thanks to Paul and Caroline I have had some of the most wonderful outings at weekends. I had very pleasant stays at Lam Rim Bristol with Geshe Thinley and I have enjoyed a great deal his company and hospitality.

I have grown up reading comics and novels set in Great Britain, like Tin Tin and The Famous Five, and Britain has captured my imagination since childhood. Even though reality didn't fully measure up to my romantic imagination (for instance, I was truly surprised to see homeless people living in the streets of London) I was still very much struck by the extent of the standard of living here, such as almost everyone owning their own car and having heating in the home. I find it surprising sometimes when I see people here complaining about life (especially the British media's gloomy outlook), so much more than the Indians do. So it looks like there is still much work to be done in terms of inner satisfaction in the West and I will be happy if I can contribute a small drop in the ocean in this regard.

I was amazed at the lush green landscape of the British countryside but I did not anticipate the abundance of rainfall behind this beauty! My visit also coincided with one of the longest winter cold spells and although the first few days of snowfall was quite exciting, as I had not seen snow since leaving for Drepung at the age of nine, it didn't take to long for the excitement to wear thin.

On February 14th I celebrated my first Losar (Tibetan New Year) abroad, and it is the year of the Iron Tiger. Geshe Thinley came over from Bristol and fried up some delicious Tibetan Khaptse (a fried biscuit) and there was a gathering of over thirty people. We hoisted a new victory banner, hung prayer flags in the grounds and recited Tara puja together. Geshe-la gave a brief talk in which he told us that we should reflect upon the transitory nature of life and not get too carried away during the new year celebrations!

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On the February 19th I started the 2010 programme at Lam Rim Wales by leading a group on Samatha meditation; this was my first teaching assignment for a Western audience; and although I had a little trepidation regarding my ability at first, I feel that it went well in the end. I certainly enjoyed it anyway!

My initial plan for the visit was to stay until April; however, a special situation in India required my immediate personal attention so with deep regret I have had to curtail my stay this time and I will be leaving at the end of February. However, as someone once said, "I'll be back!"

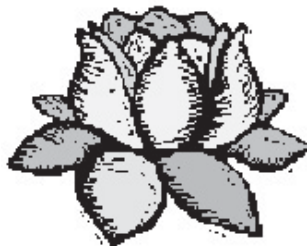
My present visit has only been designed to be an orientation visit and hopefully my next visit will be longer and take on more teaching tasks. I hope to meet more of you.

I also intend to make a visit to South Africa in the not too distant future to meet the Lam Rim community there. I therefore humbly request that the Lam Rim community pray for my success in the fulfilment of my role in accordance with Geshe-la's vision.

I offer my sincere thanks to Jan for helping to put my ideas into words for this article.

My Tashi Deleks to all of you.

Gyalrong Khentru Rinpoche



An Exciting Year Ahead for Lam Rim South Africa....

Under the auspices of the Tibet Society of South Africa six monks from the Rizong Monastery in Ladakh will be arriving on our shores (first port of call Durban) on the 30th April. They have been invited to construct the Avalokiteshvara sand mandala in Durban, Johannesburg & Cape Town during the month of May to promote the Tibetan Culture and to honour the 75th birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The visit has been called, 'World Peace & Compassion Tour, South Africa'. Lam Rim in Durban has been working closely with the Tibet Society in co-ordinating the visit, and we are particularly grateful to His Eminence Rizong Rinpoche who graciously accepted the invitation on behalf of the monks. The idea was conceived last year when Elizabeth Gaywood (SA) met up with Venerable Geshe Damcho-la, Margaret, Caroline & Paul in Ladakh. It was only after Elizabeth had met with Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche in Delhi who mentioned focus should be given to His Holiness the Dalai Lama's 75th birthday, that the idea of inviting some monks to South Africa started to materialise. Fortunately, Venerable Geshe Damcho-la was still in Leh at the time and Margaret, through various long-distance telephone conversations with Elizabeth, was able to make the request to Rinpoche. The co-ordination of the event could not have happened without the kindness of Venerable Geshe Damcho-la, Margaret and Venerable Geshe Dhonden-la and Venerable Geshe Phende-la, who 'just happened' to be at Drepung in India when some critical

information was required to finalise the programme; it is wonderful how a 'plan' starts to unfold.....

