

LAM RIM



MANDALA

---

YEAR 2003. ISSUE NUMBER 11

---

## Editorial

Dear All

Thank you so very much for your articles. There has been a very good response this time and I am very grateful to you for making this possible.

There is a continuation of Dechen's article: 'Life in a Tibetan Monastery' from previous versions of the Mandala and some lovely articles on the Fire Puja site at Lam Rim.

By the time you read this MANDALA I shall have just returned from India, having been on a Pilgrimage which involved meeting His Holiness Dalai Lama. I left on March 7th and returned on March 23rd. It was my first trip to India and no doubt, I will have an article to write for the next MANDALA.

Thank you to Ann Davies once again for proof reading the Mandala and thank you Margaret for your articles and also chasing up articles for me.

love and best wishes

Lorraine

*Humour is the ability to see one reality from the perspective of another*

## Table of Contents

Geshe La's Letter.....	page 3
A Few Reflections on the Visit of H.E. Denma Locho Rinpoche.....	page 4
Experiences of Kalachakra .....	page 5
Faith & Reason, by John Peacock .....	page 6
The Diamond That Cuts through Illusion.....	page 7
Life in a Tibetan Buddhist Monastery .....	page 8
Beware of Honey Offered on a Sharp Knife.....	page 12
Fire Puja Site .....	page 13
Peace Mala.....	page 16
A Brief Moment in Shambala.....	page 18
A Fishy Tale .....	page 19
When the Horse Runs Off.....	page 20
Notes on Progress at Lam Rim .....	page 21



## Responsibility for Ourselves.

*When the Buddha teaches that we are our own master, that everything depends on us, he is indicating that pleasure and displeasure come from virtuous and non-virtuous acts respectively, that they are forged not externally but deep within ourselves.*

*The Buddhist theory about the responsibility we have for ourselves is particularly relevant.*

*It invites us to question ourselves, and to tame ourselves in our own interest and that of others.*

H.H. the Dalai Lama

## LETTER FROM GESHE DAMCHO-LA



Dear Friends,

Thinking and sending Greetings for 2003, especially as we are all experiencing great concern for World Peace.

In this world it is always serious time, so it is not really unusual. However, the world we perceive is not outside - inside is the real trouble-maker, inside our own mind - that is our terrorist and we need to be vigilant and mindful. The name of that terrorist is called Un-subdued Mind. This Mind is our own cause of ignorance that is common in sentient beings - a trouble creator. We need to practice checking our own minds, take responsibility for what we experience in our own minds, not to be pointing the finger at others, saying it is their fault; I am right and they are wrong; so many misunderstandings when there are different cultures and different religions.

The way forward is to start with your own mind and we need to clean those negativities of hatred, anger and greed. These negative emotions arise constantly from the root of ignorance - the state of not knowing. We find the environment becomes negative and the reality of others is negative, then we have trouble. Instead of things getting better they get worse. This negativity is called non-virtue and non-virtue effect is called suffering. We all do not want suffering. We all want happiness. There is total agreement on this, regardless of our culture and religion. Therefore the action we need to take is to check and investigate our own mind and then we will experience virtuous action - wholesome action, which will lead us to happiness.

The checking part is called Ethics - discipline and ethics are very important for this life and future lives. The 10 virtuous ethics - you need to check your body speech and mind and to practice non-harmful activities. When you are really quiet, watch the thoughts going on in your mind, just observe them, are they generating love and compassion, altruism? We constantly use words of peace and loving kindness, but inside our own mind there still sits grasping and self-cherishing - the trouble creators. So our speaking and thinking are in contradiction. It is only when we overcome this contradiction by being sincerely kind and compassionate with truthfulness at all times, not just when others are watching, that we will naturally become peaceful both in body speech and mind. When our inner world - our mind, becomes peaceful then our outer world naturally becomes peaceful too.

Thank you for reading this letter and I pray for wish-fulfilment of Peacefulness.

Thank You.

Venerable Geshe Damcho Yonten



## A FEW REFLECTIONS ON THE VISIT OF H.E.DENMA LOCHO RINPOCHE

by John Allman



### A Prelude:

Over the past few months many special events have taken place. H.E. Denma Locho Rinpoche and H.E. Rizong Rinpoche have both revisited Lam Rim. Between those visits Venerable Geshe-la led a pilgrimage to India, where we could be with His Holiness and many other Lamas both in Drepung Moastery, Ganden Monastery and many holy places. The bonds of kinship between Lam Rim and Gya Khamsen grow ever stronger and are most tangible now in the presence of Venerable Geshe Thinley. Over many, many years now, with such patience and care, Venerable Geshe-la has taught us how to discern the true qualities of a spiritual teacher, a process intimately dependent on using our human intelligence to establish the true qualities of a student. May these anecdotal reflections remind us of our good fortune, so that we can deepen our understanding of the Dharma and really be of help to others.

..... As preparations for Rinpoche's visit were nearing completion, a phone call came from America. Rinpoche had put forward his flight to the U.K. and would be arriving a day early. Venerable Geshe-la duly met Rinpoche at Heathrow and accompanied him back to the comfort of the Centre. Within a few hours horror and disbelief engulfed the country he had left behind. It was the morning of September 11th 2001. Since Rinpoche's original schedule involved flying on the 11th,

he arranged for all his students in India, Taiwan and many places in the world to be reassured that he was safe and well...

..... I had never thought I would be with Rinpoche at this time. Months before, I had presented offerings from the Centres at his home in Dharamsala, transforming them through words from the offerings of request to offerings of gratitude. Rinpoche had already agreed to visit the U.K. on his way back from America, now that was happening. Within a few days Rinpoche would make comments about this tragic event from the High Throne...

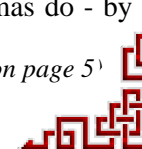
..... The High Throne at Lam Rim accords with its name - it is high and because we all sit latitudinal to the throne, you really do have to 'look up' to look at Rinpoche. The angle is very similar in the great prayer halls of the monasteries, where as you make offerings you gaze up at beautiful images of Enlightened Beings. So too is the angle of a toddler's head looking up at his or her parents. The angle has an important effect on the mind. I have been reflecting how sparse is our western cultures' ability to look up to - to genuinely and openly look up to.....

..... At one point during the transmission of Lama Tsong Khapa's wonderful text "The Fulfilment of all Hopes of Disciples" Rinpoche made reference to the collapse of the two towers. In essence he said that although the scale of the tragedy was shocking - such events are happening every day in our world. I remember at that time a shift in my mind - I could

not quite accept what Rinpoche had said. I often reflect now on those words - rooted as I know they are in the equanimity of Bodhicitta. The personal bewilderment, abject fear, unutterable pain and torture of body and mind that confronts many dying in our world is a remorseless, ongoing truth. I heard a remarkable Christian nun speak recently of the awesome degrees of evil that penetrate our world. She spoke too of how to forgive - she was and is frontline in Rwanda. Only love and compassion go willingly to those terror places - longing to transform and take away the pain. That is why, for my part, I am able to "look up to" - and why at the very, very least I try to be in earnest about my own death.....

..... Another day - For the Lama Tsong Khapa initiation, if I remember correctly, Rinpoche was given a text that had only been photocopied on one side. He asked Venerable Dhonden-la to help him assemble the loose pages of the text back to back in the usual Tibetan printed style, and I rejoiced at the mindful way Dhonden-la, standing before the High Throne assembled the text for Rinpoche. During this little interlude the energy in the shrine room became so beautiful. Rinpoche was making these incredibly happy sounds - pre-lingual intonations, exclamatory cadences - near-hums and murmurings - a sort of enlightened 'telly-tubby' speak. It was quite exquisite. Everything that true Lamas do - by

*(Continued on page 5)*



*(Continued from page 4)*

definition - encourage us to cognize the two Bodhicittas. For such holy beings to process is innate skilful means is expressing the pure delight of what is true. Whatever was happening, that is all I could hear - the utter joy and delight ...

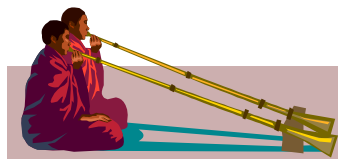
..... One consistent aspect of the visits of High Lamas to Lam Rim is how comfortable and at home they feel. Once, whilst waiting very formally for an audience with Rinpoche at his residence in Dharamsala, he had emerged from one room and disappeared into another dressed in a soft golden shirt, underskirt and beaming smile. He was very much at home. I distinctly remember a memory of similar images of Rinpoche at Lam Rim - often with Venerable Geshe-la - relaxed and rested before his return to India. All I can say is that his very presence was enough - was the teaching.....