The monks will spend the majority of their stay at the Lam Rim Buddhist Centre in Johannesburg and a programme of activities will be formulated so that we can take full advantage of the monks' visit. We have also requested that the sand mandala remain 'fixed' at the Johannesburg Centre and will take pride of place in the shrine-room.

We are also excited to be welcoming Venerable Geshe Samten Gyatso, who has a 3-month break from June to September, and has decided to visit us. Again, we are very thankful to Venerable Geshe Damcho-la for planting the seed. Venerable Samten-la will be based in Johannesburg but will also travel to Durban.

We are also in the process of liaising with Venerable Denmo Locho Rinpoche, who has indicated to us that he will be available to visit South Africa in September/October this year. We feel honoured and look forward to further confirmations from Rinpoche and also translator Sean Price.

Our humble thanks to our wonderful Teacher for his Wisdom & Guidance.

Elizabeth Gaywood

Renunciation

During my stay at Lam Rim Buddhist Centre Wales, Margaret, the administrator, lent me a book to read called, 'First Shave Your Head' by Geri Larkin.

It is the story of a female Zen practitioner who accompanies her teacher, and a friend, who is a nun, on a pilgrimage to South Korea. Before setting off, she has to get her head shaved. She develops various strategies to try and put this off, but eventually, the inevitable happens.

For many women, hair, and what you do with it, can have strong associations and much attachment.

For me – it is face cream. This is a realisation that has been creeping up on me for some time. Letting go of 'self' sounds like something that maybe I can imagine one lifetime, many aeons away, but – 'letting go' of face cream – I'm not so sure about. Can I become enlightened and still keep my face cream?

Over the past ten years I have spent long periods in hospital. Once, on returning from a home visit, I opened the door to my room where I had lived for many months, and found it empty. Stripped. All my pictures, clothes, everything had gone. Eventually, with the help of a nurse, I tracked them down. All my possessions had been stuffed into a large green plastic bag (I never found out why they were green). This bag was in a room, with a door which you opened and closed very quickly, in case all the other green bags crammed inside, fell on top of you.

I unpacked the carrier bag and went to sit on my bed to calm down, then noticed lots of my belongings were still missing. I went off, found another nurse, another large green plastic bag, unpacked, calmed down. It was time to wash – **no** L'oreal Revitalift night cream – panic !!

I immediately reported my loss to the nursing staff, who by now I suspect, had decided that my emotional agitation was just more proof of my illness! I filled in a lost property form and waited. Hospitals are excellent places to practice patience. Nothing happened.

One day, much later on, a nurse brought me a plastic bag (clear, not green) with a pot of cream inside. They couldn't afford to replace mine, but one of the office staff had recently bought this, and was giving it to me. I was touched that my dilemma had reached beyond the confines of the ward.

Going to Lam Rim Wales this time I used the train (they have let me out of hospital). Over the past thirty years I have always been in a car. This meant taking a rucksack. My pot of cream at home was too heavy to take. I walked around Bath the day before I left until I found my favourite brand in a new, light container, and bought it.

Continued...../

If you ever see me packing to go to India, you can be assured that amongst the malaria and water purifying tablets, I will manage to find a space that fits my face cream.

I feel, even yearn, to practise and live in a remote cave, inside an inaccessible mountain. Maybe, one day, I might imagine being able to let go of my attachment to family and friends.

But – will I ever be able to renounce face cream?

Beverley Ferguson
October 2009

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THE EIGHT VERSES

ON TRANSFORMING THE MIND

With a determination to achieve the highest aim
For the benefit of all sentient beings
Which surpasses even the wish-fulfilling gem,
May I hold them dear at all times.

Whenever I interact with someone,
May I view myself as the lowest amongst all,
And, from the very depths of my heart,
Respectfully hold others as superior.

In all my deeds may I probe into my mind,
And as soon as mental and emotional afflictions
arise-
As they endanger myself and others-
May I strongly confront them and avert them.

When I see beings of unpleasant character
Oppressed by strong negativity and suffering,
May I hold them dear – for they are rare to find-
As if I have discovered a jewel treasure!

When others, out of jealousy,
Treat me wrongly with abuse, slander, and scorn,
May I take upon myself the defeat
And offer to others the victory.

When someone whom I have helped,
Or in whom I have placed great hopes,
Mistreats me in extremely hurtful ways,
May I regard him still as my precious teacher.

In brief, may I offer benefit and joy
To all my mothers, both directly and indirectly,
May I quietly take upon myself;
All hurts and pains of my mothers.

May all this remain undefiled
By the stains of the eight mundane concerns;
And may I, recognizing all things as illusion,
Devoid of clinging, be released from bondage.

**Written by the eleventh-century meditator
Geshe Langri Thangpa**

Next page for Part 2 of Thought Transformation.

**Teachings by The Venerable Geshe Damcho Yonten
on the Commentary of the
Eight Verses of Thought Transformation**

Written by the eleventh-century meditator Geshe Langri Thangpa

This is the second part of an abridged and edited version of notes taken at Geshe-la's teaching in Johannesburg, Lam Rim Centre, 20.9.2008. Any benefit I dedicate to Geshe-la and his compassion. I take any errors on myself and welcome any discussion which arises. I'm sorry the style has turned out to be so serious, but Geshe-la's affectionate joking, laughter and enjoyment in the moment can be imagined if you have heard him teach. To add to your enjoyment, you may wish to imagine this as you read this.

**Commentary on the Eight Verses of Thought Transformation by Geshe-la
Part II South Africa, Johannesburg Lam Rim Centre, 20.9.2008**

From the commentary by His Holiness, the XIVth Dalai Lama, 2007.

Introduction from Part I

Our subject today is Thought Transformation. Dharma means developing the mind and this text is intended to help progress mentally. It is intended to help mind change.

What is this mental progress?

To begin, ethics are useful for all sentient beings. Achieving morality means no harm to other sentient beings. In addition, morality leads to high rebirth, even in the God-realms. Hence, the Ten Virtues are very important. Then there is the Liberation revolution which comprises three trainings – ethics, concentration and Wisdom. This leads to the achievement of Bodhicitta, the achievement of compassion, and the practice of loving kindness.

First understand the suffering of samsara, then develop renunciation and then compassion.

Compassion is thinking of other sentient beings first: from the thought 'I wish to help sentient beings' up to the thought of great compassion: 'I am responsible, and I will liberate them'. Understanding the way things arise from causes and conditions will lead to a sense of responsibility for them and then a strong desire for Enlightenment for their sakes. Their suffering is great, so one needs to take the quickest path to enlightenment of your own self and other sentient beings. This is the Mahayana way.

Continued...../

Verse 1, (continued)

The result of the Hinayana path is self-liberation. In the Tantra path, if a Hinayana practitioner practices tantra then a Hinayana result will arise or maybe the hell realms. This first is a small result. In contrast, Mahayana aims at all sentient beings' benefit and is a better basis on which to practice tantra, and for you practitioners, it is generally the stronger practice.

Cherishing others is stronger than the more narrow view. You can achieve all sentient beings' kindnesses and purposes, including your own.

Always take care of all sentient beings; for example rescuing an insect. And it's useful to do this with some care for the comfort of this sentient being, and not just perfunctorily. In this way you need to knock down the self-cherishing mind over and over again.

You certainly can't develop bodhimind with hostile criticism or jealousy towards others, and you need to change this.

Verse 2

'In the company of others I will see myself as the lowest among all, and make others supreme from the depth of my heart.' When I am with anyone anywhere, I always regard others as high. Regard yourself as lower, with no ego-grasping, refraining from arrogance. The mind of self-importance makes it impossible to benefit sentient beings. Whether other beings are bad or good, high or low, we are all other-dependent, and do not exist inherently, independent of others.

If you compare yourself with insects, with this precious human achievement of our life, it seems we are in a better position. However, we can also go more wrong ways, and end up lower than insects. So there is no room for thinking oneself better than, say, an insect. Our rebirth is dependent. It is dependent on the causes we create. With each cause, each result is different. If you practice patience, the result is beauty. If one is angry, this results in an ugly body. Practicing generosity provides wealth and other necessities. Because we are totally dependent on cause, if there is no human rebirth then we can't practice Dharma.