..... I had meant to speak of the glow - Rinpoche's glow, but perhaps these are enough words for now. I am sure all who have met Rinpoche have some experience of that glow - so very comfortable to be near - as much felt as seen. It is very coherent, in part the result of non - revelatory forms such as the purest continuity of the three types of vows. The glow is also a dependent arising, encouraging us to realise it. Some years ago Venerable Geshe-la cited Rinpoche as showing aspects of the auspicious signs of the Enlightened

*Gold lies deep in the earth, yet its light shines bright in the sky -  
(Good deeds, although hidden, will always bring benefit)*

## EXPERIENCES OF THE KALACHAKRA

by Hillary Beckett



I am sure there were as many experiences of Graz as there were people there to experience it. And my experience will seem woefully inadequate to many and sentimental to others. But one of the beauties of the event was that it invited a great freedom to feel and to be just as you are.

The town and people of Graz were welcoming and friendly, the air fresh and clean, the travel on buses miraculously free, we were given bus passes, we became honorary citizens.

If I think in terms of family, there were many families at Graz. At the festival building we were warmly welcomed as a temporary, but valued, part of the organisational team and the notion of being part of a family just seemed to develop from there. In one moving family celebration, the Mayor of Graz, honoured its famous native son Heinrich Harrar, writer of 'Seven Years in Tibet' and its even more famous adopted son, His Holiness the Dalai Lama. This reminder of the old Tibet and of this ancient 'family' relationship, now being renewed and re-honoured between His Holiness and Heinrich Harrar, recalled a mysterious Tibet to a 17 year old who read that book within a family structure of her own and now responding to work demands, had brought with her the formidable task of understanding the deeply dysfunctional family of Shakespeare's King Lear.

But this world of the Kalachakra was teeming with people of its own. People from across the globe; busy, purposeful and dedicated; providing a service to those who were there and to those that were not. And all these widely divergent people united by the presence of one man, His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Blessed by a marvellous man who just beamed at us, asking us only to be and to feel good in our being. We became a family. We were ourselves a Mandala and we remained so right to the end.

The making of the Mandala was beautiful to watch and to listen to. The unhurried painstaking placing of each wonderfully coloured grain of sand, each perfect in its colour and position, accompanied by the patient, gentle scraping sounds made by the monks as they directed each grain to its place, was quite wonderful and unique. The sound seemed to be of the universe, the activity of the creation simply echoing the way it has always been.

But how was it that this Mandala which had been so marvellous to watch as it was being made, became in its dismantling suddenly so shocking and painful? Suggesting loss, betrayal even? Signalling that this end was an end after all and not, as I had expected, a beginning. This suddenly resembled a nightmare. What a dreadful fear: to have been a grain of sand in that beautiful Mandala and only to have suffered. Not to have been happy. Not to have seen the beauty. To have lived and not to have found it wonderful.

And this became one of the experiences of the Kalachakra. A lesson perhaps, that I am still



## FAITH & REASON by JOHN PEACOCK

*Statistics on crime and sentencing will continue to soar - until we apply some revolutionary Buddhist thinking to our jails*

**What Cherie Blair did not say about the crisis in Britain's prison system**

**Independent, Saturday 13th July 2002**

It will have come as no surprise to observers of the British penal system to hear Cherie Blair announce this week at the inaugural Lord Longford lecture that our prisons were vastly overcrowded. Many of those behind bars include people with mental health problems, drug addicts and others who really should not be there at all. Especially worrying was the effect of prison sentences on women which affect a staggering 10,000 children. The prison population in Britain at the moment stands at an all time high of 71,360. Yesterday the prison authorities, for the first time in seven years, asked to use police station cells to house the overflow.

If a society is to be judged on how it treats the unfortunate and dispossessed, then surely Britain is failing miserably. Both politicians and the judiciary appear to be suffering from a severe lack of imagination when assessing sentencing policies. Politicians in particular are caught within a rhetoric seemingly designed to make them worthy of re-election rather than addressing the real issues.

What is plainly apparent from a Buddhist perspective, however, is not just a failure of imagination but a severe breakdown in compassion within our society. Sentencing appears to be aimed primarily at retribution rather than rehabilitation. Those labelled "criminal" are considered almost incapable of change and the job of politicians and the judiciary is therefore to protect society. Hence, following this logic to its natural conclusion, the only option is to lock up as many criminals as possible.

Compassion is rightly extended towards the victims of crime, though many victims feel the degree is insufficient. But it is largely withheld from the perpetrators - an impression reinforced by a criminal justice system which

frequently hands out custodial sentences for minor offences and imprisons those who, like the mentally ill, should be dealt with in other ways.

Contrast this with the attitude displayed in the early Buddhist scriptures which holds "compassionate justice" to be the means of governing society. The basis of this form of justice is a compassion for the wrongdoer as well as the victim. Compassion is one of the key Buddhist virtues and values which, in the ideal society, is to be extended to all without preference. Thus any punishment inflicted on a wrongdoer should be motivated by compassion rather than a desire for revenge. This attitude, it should be made clear, is not a condoning of the evil or the wrong done but is motivated by a concern that the wrongdoer may change.

The early Buddhist scriptures naturally do not describe Western liberal democracies but societies ruled by "righteous kings". Such kings are required to "root out wicked people just as a father disciplines a son". However wrongdoers are considered to be ill and "like a doctor, a ruler should not get angry with them but rather make an effort to remove their faults". Thus we can see that, far from condoning evil and wrongdoing, the righteous society is to confront it and attempt to eradicate it. Nevertheless in attempting to eradicate it revenge is ruled out as appropriate for, as the Buddha eloquently says "not by hatred is hatred overcome" but "only by the absence of hatred is hatred extinguished".

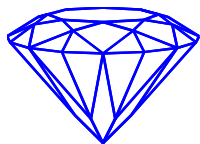
The Buddha's words and attitudes can speak to us in the contemporary world over the chasm of 2,500 years. In speaking of wrongdoing as an illness the Buddha focuses his attention on cure not vengeance. A system of compassionate justice in the modern world would thus

focus on the process of rehabilitation rather than revenge or a desire simply to remove criminals from society. Whilst the necessity to remove certain individuals from society is not discounted, this action must both be motivated by an attitude of compassion for perpetrator and potential victim. And the ultimate goal must be the eventual return of that individual to a normal life within society with the acknowledgement that change is a very real possibility.

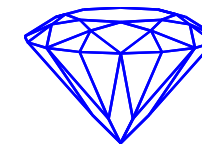
Buddhist texts from all traditions abound with stories of wrongdoers who have changed and attained insight and peace. That such stories exist testify to the Buddhist idea that no matter how sick the person is they can return to full health - if they seriously wish to eradicate the greed, hatred and delusion that motivate them in their evil actions. In other words the criminal is not a fixed entity who is irrevocably evil and incapable of change but an individual "infected" severely by greed, hatred and delusion. Health, it is argued, can again be attained by a progressive training and transformation of the mind - a "ceasing to do evil" and "a learning to do good".

What does all this say to the present crisis in the prison system? It means looking for ways of working on rehabilitation as an alternative in many cases to custodial sentences. But most of all it requires the criminal justice system to rethink its attitude to the possibility of changing those who commit crimes. That is not a soft option; in many ways it is a harder one. But without such a paradigm shift we will be unable to begin to think more creatively about sentencing policies and move away from the myopia of thinking that prison is the only alternative.

John Peacock is director of Sharpham College for Buddhist Studies & Contemporary Enquiry.



**‘THE DIAMOND THAT CUTS THROUGH ILLUSION’**  
**‘The Vajrachedika Prajnaparamita Sutra’**  
**Part 2: Submitted by Emma Lawton**



**5**

“What do you think, Subhuti? Is it possible to grasp the Tathagata by means of bodily signs?”

“No, World-Honoured One. When the Tathagata speaks of bodily signs, there are no signs being talked about.”

The Buddha said to Subhuti, “In a place where there is something that can be distinguished by signs, in that place there is deception. If you can see the signless nature of signs, then you can see the Tathagata.”

**6**

The Venerable Subhuti said to the Buddha, “In times to come, will there be people who, when they hear these teachings, have real faith and confidence in them?”

The Buddha replied, “Do not speak that way, Subhuti. Five hundred years after the Tathagata has passed away, there will still be people who enjoy the happiness that comes from observing the precepts. When such people hear these words, they will have faith and confidence that hear is the truth. We should know that such people have sown seeds not only during the lifetime of one Buddha, or even two, three, four, or five Buddhas, but have, in truth, planted wholesome seeds of tens of thousands of Buddhas. Anyone who, for only a second, gives rise to a pure and clear confidence upon hearing these words of the Tathagata, the Tathagata sees and knows that person, and he or she will attain immeasurable happiness because of this understanding. Why?”