Objects and qualities might appear inherent, but in reality are mentally dependent.

If your eyesight is poor, without glasses, you can't see properly. Similarly, with delusions this mind can't see properly and delusions are naturally there. We need Dharma glasses so mind can see clearly. In working with bad causes, we are our own worst enemy. I know what I'm doing won't help and yet I do it. At the beginning you need to know Dharma.

Continued....!

Initially, change feels uncomfortable. Start by stopping what you have always done, otherwise you can't do anything. In the beginning stop things like desire, jealousy, and pride. Awareness and thoughtfulness is very important at beginning times. Always be helpful, always cultivate humble mind, otherwise real compassion is not possible. To stop delusions such as jealousy from arising, cultivate the opposite. The opposite is possible through humility; then one can think positively. With an arrogant mind, it is difficult to think positively. A proud mind can't help sentient beings.

Verse 3

'In all activities I will examine myself and whenever an afflictive emotion arises, I will strongly face and avert it'. Always investigate to stop negative causes, then delusions stop. Use your awareness and alertness to help you. Alertness is like saying "stop thief!" to arising delusions, stopping these immediately. Awareness is then sitting, working, and digesting.

Watch mind, examine mind to stop negative causes, negative mind. Encourage positive causes. Always think positively. The self-cherishing mind is of no use, of no value here. Positively motivate; think: 'For many lifetimes we have had delusions in our mind. Now we need to stop these and experience virtuous paths'. In this way think more positively, and refrain from delusion. When delusions are strong one can't do antidotes. Stop these delusions early wherever you can.

For Shantideva, wrong understanding leads to some sort of discomfort, feeding delusions. Be aware of the discomfort and stop delusions. When a burglar enters, the first time you stop the entry, you need great effort. Be alert, aware, and make effort to stop this burglar. Gradually one gets used to virtuous paths and then there is no effort. In beginning your own effort has to be strong. Delusions are cheeky. In the beginning it is useful to learn to recognize delusions, negative afflictive emotions, such as anger, jealousy, pride; then practice the antidotes to these.

So, as much as possible always be alert, aware. One needs to make effort to stop delusions. Then gradually one's mind becomes calm, happy. It's much better to control your mind whatever your activity, and apply the antidote should an afflictive emotion arise.

It's like studying hard, doing your examination and getting a new job, which is being happy. You want to be a Bodhisattva and help sentient beings achieve enlightenment – so you try to achieve this. Bodhisattvas want to help sentient beings achieve enlightenment, so you try to achieve this.

Continued...../

Helping non-virtuous, suffering people - this is good job.

We are now beginners at this work; in kindergarten. We try to help in whatever way we can. Real help that lasts for these suffering beings is to develop your mind.

When we reach Bodhisattva level, then tantra is most helpful. At our level, maybe tantra is not much good. It does not lead to quick enlightenment while we are at our level of development; it can make our path longer or maybe leads to the hell realms.

There is a story about an Abbot of Nalanda monastery who was a tantra practitioner. He cheated the monastery, and gradually there was no development except intellectually. In his next life he was reborn as a hungry ghost, who harmed children. He discussed this with a monk who could see him. The monk told him that what was important was compassion, not intellectual development. This being then developed strong regret and stopped harming others. Loving kindness is real development. This is what Thought Transformation teaches.

So if righteous anger leads to more hardship and loving kindness leads to greater happiness, which one is more important? Which one benefits more? You need to think.

Dan Buys



Why not join 'Helping Hands' at Lam Rim.

Contact Margaret at Lam Rim

 01600 780383



LOVE

comes from
the higher self

FEAR

comes from the
lower self
or ego

Random Acts of Compassion

As an idea for an article for the newsletter I thought I'd email my friends and ask them if they could report back to me with any random acts of compassion they heard about or witnessed, during the snow and icy weather we had through the winter. The feedback was light but interesting and not quite what I anticipated but it was an interesting exercise. Here's some to share with you:

Care and Innovation

On Monday 21st December 2009, whilst Christmas Shoppers were busy in Basingstoke, an unexpected very heavy fall of snow came bringing everything to a standstill.