“Because that kind of person is not caught up in the idea of a self, a person, a living being, or a life span. They are not caught up in the idea of a dharma or the idea of a non-dharma. They are not caught up in the notion that this is a sign and that this is not a sign. Why? If you are caught up in the idea of a dharma, you are also caught up in the ideas of a self, a person, a living being, and a life span. That is why we should not get caught up in dharmas or in the idea that dharmas

do not exist. This is the hidden meaning when the Tathagata says Bhiksus, you should know that all the teachings I give to you are a raft. All teachings must be abandoned, not to mention non-teachings.”

**7**

“What do you think Subhuti, has the Tathagata arrived at the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind? Does the Tathagata give any teaching?”

The Venerable Subhuti replied, “As far as I have understood the Lord Buddha’s teachings, there is no independently existing object of mind called the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind, nor is there any independently existing teaching that the Tathagata gives. Why? The teachings that the Tathagata has realised and spoken of cannot be conceived of as separate, independent existences and therefore cannot be described. The Tathagata’s teaching is not self-existent. Nor is it non-self-existent. Why? Because the noble teachers are only distinguished from others in terms of the unconditioned.”

**8**

“What you think, Subhuti? If someone were to fill the 3000 chiliocosms with the seven precious treasures as a act of generosity, would that person bring much happiness by this virtuous act?”

The Venerable Subhuti replied, “Yes, World-Honoured One, it is because the very nature of virtue and happiness are not virtue and happiness that the Tathagata is able to speak about virtue and happiness.”

The Buddha said, “On the other hand, if there is someone who accepts these teachings and puts them into practice, even if only a gatha of four lines, and explains them to someone else, the happiness brought about by this virtuous act far exceeds the happiness brought about by giving the seven precious treasures. Why? Because, Subhuti, all Buddhas and the dharma of the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind of all Buddhas arise from these teachings. Subhuti, what is called Buddhadharma is everything that is not Buddhadharma.”

## LIFE IN A TIBETAN BUDDHIST MONASTERY

### PART THREE: THE THIRD YEAR, by Dechen Rochard



Before the end of the academic year of 1991 which culminated in the debate exams in late December, I went on a long three-day train journey to the Tibetan settlements in South India. Christmas day passed almost unnoticed. I arrived at the Dzogchen Monastery in early January, to attend the opening ceremony and teachings given by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and in good time to help with the preparations before His Holiness' arrival. Dzogchen Rinpoche had been a student at the Dialectics Institute, completing the first three texts (and the major portion) of the Geshe degree course. As was traditional in those days at the Institute, after completing the Madhyamaka class he moved on. He became absorbed in re-founding his own monastery in Kollegal (Karnataka State), which is near Bylakuppe (famous for being the settlement in which Sera Monastery of the Gelug tradition was founded). Dzogchen Rinpoche is the half-brother of Sogyal Rinpoche, the well-known Nyingma master who has done much work in the West through

his Rigpa centres and other organisations. Naturally enough, the international Rigpa centres were great sponsors and supporters of the Dzogchen monastery, and many students from the Rigpa centres were present in Kollegal working hard at setting up the facilities for the teachings. I was struck by the equanimity of these students, how they worked almost continuously throughout the night with scarcely any time for sleep, without getting irritated with each other or anything else! This was evidence of genuine Dharma practice, I thought. My job was calligraphy, which involved sitting-down and writing people's names on small round pieces of white card. These would become the name badges for all the participants. I don't remember how many people had registered for the teachings, but each of them had such a badge. After these mountains of boring badges were completed I was asked to write signs, which indicated where various facilities were and what you could do in them. There was just one final sign that I failed to write, perhaps because the teachings had already started and I had begun the job of co-ordinating the recordings of them. I'm not sure.

Anyway, I regret not having been able to fulfil Sogyal Rinpoche's request.

During the fortnight of teachings His Holiness bestowed many initiations in connection with the Secret Visions of the Fifth Dalai Lama. Abbots, lamas, masters and disciples of all traditions attended these teachings and initiations. It was wonderful to see them all together in one great radiant throng. We also received teachings during the lunch-breaks and evenings from some of these other masters, such as Nyersho Khen Rinpoche, Khamtrul Rinpoche, Ringu Tulku, Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche, and Dzogchen Rinpoche himself, who was too humble to consider giving us a teaching but sat and "talked" to us in the gompas. The facilities had not been fully developed at that time, and many people didn't have rooms to sleep in. The lamas were accommodated in various rooms, the sponsors were in the dormitories. The ordinary Tibetan monks, nuns, and lay-people probably

had tents. Through my connections with the Dialectics Institute I had been given the one and only (very simple) bedroom in the nearby school. Other Westerners slept on tables on the veranda around the dormitories and common rooms. But it didn't matter. The weather was mild, the food was good, the teachings were excellent, and everyone felt extraordinarily happy.

After His Holiness had departed from the Dzogchen Monastery, I was invited to join Ringu Tulku and a group of his students travelling to Bylakuppe in a hired mini-bus. We visited Mysore and then spent the rest of the time at Sera, whilst doing daily pilgrimages to the other Tibetan monasteries nearby.

Ringu Tulku gave very inspiring informal teachings at each place. After he and his students had left, I travelled to Drepung, where I met up with Samten Gyatso (a friend from the Dialectics Institute). We spent a couple of weeks at Drepung and then

***I was struck  
by the  
equanimity of  
these students,  
how they  
worked almost  
continuously  
throughout the  
night with  
scarcely any  
time for sleep,  
without  
getting  
irritated with  
each other or  
anything else!***

*(Continued on page 9)*



(Continued from page 8)

went to Goa with some other friends (including Geshe Konchog's student from the UK - Sal). It was great fun. A few days later Samten and I were on the long train ride back to the north, stopping in Delhi for a few days whilst I renewed my passport. Back in Dharamsala it was cold, but we arrived just in time to receive the traditional Losar blessing from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Early in the morning we joined the rows upon rows of people that formed a line snaking up and down the debate courtyard outside the palace, where we stood and shuffled for several hours. Although it was long, I remember feeling full of strength and joyful energy throughout. Finally, what a treat it was to arrive in the presence of our beloved guru, be touched by him, and greeted with his words of "Tashi Delek" at the very beginning of the New Year. We each received a knotted red ribbon around our necks whilst being embraced by his radiant, compassionate gaze, and with a smile in our hearts we stepped forward into the new and challenging year ahead. However, in the years since, this tradition has been discontinued out of concern for His Holiness' health and safety.



A few days later I was off to Tso Pema to receive teachings and initiations from His Holiness the Dalai Lama again. This place is considered to be especially blessed, particularly by the Nyingma tradition. According to traditional accounts, Guru Rinpoche and his consort were captured and placed in a pyre, which was then set alight. Instead of being burnt by the flames, he miraculously transformed the pyre into a lake, and in its centre was a beautiful lotus upon which he sat in union with his consort. Every twelve years there is a special Guru Rinpoche, or Padmasambhava, festival held in various holy places. This was such a year, and Tso Pema such a place. To attend His Holiness' teachings here at this time was indeed auspicious. I was fortunate in being invited to join a group who had hired a bus. The people in this group were from the USA, and travelling under the guidance of their Dharma teacher, a Tibetan monk named Lobsang Samten (also known as Ngodrup). I had met Lobsang the previous year during another of his visits to India, and he had introduced himself to me as a close friend of Paljor (His Holiness' attendant). Lobsang was also from Namgyal

Monastery, and had served as a personal attendant to His Holiness a few years earlier when another attendant had been sick. He is very close to His Holiness. So I stayed with this group and participated in their activities whilst attending these teachings, and a strong bond formed between us. They all invited me to go to the USA later that year, during the winter vacation, and I considered their invitation very warmly. I had not yet been back to the West since my arrival in India two years earlier, so it would be quite an interesting experience, and I had never been to America at all.

The festival at Tso Pema only lasted for a couple of days, but during the first of those days it absolutely poured with rain. I was sitting outside with other members of the monastic sangha, and got soaked through to the skin. That night I hung my robes over the balcony to dry. They were the only set I had brought with me, as usually one does not need more for just a couple of days, but they were no drier in the morning. I couldn't bear to put on those cold, wet, heavy clothes, so I thought I would just stay in the hotel room that day (as there would be no teachings on the second

day of the festival). But my roommate, Cait, suggested that I wear her spare clothes, and kindly lent them to me. This second day was bathed in glorious sun-light, and filled with the vibrant colours and sounds of Cham dance. All my friends thought it was hilarious that I was wearing lay-clothes, after I had explained to them what had happened (including Paljor-la). Wearing lay-clothes felt quite odd, but I knew it was only temporary. The robes dried that day in the sun, and by the evening I looked like my normal self again. The last day of the festival was over, and the next day we returned home to Dharamsala, a ten-hour bus-ride away.