2000 cars in the car park had to be left overnight. Those within walking distance walked home, others were stuck in their cars for hours. A journey which normally took 10 minutes was taking 3 hours.

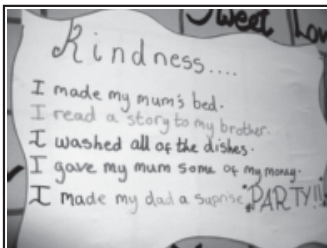
The Salvation Army rallied and found all the sleeping bags from its local community and thus put up 32 stranded shoppers for the night in their warm 18 month old Centre.

Captains Elaine and Fred were very busy on the Tuesday morning producing bacon butties for breakfast. They had a cheerful and fun attitude making the best of the circumstances.

Pam Hasted

Spreading a Little Kindness

We've been doing lots of work with Year 7 tutor groups that include students with Special Needs. One student has autism, one cerebral palsy and another quite complex social and emotional difficulties as well as learning needs. Others can be very intolerant of difference. It is easy for any student who is different in any way to be bullied and have a miserable time at school. We teach that everyone is different and everyone is special that it's good to be different.



Lots of work around tolerance and compassion and kindness is done. This project was putting up a 'Kindness Wall' following lots of class discussion. We follow up with buddying systems and 'Circle of Friends'. A lot of the students don't have very good home role models.

Anne Hale



Some photos that Anne sent with her feedback were too fuzzy to use so these have been reproduced below in the original words written by the children:

How to be Kind
Open the door for staff or students and say 'after you'.

- * Say hello to people.
- * If someone is upset try to cheer them up.
- * Just smile to make people feel happy.
- * Say please and thank you.
- * Don't be negative about how people are.
- * If someone is left out, include them.
- * Don't treat people differently.
- * and lastly **JUST BE KIND !!**
😊

- * Smile when you come to school
- * Don't answer teachers back
- * Say Good Morning or Hello to teachers and people that you no.

Continued/

Peace in Snowy Solitude

Elly lives in a lovely wooden house in the middle of fields and woodland, accessible down a long potholed dirt track. She wrote:

My experience was not so much what other people did for me, but what happened to me. I was basically snowed in for a fortnight. As you might know I grew up in Sweden with quite a lot of snow and isolation as a farmers daughter.

So I decided this was not much different - just to sink into a similar mode.

So what could I do? Beside the obvious survival tasks I decided to sort out my clothes – some 20 years old or more and give them to charities. Feeling rather good about that, I then decided to attack my filing cabinet, all files and extra paperwork etc. I started to feel quite good about it all – lying thinking about what I should do next day.

I couldn't see any patients, no one could come or go, so I was alone with my husband, our dog and nature – and peace! The feeling of peace increased and increased – to the extent that when the lane was drivable, I really wondered if I wanted to go out and meet the world again!

I have now got used to patients, shopping etc. but the feeling of peace and calm is still within me and doing me a lot of good.

Maybe we in Western society have forgotten the deep feeling of connection we can have with nature and concentrate too much on the buzzing life around.'

Elly Nickson

We have an incredible capacity to wake up, to move through hesitations and patterns of withdrawal, to reach out to others and allow them to reach out to us. We have the ability to remember kindness as the genuine force of happiness that is, no matter what circumstances we find ourselves in. We have the ability to face the ups and downs of every day, to come to terms with the transience of life, and to reach for the grace and uplifting nature of kindness. May we celebrate this capacity each day of our lives by working to make this capacity a reality. Kindness can heal our lives - and transform this world.

Sharon Salzberg

(Extract from 'the Kindness Handbook')



TIGER TEN



Paws of power,
Paws of grace,
Pause for a moment,
Before you interface.

Perfect balance,
Greatest harmony,
Calls your vibration,
To resonate purely.

All the senses,
In every realm,
Acknowledge it all,
Take the helm.

See the truth,
For what it is,
Positive action,
Return to bliss.

Senses alert,
Unseen, unheard,
Look at yourself,
Honour your word.