Losar teachings began soon after we arrived back in Dharamsala, and His Holiness was on the throne again expounding the vast and profound teachings and practices, as well as bestowing a Heruka initiation. I don't remember what the teachings were on this occasion, perhaps because I had lent my FM radio set to a visitor who hadn't brought one. However, I quickly learnt that it was too soon for me to be able to understand His

***Instead of being burnt by the flames, he miraculously transformed the pyre into a lake, and in its centre was a beautiful lotus.....***



(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

Holiness' teachings directly in Tibetan, although I made a bold attempt to do so. In the end, I contented myself with simply receiving his blessing this time, as so many of the Tibetan lay-people do.



After the teachings were over, our class began its second year of study at the Dialectics Institute. There was a special ceremony for our class held on 1st April (the first day of the new term) as we were beginning our six-year study of the Perfection of Wisdom. The text that forms the basis of this is actually the *Abhisamayalankara* (The Ornament of Clear Realisation) by Maitreya through Asanga. This is written in verse, in eight chapters, and the monks memorise the whole text, often when they are quite young before they begin studying it. I couldn't spend any time doing this, as I was fully occupied with trying to translate it, the commentary on it (by Haribhadra), and the commentaries on that (the monastic textbooks), as well as the teachings themselves (mostly given by Gen. Lobsang Gyatso). Actually, I wasn't translating this material as such, but just getting along with it as best I could in Tibetan, and translating the words and phrases that I didn't know. Still, it

was a very heavy work-load, though again I benefited a lot from the kind help offered by my American classmate, Philip. Our studies began with the first words of the monastic commentary, concerning the

three bodies of the Buddha (or four when they are sub-divided again). This part is fairly easy to debate, as there are a lot of definitions (which we all had to memorise, of course), so we could play around with these quite a bit. I had started my third little book of definitions, and other useful nuggets copied from the texts, which fit snugly into my pocket (and was easily withdrawn during debate)! However, as one progressed through the text it became more important to debate the interpretations of the quotations from the great Indian commentaries, so my little books of definitions gradually became redundant on the debate court-yard and I had to memorise those quotations themselves. Sometimes I managed this, and sometimes I didn't. But I always made sure that I could follow the meaning of what was being said by the teacher when I had the text in front of me. In order to ensure this, I had to listen to the entire tape of the teachings again in my room, making notes in a larger exercise book, or in the text itself, as I went

along. It was quite a gruelling task at the time, but certainly worth the effort.

The second year at the Dialectics Institute progressed smoothly enough, and I became very fond of the long, thin text of loose-leafed peach-coloured pages that we were studying. It was like nurturing a living

***It was like  
nurturing a  
living  
organism,  
watching it  
gradually  
grow day by  
day,....***

organism, watching it gradually grow day by day, with the quotations highlighted in soft green, the headings and divisions in orange, the definitions (few) in yellow, and their defined concepts in pink. Notes expressing our teacher's words adorned the margins. It became more rich with meaning, and more beautiful in my eyes, as time went on, and I loved it as if it were my own baby. This text is Panchen Sonam Drakpa's "spyi don" ("general meaning") commentary on the *Abhisamayalankara*, which is the monastic commentary used by Drepung Loseling and Ganden Shartse monasteries. It is still with me, sitting on my book-shelf amongst many other well-loved and precious texts.

During the two weeks before the Anniversary of Buddha's Enlightenment, on the fifteenth day of the fourth Tibetan month, I went up to

Tushita Retreat Centre and did three Nyung Nyes. I would have done the fourth too, which included the fifteenth day itself, but I had decided to join our Institute practices that day, which culminated in prostrations around the Lingkhör in the evening. So, having equipped myself with knee-pads, hand-pads, a face mask, and bits of padding in other strategic places, I joined a number of our monks who were engaging in this practice. Most of us were wearing track-suits, and we set out under a full moon at about eight in the evening. It was quite beautiful, though the first downhill bit seemed rather treacherous, as I

skidded forward on my wooden hand-pads that one of our monks had kindly made for me. Those monks who weren't doing the prostrations themselves brought around buckets of orange squash (I dread to think about hygiene in these circumstances) and plastic cups to refresh the hot, thirsty participants. Even though I was accustomed to doing prostrations, I found this Lingkhör very strenuous, and it took me over three hours to complete the circuit. I must say that, even though the body is in pain at the end, the mind is very happy. I joyfully dragged myself to my room

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

afterwards, filled my bucket with cold water (I was too tired to heat it up) and began to wash off the dust and filth. How I wished I could have had a Mummy to wash me, as I could hardly lift my hands above my head to pour the jug of water over me! Anyway, I accomplished the task, and collapsed into bed with a crystal clear mind.

Monsoon came and went as drearily as ever. The only light in the midst of it was my second private audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. This meeting was quite brief. I mainly wanted to mention to His Holiness the connection made between me and Lobsang (together with his students). I asked His Holiness if I should accept their invitation to visit them in the USA. His Holiness said that it would be good to go, but that if I go then I must teach. So this plan was put into action.

After the monsoon was over we had our three-day autumn picnic. This year it was in a different place, which had a large, flat, grassy area perfectly suitable for a good game of football. Gleefully I joined the game, and played most of the day. I was slim and fit in those days, and could run fast, so I found it very enjoyable to charge up and down the pitch, even though the game was rather rough. However, on the second day, the

players' determination had increased, and it took on a slightly brutal quality. There was one monk on the opposing team, called Dorje, who was in the class above me, and he was known to be quite reckless. On one occasion I had the ball, and he just charged straight towards me without stopping or slowing down. The next moment there was a heavy clunk as his head hit mine, then a crash as I fell to the ground and he fell on top of me, then another clunk as his head landed on mine, which was now bashed against the ground too. As I dizzily got up blood gushed over my right eye. There were deeply concerned looks on the faces of most of the monks around me, though I expect Dorje was laughing. He was OK. I was helped off the pitch, and someone saw to the cut, which was just above the right eyebrow and turned out to be not as bad as it seemed (though I still have a slight scar). When I got back to my room that night and examined the damage I found that, apart from the cut on my head, the big toenail on my left foot was completely black, and a bruise the size and shape of half a boiled egg (cut length-wise) was in the middle of my right shin. I had never seen that in real life before, and thought it only happened in Popeye or



Tom and Jerry cartoons. But there it was, quite firm to the touch. Well, no more football with the monks, I thought; not tomorrow, and not ever!

October and November were taken up with beginning our study of the first chapter of the *Pramanavartikka*, focusing on a commentary by Gyaltsab Je (which is a commentary on Dharmakirti's commentary on Dignaga). Each year, at this time for two months, we would work through this chapter, completing it within the six-year period of the Perfect of Wisdom studies. The second chapter is completed in the same way during the Madhyamaka studies later, again for two months each year. This text is very difficult, particularly the first chapter as it is all about the intricacies of logic, the philosophy of language, and epistemology (according to the non-Madhyamaka schools). Nevertheless, these theories form the basis of debate within the Madhyamaka schools, at least according to Tsongkhapa's interpretation. It takes years to understand these theories properly, and how they relate to Madhyamaka thought. I am still wallowing in ignorance. The academic year ended with revision and exams in December, but by then I was on an

Aeroflot flight to England, with an unscheduled stop-over in Moscow! We were accommodated in a spartan hotel, served plastic sausages with cold rubber chips, and taken on a coach-tour around the Kremlin and Red Square. Interesting. Luckily no-one was meeting me at the airport.



*"Spending your time with true spiritual friends will fill you with love for all beings and help you to see how negative attachments and hatred are."*

*Being with such friends and following their example will naturally imbue you with their good qualities just as all the birds flying around a golden mountain are bathed in its golden radiance."*

*Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche.*

## BEWARE OF HONEY OFFERED ON A SHARP KNIFE

*Tibetan Folk Tales - Fredrick and Audrey Hyde-  
Chambers - pub: Shambhala*



As the setting sun sank beneath the glacier-ripped mountain peaks, they glowed red as the embers of a fire. From the flat roofs of the houses of Lhasa, children flew brightly coloured kites from strings sprinkled with powdered glass. The children bobbed and weaved around one another - the kites shadowing their movements - as they laughed excitedly and attempted to cut each other's kite strings. A little boy of about six sat beside his uncle, a monk dressed in maroon robes. They watched the boy's kite sail higher and higher in the sky. Caught and held by the wind, it was so high that it appeared not to be moving. Still watching the kite, the boy said, "Tell me a story, uncle." The monk chuckled. "An ancient story, then." "A father said to his son, the monk began, "I am going to die soon my son. Take my gold to your house. It is yours, but remember that you should not trust anybody, not even your wife." The father hoped that his son, Sonam, would remember his advice and that he would understand the ways of the world.

"Now Sonam had a very good friend whose name was Tamchu. As children they had their lessons together and in the evenings played foot-shuttlecock. Tamchu lived in the next village with his wife and two little boys.

One day Sonam decided to go on a pilgrimage to the holy monastery and he thought to himself, 'When he was alive my father told me not to trust anybody,' But

when he thought of his friend Tamchu he could not believe that these words were true about him. Not Tamchu. So he took his two bags of gold nuggets to his friends's house and asked him, 'Tamchu-la, please keep my gold safe for me while I am away. This is the gold my father gave me when he died.' Tamchu said, 'Oh yes. Oh yes. I will keep your gold very carefully and when you return from your pilgrimage it will be safe for you. You do not need to worry. We are good friends.'

"So," the monk continued the story, "a year passed and Sonam returned from his pilgrimage. He went to Tamchu's home and asked his friend, 'May I have my gold back, Tamchu?' 'Oh I am so sorry, Sonam. We are unlucky, so unlucky. The gold has turned to sand!' Tamchu looked at his friend in amazement as he told him of this remarkable happening. But Sonam did not seem surprised and, after a few moments of silence, said 'That is all right Tamchu. Do not worry. You did your best to look after my gold.'

"The two men ate together, and it seemed that the loss of the gold was almost forgotten. Later in the day Sonam said to his friend, 'Tamchu, I would like to look after your sons for a few months, as I do not have a family of my own. I would like to give them good food and good clothes. We should be very happy together at my home.'

"That is a very good idea Sonam!' Tamchu thought to himself, 'Although he has lost his gold to me, he wants to look after my sons. 'Well,' he thought 'he is a very kind person.' So he said 'Certainly Sonam. Please take my sons for as long as you wish.'

"Sonam took the boys to his home and looked after them very well. He then bought two little monkeys and gave them the boys' names. During the following days Sonam trained the monkeys so that when he called 'Tendzin come here!' the older monkey would run over to him. When Sonam called 'Thupten come

here!' the young monkey went over to him. The monkeys understood very well and learned quickly.

"When Tamchu came to see his sons, Sonam looked very sad as he greeted his friend. 'I am so sorry, Tamchu. We are very unlucky, so unlucky. Your sons have turned into monkeys.' Tamchu was very upset and called out his sons' names. Straight away the two little monkeys appeared and ran over to him.

They grabbed Tamchu's hands and danced about him like little children. Tamchu was distressed and asked his friend, 'Sonam what can we do? How can we turn the monkeys back into my sons?' Sonam thought for a moment and then said to his friend, 'That is easy,' but he sounded sad at the impossibility of such a thing, 'We need a lot of gold.'

'How much gold will do?' Tamchu asked. 'About two bags of gold nuggets, at least.

"As soon as possible,' Tamchu said, 'I will bring the bags of gold.' And he hurried off to his home. Later he came back and gave Sonam the gold. Sonam took it and told his friend to wait while he went upstairs. A few moments later he returned.

'Here you are Tamchu I have changed the monkeys back into human beings, into your sons.'

"Tamchu was delighted to have his sons back, but he looked sheepishly at Sonam. The two friends could not help laughing at one another."

At the end of the story the monk himself burst out laughing as he saw that his nephew's kite string had been cut while the boy listened to the story.

The two of them watched the kite float across Lhasa valley towards the golden rooftops of the Potala.







## FIRE PUJA SITE

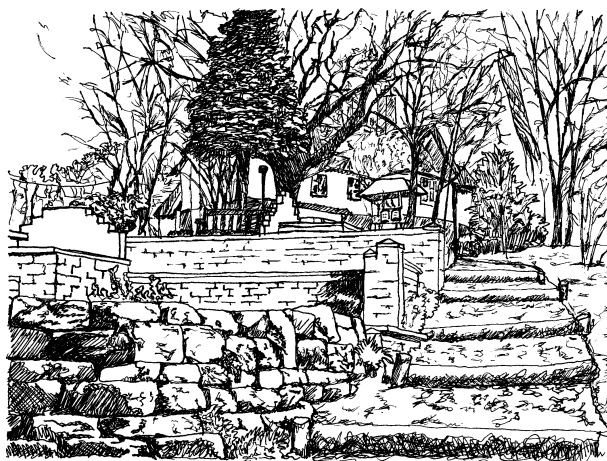


Margaret had told me that the new fire Puja site was going to need a bit of physical exertion and would I care to lend a bit of muscle and sweat to help the project along. The first couple of dates that were available I couldn't make, so by the time I managed to create a bit of spare time much of the work had been done. It was a really good time to be involved in the project because the basic shape and structure of the Puja site was complete so I could see what it was going to be. I spent a really nice three days

working with John putting some of the finishing touches to the outer edges of the site. We put a path around the bottom of the site that connected with the Mani path and built a side wall. Making the wall was a real experience. We spent ages selecting the right piece of stone for a particular place and the right blend for the neighbouring stones. It was just like doing a jigsaw; each piece had to fit together and complement the other pieces. I was reminded at this time of the comment that is attributed to Michael Angelo who said when he was sculpting that his job was simply to release the shape that already existed within the stone.

When I watched Geshe-la conducting the first Fire Puja on the new site it was really satisfying to see my little bit of work dovetailing with all the other people's effort. A real Sangha project.

Roy Radcliffe



### She Said: I Did

Sooo.... when Margaret, Ineffable-organiser-la floated the idea that I could be useful in the fire puja area, my most immediate thought was 'Oh, no, I don't think so' but I more or less immediately prodded myself into playing along with her. I needed this merit boost.

The due day - blue-sky covered, green-edged - was hot; the task to move some stones from the side of the house down to the puja site, easing the task of the skilled ones, picking and mixing up the best possible wall. There's a hazy recollection of cleaving clods of hard dry clay with a mattock; trundling up and down with the wheelbarrow - which carried progressively fewer rocks and got incrementally heavier as the day and I aged in tandem. Sweat was also prominent in the scheme of things.

By day's end an enigmatically archaeological linear pile of rocks - was it ever a wall? - was transformed into a fresher, rounder heap in a different place. Satisfying? Yes. Tiring? Oooh yes. Job done.

And one day these things will fall apart. No one knowing what the puja area was made for - still less that this confection that goes under my name had anything to do with it.

Huw Rolands

*Drawing by Ben*

## FIRE PUJA SITE, cont.



*Edita preparing the path around the Fire Puja site*

In April 2000 Ven. Geshe-la stopped at the Fire Puja site and commented that it was about time that the vast black plastic sheet which covered the downward slope from the throne seat to the apple tree was removed and the whole area should be levelled. As we walked around the site he pointed out what development was needed - explaining that the fire puja site must be able to accommodate additional members of ordained sangha for future Fire Pujas. As I listened, the vision of many monks and nuns performing holy puja was beautiful but I could not imagine that happening here in my lifetime! So the Fire Puja project was not placed high on my priority list and could be found on the back burner for 'sometime in the distant future'.

In June 2002 when Jangtse Choeje Rizong Rinpoche visited Lam Rim we requested him to

make a Fire Puja Offering. We had a total of five ordained sangha, four of whom were precariously sitting on makeshift platforms around the site. As I was waiting for the Puja to start I noted the monks' seating arrangements and I recalled dear Geshe-la's instructions. I felt so ashamed. His vision was still sitting on the back burner, it had been there for over 2 years.

At the first opportunity I made deep apologies to Ven. Geshe-la for my ignorance and lack of mindfulness. I promised that the site would be extended and upgraded very soon. I had no idea how that would happen, however, I would just have to concentrate very hard on possible opportunities to make it happen.

The opportunity arose a few weeks later when Simon (Rinchen) Cook telephoned from Lama Tsong Khapa Institute in Italy where he is studying, to ask if one of his friends, Glen, from Australia could come and spend 5/6 days at Lam Rim prior to studying at Jamyang Buddhist Centre London, during August. Would I like to think about a project they could do together? Yes indeed, I definitely did have a project in mind. Please come quickly. A few more telephone calls to some able-bodied friends together with Ven, Geshe Lobsang Thinley, Ven. Tenzin Tsepag and John Allman, and we were ready to go. Margaret Moreton gave assurance that the shop would underwrite the project. This has such benefit for all the people who purchase books and items as the profit goes into spiritual projects like this one.