From the snow,
And from the fire,
Extremes of life,
Extreme desire.

Come to protect,
Your soul's duty,
Time to stand,
In your own beauty.

Everything in motion,
It's time, it's place,
Power to change,
Remove disgrace.

Time to play,
Like a child,
A time to be,
Meek and mild.

Walk with nature,
In your soul,
Every breath,
Keeps you whole.

Anna Rickell, 2010

Ulpotha - A Village in Sri Lanka

Ulpotha has been a site of pilgrimage for of thousand of years and remains not only an oasis of tranquility in the heart of Sri Lanka and a beautiful private hide-away open to guests for part of the year; but is a traditional working village cradled on the one side by low mountains and a lotus ringed lake, and on the other by tiny emerald green paddy fields. There the present focus is on the restoration of an ageless agricultural way of life including bio-diverse organic farming and reforestation of the land and its immediate surroundings. It is a place of total peace, where you can experience the warm, generous and gentle Sri Lankan hospitality.

Guests come to simply relax or take advantage of the Ayurveda therapies and yoga classes on offer. This aspect of Ulpotha enabled the creation of a people's clinic administered by Dr Srilal Mudunkothge, an acclaimed practitioner who is carrying on the unique knowledge passed to him by his teacher Dr Amarathunga, who practiced a combination of indigenous Ayurvedic medicine, Neelammahara tradition (which specialises in mental illness) and the general indigenous medicine, Elvitigala tradition. Dr Srilal completed his formal studies and attained a Bachelor in Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery. He is also a registered Pharmacist. Skills to meet the various demands of the people's free clinic he has helped to set up at Ulpotha. Here is Dr Srilal's story about the beginnings of the clinic.

In December 2004, just before the Tsunami hit Sri Lanka, I met Viren Perera and Giles Scott in Colombo. They told me all about Ulpotha and proposed that I join them. In addition to running the wedegedara where the guests staying at Ulpotha receive Ayurvedic Panchakarma treatments, Viren and I decided that it would be appropriate for Ulpotha to offer free Ayurveda medical care to the surrounding villages, and to fund this initiative through the treatments given to the Ulpotha guests. So in June 2005 we first began by receiving patients in the Ulpotha wedegedara, while at the same time launching the construction of the free clinic located at the entrance to Ulpotha, not far from the main road.



Word of mouth spread so rapidly that by the time the Sanasuma Veda Asapuwa was officially opened at the end of August 2006, I was treating on average 50 to 60 patients per day.

The clinic is open two days a week from 8 am to 5 pm on a first come – first served basis. It is now so popular that, on some days, the first patients begin queuing for their entrance number as early as the evening before and the 50 patient limit is reached by 7 am! On most days in the

Continued/

busy season (when the farmers have planted their paddies and before they begin the harvest) there are up to 90 people waiting for me when I arrive at 8am and I have to turn some of them away. However, in such instances, I always manage to find time to consult those who have come from afar. At such times we do clinic for three days per week.

Each patient is given a personal number which enables me to keep records of the history of their ailments. The majority of ailments I treat are those caused by an imbalance of Vata, due to too much work in the paddy fields, as most of my patients are farmers. An excess of Vata tends to lead to arthritis, which in the hot weather is made worse by an excess of Pitta. A number of other complaints are caused by the dust and pollen from work in the paddy fields.

When the paddies have been ploughed and planted, the patients have time to visit the clinic while the rice is growing and before the harvest begins. But the time between planting and harvesting is unfortunately not long enough for them to take the rest I prescribe with their treatments, so the best we can do is to stabilise their condition and try to maintain their dosha balance.

For the time being, all the Ayurveda medicine dispensed at the clinic is freshly made in Colombo by Dr M.M. Chandrasena. Under his direction we are now in the process of beginning the plantation and care of Ayurveda plants and herbs in the grounds surrounding the clinic. Many locally grown Ayurvedic plants are fast disappearing due to deforestation and so have to be imported at great cost.

The clinic dispenses all medication and consultations free of charge – instead of payment, the villagers symbolically offer several betel leaves to me when I see them, as was the habit in the old days. Funding from the clinic comes from the Ayurveda treatments which guest to Ulpotha can choose to have during their stay, as well as from donations some of the guests have kindly made.

Now, food is sometimes donated to patients for their stay, and we have created facilities for cooking and overnight stay when patients arrive the day before.

Nothing planned, everything's happened automatically because of good heart.



Dr Srilal Mudungothge

January 2010.

The End of the World Cometh !! (Surviving Redundancy)

The week starts well.

A discussion with your manager on how your job is going ends on a very positive note. That Improvement Plan you've suggested has brought approval from him and the senior staff. So, eager to get started you try to schedule another meeting with your manager, but he's not available, even though his diary appears empty. Just when you've given up he asks if you're free and to accompany him into a meeting (nothing unusual about that). On entering the room you find someone from HR there too. Your manager apologises for the abruptness of the meeting and proceeds to lay out the reasons you're being made redundant. BANG!

Just like that. No hints, no warning. Suddenly you're no longer part of 'the family' and due to the nature of your job and access to company data, are told to leave the offices immediately. Do not pass go, be escorted to your desk, pick up your possessions and leave. An ousting.



So what do you do? An IT professional, the description above is exactly what happened to me in Sep 2009. Some said that I was lucky to have had two prior experiences of being made redundant and therefore able to handle the situation from the initial meeting. Even so, it is never easy to hear those bombshell words or deal with your feelings as a result.

Here are my tips to survive what seems a body blow to your gut:

Although it's an upsetting life event, be professional. It is a business issue, not a personal one. You only want to strangle your manager because he/she delivered the news. If you need a minute to go to the car park and scream, or have a double espresso and nicotine, then ask for it. They will understand. Ask what consultancy is on offer. This can range from access to work systems to help find another job within the company to HR contacting their recruitment agencies with your CV. Maintain your self worth.

It's useful to record what is discussed during the redundancy process. Make meticulous notes about all conversations. If anything is later in doubt you'll have it recorded for resolution as soon as possible. Ensure any documents are checked two or three times to understand them properly and pick up any errors. Obviously check all figures carefully: pay rates, holiday owing, last day of work date etc. All of these items may affect how much you receive as a payment. Consider booking another interview with HR for a couple of days after the bombshell hits to ensure you have a clear head. Make a list of questions that you want answered. Take advantage of any consultancy offered; openings in other divisions or with a customer.

The reasons for redundancy are many and varied. They are rarely to do with performance as most businesses have a performance management process which could make you unemployed. It is hard to think it is not you, but now is the time to stand up and dust yourself off. You may not be perfect but you are worth employing.

If you think it is performance related then you should lodge a complaint with your company and have a free consultation with a solicitor.

As it happens each of my redundancy experiences were slightly different, but there are three things to do straight away. **Check your finances! Don't waste time! Keep a positive attitude!**

Have at least 3 months wages to get you through a redundancy. Two of my redundancies had financial packages that we could fall back on. We worked out how long we could survive on the bare minimum of outgoings. If you are lucky to get a new job quickly then that exotic holiday is an option. The reality is it can take months to get another job. I wasn't long enough in one job when made redundant so had to get any type of work immediately, so don't let pride stop you from getting any job in the interim while you are looking, it will add to your CV, life experience and as I found a source of amusing stories to recount courtesy of Royal Mail and the Ambulance Service while working as a Parcel deliveryman and Storeman. Don't waste time once you're sure redundancy is going to happen. You may think you can have a 2 week holiday but in reality jobs are slipping past all the time.

Sorting out your CV and interviews can take days or weeks. The time for 1st, 2nd and final interview may be up to 6 weeks – with no guarantee you have a job at the end of the process. Apply for all jobs you want as soon as they appear. If you are offered two then you can always turn one down. Through it all, keep a positive attitude. Easier said than done but its really important! Bemoaning your situation brings you down, affects your relationships and can affect your interviews. Ask yourself whether your skills set can be adapted to an area of work you haven't considered before? Is it time for a career change? Get your friends and family to monitor your attitude and be honest with you. And don't moan at them for being honest.