Over the next 6 days we had a heatwave - ideal conditions for creating a mountain of clay. Geshe-la was going to start his summer retreat on the 1st August as he came down to explain his vision. Uncle G (who painted the house) came with

his A-team of bricklayers and we put the project together. The excavating, tree-cutting, levelling and stonewall building, together with gravel-spreading would be completed by the 'Lam Rim team' and the bricklaying, blue stone laying and steps would be Uncle G's remit. All work had to be completed by the end of August, in time for dear Geshe-la to make the Fire Puja Offering. With the combination of sweat and aching limbs we all did it.

Sometimes a group of people with strong motivation find themselves in a set of circumstances where they are inspired with a strong creative energy. I think we each witnessed this experience. Our declaration of trust in Ven. Geshe-la's vision for laying the foundations for future times was symbolized by hoisting a tall rainbow-coloured wind-sock with the OM MANI PADME HUNG mantra inscribed by Ben and Emma on its tails which danced in the wind, rejoicing in our happiness and satisfaction.

Ven. Geshe-la offered Fire Puja. Ven. Geshe Lobsang Thinley and Ven. Tenzin Tsepag were sitting comfortably with Geshe-la smiling.

A job well done. Thank You.

Margaret



*"In the midst of clouds of impermanence and illusion dances the lightning of life.*

*Can you say you wont die tomorrow?  
Practice the Dharma."*

*Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche.*

## FIRE PUJA SITE, cont.

### ... Of Walls and their Making

Where and how does a wall begin? Beneath the lush green ground needed to be levelled there is no uniformity. It is worth reflecting that although shallow stumps of trees do not appear as much of an obstacle to remove, their life force reaches deep - deep in the ground. The root systems of three trees were very tenacious and long hindered the task at hand, as did dense patches of rock and stone.

Tens of yards away, Paul's chain-saw lopped substantial parts off living trees, thereby creating new openings and approaches and hints of the site. Gradually, along with a great deal of careful pruning in the immediate vicinity, new patterns of sunlight embraced the ground and the trees offered intimate privacy rather than restricted views. As the views were cleared, so too was the ground. Levelling inclined ground is intimately related to the laying of foundations, especially when giving consideration to what is dug up. What makes a hole in the ground, of course, is the absence of earth. One of the most interesting aspects of this project were the displaced piles of earth that were filled with asylum-seeking mother beings. Where were they all to go? Thankfully not far. Very little earth was moved away from the site-just used for a mini-landfill exercise here - or a gently sloping embankment there. Clods and turfs were cut and stacked to be re-assembled later. Vast mounds of foliage and brushwood were disentangled and dispersed, whilst valuable winter fuel was saved and carried up to the house. Barrow after barrow of stones were brought down to the site from the

vegetable garden. Men drawing heavy lorries braved the soft turf to deposit tons of materials as near as they could.

Only then, during and around all these activities, by so many helpful people, did the terraced walls appear. Jeff the bricklayer built another-brick-in-the-wall type walls with hypnotic rhythmic speed. None of the dry-stone base laid by Jason is now to be seen, yet that mindful work captures the essence of all good foundations. As you approach the Fire Puja site from far below on the Prayer Path, the organic strength of the rampart wall built by Simon and Glen impels closer inspection, especially when you catch sight of the plants introduced by Edita and Helena.

A short while later, after the disentanglement process of tress and leaf carried out by Venerable Tenzin Tsepag and Margaret, Roy built the terraced walls on the bank by the stone-paved steps. He re-enacted that great spiritual traditions, patiently building a section of wall then taking it down and starting again. On the higher puja fireplace where Gerald designed a new throne seat there is an unobtrusive border of stones. Purists of course, might object to the inclusion of this effort in the category 'wall' but such considerations are highly relative - just ask the faerie and other special beings who have to stand on tip-toe to see over them.

Last, but certainly not least there is a little wall by the grass bank - the Manifest Madhyamika wall. Unlike all the assemblies around it that appear autonomous and self-established, it is conspicuously interdependent. Few self-supporting stones here - just a jumble of friendly dependencies. Guest stones and bricks are welcomed into this hole-some edifice, not for the sake of dynamics or strength but

just for 'mere appearance'. Those appearances hardly disguise that the wall has a dry-stone humour which is no real surprise when you consider it was built by two generations of Lharampa Geshe.

John Allman



### *Like Ripples on a Lake*

*Worldly activities are like ripples on a lake: hardly has one disappeared that another one emerges.*

*It is endless.*

*Worldly activity will never stop until death.*

*Now that we have obtained a precious human life, it would be such a pity if we were not to open ourselves up a little to the influence of the Dharma.*

*We should seize every opportunity to practice the truth and to improve ourselves, instead of waiting for a time when we are less busy.*

*H.H. the Dalai Lama.*





*Peace Mala Youth Team*

Since the launch Helen Mary Jones, Assembly Member for Llanelli, who attended the launch, has given her full support to the Peace Mala. When she met the president of Ireland Mary McAleese during an official visit to Wales, she gave the president her Peace Mala. "It seemed appropriate as the President was talking about the need for peace." The President was delighted with the gift.

The Western Synagogue in London was the first faith community to use the Peace Mala as a youth activity. During Holocaust Memorial Day, 150 youngsters at the synagogue made Peace Malas using Peace Mala kits.

On February 27th, leaders of the Peace Mala Youth Team will give a presentation to Heads of Religious Studies at the networking training day in Ferryside. On March 8th a presentation will be made in Llanelli Town Hall as part of International Women's Day. The Youth Team also hope to give a presentation to the newly formed Inter-Faith Council at the National Assembly during their next meeting in March. Further presentations will be made in primary schools in the hope that teachers will adopt the Peace Mala as a worthy subject for lessons in global education, religious studies and world peace.

# Peace Mala

## **Pam Evans and Pupils at Coedcae School**

Peace Malas, explanatory booklets and a Teachers Guide to the Peace Mala are available from Pam Evans, Head of Religious Studies, Coedcae School, Llanelli.

Further information can be gained by looking up the web-site: [www.peacemala.org.uk](http://www.peacemala.org.uk)

"The voices of intolerance are all around us - the voice of tolerance needs to be louder."

### **History of the Peace Mala**

The Peace Mala was born in a classroom in Coedcae School, Llanelli, Wales UK.

Pam Evans, Head of Religious Studies, and her pupils were discussing the terrible events of September 11th 2001. During the discussion in the classroom, they realised something needed to be done to combat prejudice and religious intolerance. The rise in Islamophobia in the world was to be expected, as a response to the attack. What was more shocking was the rise in fundamentalism, racism and prejudice, that we are faced with today. Pam Evans came up with the idea of a symbolic bracelet with a powerful message. Her students approved and the Peace Mala was born.

The Peace Mala is a fashion item to wear on the wrist and is also a practical teaching aid. It can be used with youngsters to help promote awareness, tolerance and respect between all communities. It has been created as a simple representation of the world's religions living alongside each other in harmony.



In October 2002, Coedcae students received the Prince's Trust Millennium Award to promote the Peace Mala as a Youth Project. Sarah Kitchener of the Prince's Trust said, "This is a unique and special project. A group of young people have come together to promote harmony throughout Wales and the Princes Trust is very pleased to fund the project."

Pam Evans and her students hope that the Peace Mala will stimulate interest and encourage youngsters and adults to find out more about the faiths represented on it. If teachers and leaders of faith communities join in this initiative, they can help spread the message of love, respect and peace through places of worship, Sunday schools, Youth Clubs, schools, colleges and other centres of learning.

### **Meaning of the Rainbow Beads**

The coloured beads on the Peace Mala create a

*(Continued on page 17)*



(Continued from page 16)

double rainbow of the faiths. The rainbow is an important symbolic link between heaven and earth in many cultures. The Peace Mala is made up of fourteen coloured beads with a central white bead between the symbolic knots. Malas of the individual colours of the rainbow, representing the individual faiths, are also available. In these arrangements, the central white bead becomes symbolic of the rainbow and represents all the other faiths. For those who prefer a less colourful mala, a mala of 14 black beads and a single white bead is available.

The Peace Mala was launched at the UNA Wales Temple of Peace in Cardiff, on Wednesday, November 27th 2002. The weather conditions could not have been worse but the torrential rain and gale force winds did not stop representatives of the various faiths and spiritual traditions travelling from all over Britain to join together in friendship and peace.

The launch was lead by the Most Revd. Dr. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Wales, now Archbishop of Canterbury who commented "Strong and distinctive religious commitments need not involve hostility and bigotry. I welcome this contribution to friendship, coming as it does from children who have worked and thought deeply around these issues."