Job Searching can be time consuming and soul destroying. Look at it like the washing up – not pleasant, needs to be done, you are glad when it is over – but do it properly. Look at job websites etc for jobs along the lines of your chosen profession. See if you can alter your CV to reflect what they want (without lying). Keep several variations of your CV. Search for a job speciality and then phone several of the agencies listed to discuss your situation. 7 times out of 10 they will want your CV. Keep in regular touch with any agencies you make use of as they are busy people; this will keep your name in their minds. Discuss other roles you may be able to fill. (Keep notes to help you keep track). On average you will get one enquiry per 8 applications. This is not a reflection on you. There are lots of people out there looking and companies can only interview 4 or 5 for a role. The second time I was redundant it was 112 applications before I got a job.

While redundant, incorporate tasks/events in your day that make you feel good and give you a sense of achievement while you're searching for work. It will help to maintain a positive attitude. So you don't fall into the pit of doom!

Redundancy might seem like the end of the world, but see it as an opportunity for the beginning of something new.



A Childrens Story

The Jackal & the Lion

Once upon a time in ancient India an enormous lion lived in the Himalayan forest. He was strong but didn't bother the other animals unless he had reason to. One day returning to his cave after having a hearty meal, the lion (who was really the Buddha) met a starving Jackal who said to him "O King of the Forest you are the greatest of all the animals. Please can I be your humble servant." Kindly, the Lion said "As you wish Jackal". The jackal was being clever as he knew that he wouldn't have to hunt anymore if he lived with the Lion, he would be able to have his leftovers.

So it was from that day forth the jackal did indeed serve the lion and never had to go in search of food himself. Soon he became fat and strong. Other animals in the forest became scared of the jackal as he had was friends with the lion. Jackal would even go into the forest and bully the other animals.



Seeing the other animals were afraid of him the jackal thought to himself, "I am getting powerful. All animals are scared of me. Only the king is stronger than I in the entire forest."

When jackal and lion were out in the forest the next day, they saw a lonely elephant. Jackal called to the lion "O King, I will hunt down that elephant for you as I have been feeding on your leftovers, but today you will feed on mine!" Shocked at what the jackal had said, lion stared at the jackal in horror and warned Jackal to leave the elephant alone. Filled with false pride, the jackal ran down the hill and pounced on the elephant from above. Startled and angry the elephant picked up the jackal in his trunk and flung him hard against a tree. The lion walked across to the lifeless body of his servant jackal and quietly said "The path of false pride always leads to trouble jackal." but the jackal could no longer hear.

The End

RECIPE PAGE

EMERALD MOMOS

Serves 4-6

RECIPE

For the Dough:

5 oz / 150 gm flour
3 tbs / 45 ml boiling water
1 ½ tbsp / 25 ml cold water
½ tbsp vegetable oil

For the Filling:

2½ oz / 75 gm minced fried tofu
1¼ oz / 45 gm spinach, boiled and coarsely chopped then mashed
½ oz / 15gm capsicum, chopped
½ tsp sesame oil
1 tsp / 5 ml clear honey
½ tbsp light soy sauce
1 tsp / 5 gm cornflour
Salt & Pepper to taste.

METHOD

For the dough:- Sift the flour into a bowl, stir in the boiling water, then the cold water and finally, the oil. Mix well and knead until smooth. Divide the dough into 16 equal parts. Shape each into small balls then press flat to give circular shape (you may use a rolling pin if required).

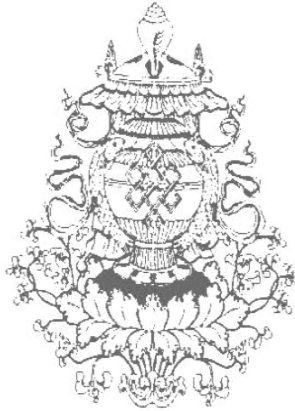
For the filling:- Mix together all the ingredients until well blended.

Place a little of the filling in the middle of the small disc and bring the edges together pinching them tight to make a little pouch.

Line a steamer with a damp towel. Place the dim sums (momos) in it and steam for about 10 mins.

Serve with sauces of your choice.





Spiritual Director and Resident Teacher
The Venerable Geshe Damcho Yonten

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