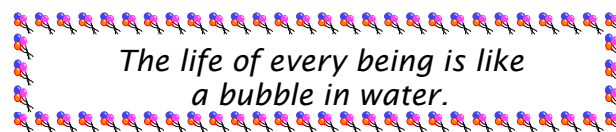
Coedcae students and their teacher, Pam Evans, joined the Archbishop. Students and teachers from other schools in Wales and lecturers in World Faiths from the University of Wales were also present along with many NGO's and representatives of 14 different spiritual traditions. Father Luke Holden, Greek Orthodox, led the procession of faiths into the Peace Hall. Lama Khemsar Rinpoche gave an

unexpected blessing in Tibetan. The "Barefoot Doctor" was also among the faith guests.



Large, hand-made candles, in the rainbow colours of the Peace Mala were lit by representatives of the 14 spiritual traditions. It came as no surprise when pupils asked if the Venerable Geshe Damcho Yonten of Lam Rim Buddhist Centre would light the peace candle on behalf of all Buddhist traditions. Coedcae students have been visiting Lam Rim for several years to conduct fieldwork research on Buddhism. Geshela was the obvious choice who sprang to mind. They were delighted when he said yes.

Every person present in the Peace Hall followed the lighting of large Peace Candles with the lighting of votive candles for world peace. After the ceremonies were completed and guests started to leave, a double rainbow was seen in the skies above Cardiff. This seemed like a blessing and certainly appeared to be a most auspicious sign in the heavens.



*The life of every being is like  
a bubble in water.*

## THE BROWN PAPER BAG

I put to you a question:  
Have you ever owned a brown paper bag?  
Not ornately dressed, or resilient  
Just a brown paper bag  
Its simplicity is somewhat perfect;  
If struck it will not attack.  
If upset, it will not cry.  
Yet I, despite its perfection see defects.  
It will be held, but is limited to that which it can hold;  
It will offer shelter, yet is incapable of granting itself the same luxury,  
instead it will sit through hardships to be dissolved  
slowly by the elements by which it is attacked,  
thus advancements of its person is impossible.  
If that bag were to be burdened with more than its own load,  
It would collapse, scattering your heartfelt contents,  
To be ravaged and pecked by the pigeons and vultures of this world,  
Who will gladly take your load, in an unpleasant pretence of parental care.  
Still I have to know by your emission,  
The answer to my simple question



We do not have the benefit of specialist bookshops like Wisdom in South Africa and this resulted that garage type bookshops have emerged to cater for our needs. I was browsing in one of these early in 2000 when I was given a little red booklet that had a picture of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama on the cover and the title read “KALACHKRA 2002 – GRAZ”. I only knew 6 weeks before the actual event that it was going to be possible to attend.

It was very cloudy and misty as the plane approached the airport as we landed at Graz airport and I was just so happy to be there because it was like a dream come true. I hired a taxi together with two Mexican women as we were a little late for the opening session and we were keen to get to the event site in time for the opening address. We first had to register in order to obtain our admission into the event site. We then had to find the dormitory and a mattress to sleep on.

10,000 visitors from 70 countries took part in Kalachakra Graz 2002 (from 11 to 23 October), with the majority of them attending the whole event. For the first time ever, a Kalachakra ceremony was transmitted live over the Internet. Never before had I heard so many different languages spoken in one place and I regretted not being multi-lingual which would have allowed me to communicate more with others.

I was grateful for the opportunity to stay in the dormitory because it made the trip possible. The dormitory was dry, warm and we were safe. We were however without all of our creature comforts and I must admit that I missed the privacy of my own bathroom at home the most! On the upside we were only a few hundred metres from the event hall which became known as “Halle 12” and this was very convenient, as we did not have to travel and catch buses, trams and taxis backwards and forwards. Close proximity gave the dormitory guests the luxury of spending more time with Dharma-related events. There were daily talks and videos that did not form a part of the official program, but that were related to the Kalachakra and Tibet.

## **A BRIEF MOMENT IN SHAMBALA...**

### **Erica Lieberberg**

At the event site there was a huge poster against one of the buildings advertising a play about the life of Ghengis Khan, the Mongolian conqueror. One morning as we all went to breakfast, we were confronted with a number of Mongolians standing in front of this larger than life poster, dressed in their own traditional and colourful dress, discussing the poster. It left an imprint in my memory and I regret not having had my camera with me to capture the moment.

Meeting my friends from Lam Rim, Bristol and Wales was very special. I was fortunate to be able to meet with Geshe-la, who had also travelled to Graz for teachings with His Holiness and the event. This was one of the highlights of my trip as Geshe-la had been ill and we hadn't seen him for a while and rumours were abound that he may not travel to visit South Africa again.

It was autumn in Austria and the weather was cool and rainy, with autumn leaves everywhere. Ritual started at 07:00 in the mornings and this meant that if we wanted to attend the ritual, we had to get up just after 05:00, shower dress and then queue for breakfast, eat and then queue again to go through security to enter the event hall. Finally we were in the presence of the most incredible energy. Seating was allocated for the event, but in the mornings during ritual, we were permitted to sit anywhere. It was awesome. The Nyamgal monks started early in the morning with the construction of the Sand Mandala on the one side of the stage in the Mandala house and in front of them, seated with their backs to us there was His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama and the Lamas and the monks chanting and doing ritual. This was alternated with ritual dances and more chanting and ritual.

The daily schedule consisted of ritual in the mornings, teachings by His Holiness in the afternoon and then there were lectures by the lineage representatives in the

evenings. HE Rizong Rinpoche gave the Gelugpa lecture on the 6th evening and then on the 7th evening we attended a lecture by the Abbot of Nyamgal Monastery, HE Jhado Rinpoche on Kalachakra. His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama's afternoon teachings commenced on day 4. The preparation for initiation commenced on day 8, followed by 2 days of initiations. Day 11 consisted of a long life prayer for His Holiness and a White Tara initiation. We were allowed to view the Mandala on conclusion of the initiations. The Mandala was then dismantled on the last day and the sand was poured in to the local river. It was a full program, but it was invigorating and I loved every moment of it!

During the event we were able to follow the teachings on little FM radios. Teaching was given in Tibetan and translated into German over the sound system in the hall. There were translations into English, French, Italian, Slovenian, Spanish and Russian. His Holiness chose “37 Practices of a Bodhisattva” and “Middle Stages of Meditation” by Kamalashila as the teaching topics. As always the teachings were profound. For ease the Kalachakra organisers had for sale taped copies of the teachings as well as video tapes, ready for distribution by the time we had vacated the event hall each session. This was rather impressive and like almost everything else in Graz things happened with German or rather Austrian precision.

Buddhist precepts governed the proceedings during our stay and it was awesome to be surrounded by so many like-minded people. Everything was peaceful and there was an overall spirit of brotherhood. It was very sad when the last day finally arrived and it was time to leave. I managed to say farewell to Geshe-la before I left. Being at Kalachakra-Graz was a life altering experience, it felt as if we were all drifting on a cloud. Words cannot adequately describe the powerful energy that prevailed. We were so blessed to be a part of it.

For a few days we had a brief moment of Shambala...

## A FISHY TALE

Janie Harris



When I first heard the Lam Rim teachings about the Hell realms and stories of pitiful creatures with thin necks and potbellies, I was sceptical. Then there were the tales of sea monsters and naga snakes. I put it all down to symbolism, unnecessary for me, I was an intelligent westerner. This is the 21st century for goodness sake! How could I possibly believe in the existence of these mythical beings? Then I put on my modern day aqualung and dropped over the side of a boat into the ocean.

When you first start to scuba dive all you can hear are your bubbles. At first, under natural light, the coral reef looks like a rocky landscape. A closer inspection under torchlight reveals a nearby “boulder” to be a miniature world covered in strange tree-like beings waving their thin arms in a Mexican wave. The sticky fingers of these coral catch some unsuspecting passing plankton and they draw it into their central mouths, licking the food off gracefully, like a ballerina with bad table manners.

Most people fear shark attacks and strange things with venomous spikes that lurk in the darkness but paternal attachment can make a most unlikely aggressor. If you swim too near their eggs, a 2-inch long black and yellow striped “sergeant-major” fish will chase you. Seemingly unfazed by your size they will shake their tails in apparent rage until you have passed on to a safe distance occasionally attempting a rather ineffectual nip at your wet suit. However, most animals are much shyer, and I have spent many an hour staring into the eye of an octopus as he peeps out of his den at me. If I am patient his curiosity will get the better of him and he will extend an arm to touch my hand with his suckers. This is the way they “taste”

and I always marvel at their gentleness whilst being wary of the fact that they have a sharp beak if they think I might prove edible!

A mutual fear of being eaten has created some strange alliances and “bedfellows”. One little “goby” fish has teamed up with a blind shrimp sharing their hole in the sand together. The goby keeps a lookout for passing predators whilst the shrimp works constantly to keep house, running in and out like a demented bulldozer constantly shovelling sand. One of the shrimp’s antennae is always touching the goby who will raise the alarm at the first sign of trouble and upon the fish’s signal both will disappear

down the hole to safety. The anemone fish is also a housekeeper, as it is immune to an anemone’s stings he cleans house for the anemone in return for its protection, scurrying back into its folds if you approach too close.

“Cleaning stations” are designated spots where small fish will hang around to clean larger fish. You may have spotted the flaw in this arrangement if you wonder why the small fish don’t worry that they might become the dish of the day. This however is a mutually agreed peace treaty. The big fish have irritating parasites and the small fish have handy little teeth and can eat the parasites. The fish signal their readiness to be cleaned by changing colour and posing in a posture signifying the equivalent of a white flag. The cleaner fish then burst into action cleaning and tidying, swimming in and out of gills and even between teeth! After mutual satisfaction the big fish reverts to it’s normal colour and swims off. Many fish including sharks visit these cleaning stations and I have even had a small fish attempt to “clean” me as I have watched this intriguing process.

Underwater I have always felt like a privileged

visitor; but to the creatures that live there I will always be a strange ungainly swimmer whose bubbles sound like thunder. As I have become more relaxed in the environment I have been able to observe and even communicate with the sea’s residents. I have also learnt that things may not be as they first appear. Changing colour or even shape is not an unusual ability for marine life. The parrotfish can change sex 3 times during its lifetime from male to female to “super male”! Many fish like the puffer fish can expand to many times their usual size and cover themselves in protective spikes and cuttlefish can change their shape from smooth to knobbly and back, whilst

rippling sparkling lights up and down their body. This electric light orchestra performance is the cuttlefish equivalent of dressing up on a Saturday night and often proves irresistible to its mate.

Camouflage is a common talent. Fish wear false “eyes” on their tails to confuse their predators, as to which end is which. Some fish pretend to be someone else, preferably a ‘cousin’ who is highly poisonous. Or they can look like their surroundings. The decorator crab grows a complete ‘garden’ on his back and tends and plants it with the dedication of Alan Titchmarsh.

The harlequin ghost fish is a type of seahorse; elongated and covered in multi-coloured knobbles and bumps he completely takes on the appearance of his surroundings and it takes concentration to see him in his seaweed home.

The underwater realm is an extraordinary world of complicated kingdoms and strange attachments, weird shapes and extraordinary colour schemes. It can be beautiful and cruel, peaceful or frantic. Hell realms, hot and cold realms nagas and hungry ghosts? Maybe they are not so difficult to imagine after all.

***As I have become more relaxed in the environment I have been able to observe and even communicate with the sea’s residents. I have also learnt that things may not be as they first appear.***



## WHEN THE HORSE RUNS OFF

*From KINDNESS - Treasury of Buddhist Wisdom for Children and Parents—collected and adapted by Sarah Conover.*



Long ago, in a country where the mountains are among the world's loftiest, there lived an old farmer and his son. The boy spent his days attending to the work of the farm and their one horse - a beautiful white stallion.

After years of careful training, the horse ran swifter and smoother than any other in the region. But one day, father and son awoke to find their cherished animal missing. The son was heartbroken. Neighbours gathered round the two and lamented their great loss. But the father gazed calmly past the villagers to the surrounding high peaks. "We shall see," he said, "We shall see if this is good or if this is bad."

After a week, the magnificent horse returned, followed by an equally fine wild mare. Father and son soon tamed the new animal. This time, the neighbours praised the old man's remarkable luck - he was now the wealthiest man in town! He owned the two very best horses! But the farmer simply smiled and remarked, "Oh, of course I am pleased....but who knows if this is lucky or unlucky?"

And so it came to pass that one day, while racing their splendid horses across the field, the son fell off and broke both his legs badly. Whilst the boy's wounds were cleaned and splinted by the doctor, the villagers bemoaned the family's terrible misfortune. But the father, calm as ever, took comfort in his boy. "He is alive, that is all that counts," replied the old man. "His legs will heal in time. I cannot know if these injuries will turn out to be something good or something bad."

The very next week, a battalion of soldiers marched into the village. A war to the north was underway, and all

young men of fighting age were needed immediately. Mothers and fathers gathered food and warm clothing for their boys. With sorrowful good-byes they reluctantly let their sons join the soldiers.

But alas, there was one boy in the village left behind in his bed - for it was obvious his wounds would take many months to heal. The neighbours envied the farmer's good fortune! Of all the young men in town, his son was the only one not taken to war!

The old farmer looked out across the fields at the two fine horses grazing. He looked at the lovely way the sun caught the tops of the jagged peaks in the distance, smiled, and said nothing at all.



## THE SPAN OF LIFE

The Buddha once asked a student, ***"How long is a human life?"***

The student replied, ***"It is so brief it seems but a day long."***

He then asked another the same question, ***"What is the true length of a person's life?"***

She answered thoughtfully, ***"It is the time taken to eat a single meal."***

And so the Buddha asked a third student, ***"How long is life?"***

***"The time in a single breath,"*** was the student's reply.

***"Exactly so."*** said the Buddha, ***"You understand."***



*The Mani Walk at Lam Rim*



## Notes on Progress at Lam Rim



### Gift of Thangka

In June 2002 when we were blessed by the visit of H.E. Jangtse Choeje Rizong Rinpoche, we had requested Yamantaka initiation. It is a rare occasion when the opportunity arises to actually look at an old thangka - just imagine our delight when the owner of the thangka offered it to Geshe-la and Lam Rim Buddhist Centre. So when Rizong Rinpoche gave the initiation the thangka was hanging in the shrine-room, such blessings. We would like to thank Mirko Whitfield - Lawrence Whitfield's son, who is now living and working in Tüdingen, South Germany, for his kindness and generosity enabling us to benefit in our spiritual practice as well as the Ven Tenzin Tsepag.

### Fire Puja Site

When the building work was completed, 10 tonnes of yellow gravel was delivered - it was rather like the straw that broke the camel's back. At first we just looked at it, and looked at it. Then it was shovelling time - 5 tonnes for the fire puja path and 5 tonnes for the drive. Dear Geshe-la could hear all this activity going on



whilst he was in retreat - and informed us later he had experienced a very busy retreat indeed.

Having completed the Fire Puja site, Simon Houlton made the final adjustment by clearing an area for the offering tables. Geshe-la was amazed at the dexterity and skilfulness of Simon's work. We have a garden seat there, so go and enjoy a rest and admire all the efforts of our young men. Simon has now returned to Drepung Loseling monastery to continue his Buddhist studies and Tibetan language. Simon (Rinchen) Cook and Glen have returned to Lama

Tsong Khapa Institute to resume their Buddhist studies.

### Roof Insulation

You will be happy to know that we have now had the roof space insulated. The last time we did it was 23 years ago. It was getting rather threadbare up there. Another good job done.

### Trees

When the gales came we lost a large Ash tree near the Coach House. It fell in a most spectacular way, right across the lane and totally uprooted.

Apparently, it was suffering from a fungi infection in the base of the tree. It was strange because it look strong and straight - just the combination of strong wind and rain brought it to the ground. Paul from Cardiff sliced it up and created two chairs so you can now sit and contemplate the roots.

### Ven.Geshe Lobsang Thinley

Geshe Thinley-la received an extension of his student visa for a further six months. He is now studying in Bristol and is enjoying it very much. He is helping to spread many smiles at Bristol Lam Rim Centre, where he is living. In a recent survey Bristol was named as the city with the most smiles and grins - as someone pointed out - "That's because Ven.Geshe Thinley-la is there" That is wonderful. Thank You.

Margaret

### KARMA JOKE sent by Arthur

Two caterpillars talking and eating on a leaf, when a butterfly flew overhead.

Looking up, one of the caterpillars remarked,  
"You will never get me up in one of those!"





---

## **LAM RIM BUDDHIST CENTRE**

**Penrhos, Raglan,  
USK,  
Monmouthshire,  
NP15 2LE.**

**☎ 01600 780383**

**email: [margaret@lamrim.org.uk](mailto:margaret@lamrim.org.uk)**

**Registered Charity No 326675**

---

**Spiritual Director and Resident Teacher  
The Venerable Geshe Damcho Yonten**