



Spiritual Director and Resident Teacher
The Venerable Geshe Damcho Yonten

LAM RIM BUDDHIST CENTRE

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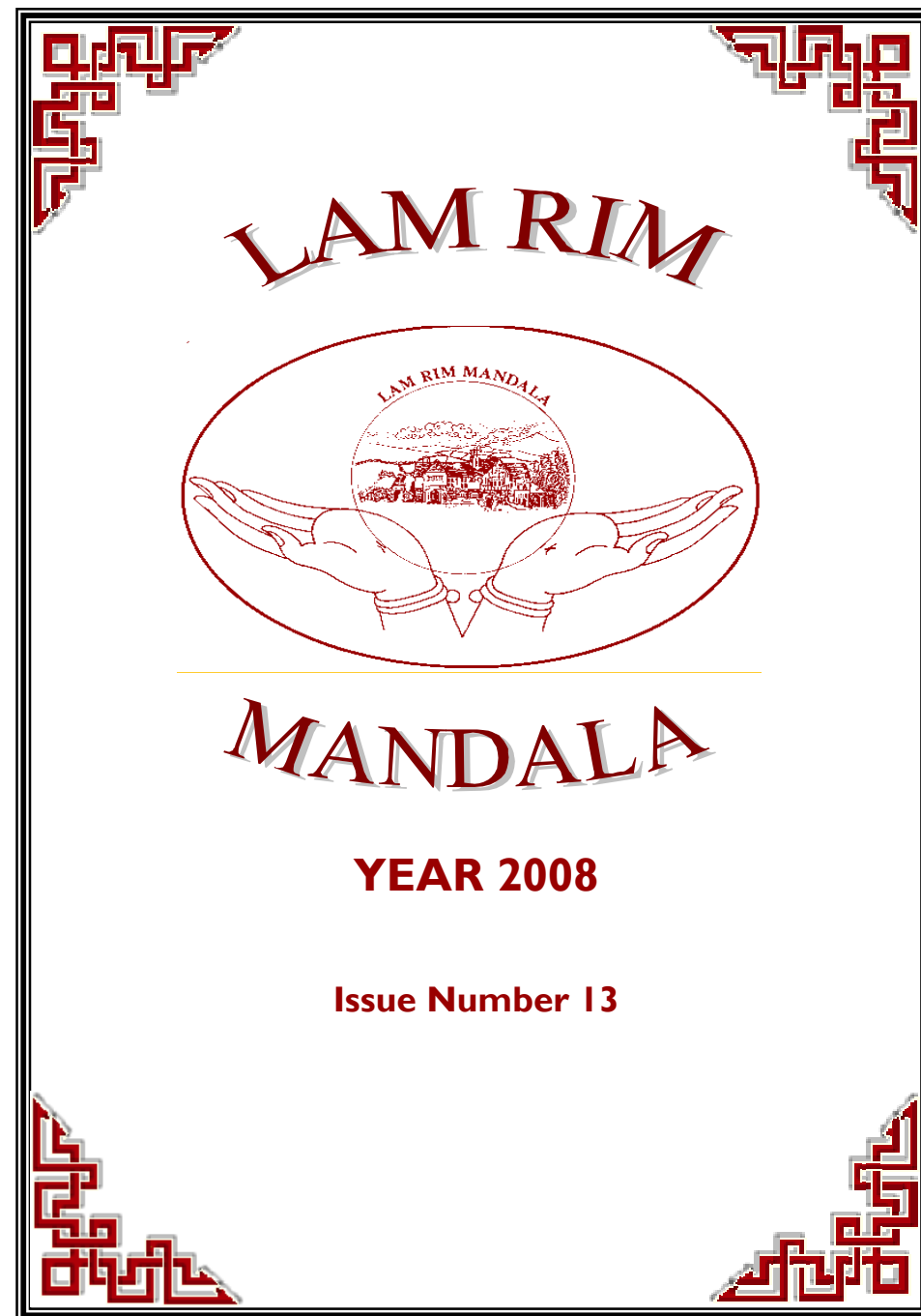
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Hello everyone

Here we are with Issue 13 which I hope you will enjoy. Sorry it's a little later with you than planned. A big THANK YOU! to all who have kindly given their literary grey cells a workout and dutifully sent their contributions to me by 'the Editors deadline!' All items will be gratefully received from those of you out there who would like to include something for the next issue in the new year. Perhaps some personal memories of His Holiness's visit to the UK that you'd like to share? It is always good to hear from other branches of Lam Rim so do share your news and views.

Best Wishes,

Jan

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RECIPE PAGE

Vegetarian Tartiflette

Tartiflette is a rich and filling potato dish from the Haute Savoie region of France.

Usually made with lardoons of bacon to give it a smoky salty taste there is no definitive recipe. This recipe has been adapted for vegetarians by substituting the bacon with mushrooms. If you can get some nice strongly flavoured wild mushrooms, morels or ceps, these will give a flavour. Reblochon is a creamy strong flavoured cheese with a thick edible skin similar to Brie.

500g of Jersey Royal potatoes or similar	2 cloves of garlic
200g Reblochon cheese	Small bunch of parsley, coarsely chopped
1 large onion	Freshly ground Salt and pepper
100g wild or porcini mushrooms	Olive oil
125 ml double cream	

Tartiflette is a very filling dish and is best served with a crisp salad – and a glass of dry white wine!

Ingredients for 4 people:

Method:

Preheat oven to 250°C. Peel and slice the potatoes and part boil them. Finely shred the onions and slice the mushrooms. In a large frying pan, sauté the onions and mushrooms. Cook for 4 to 5 minutes but avoid over browning. Add the garlic, potatoes, salt and pepper. Transfer to a buttered ovenproof dish and cover with the cream. Scrape the crust of the reblochon and cut it in pieces and lay the pieces of reblochon on top of the dish. Cook in the oven for about 20 minutes or until the potatoes are thoroughly cooked and the cheese is nicely coloured but not melted. Sprinkle with the chopped parsley to serve.

Andrew Parfitt



OUR 30th ANNIVERSARY GARDEN PARTY

On the 31st July 1978 we moved into Pentwyn Manor and Lam Rim Buddhist Centre was established. Ven. Geshe Damcho-la chose the name as it referred to the Text that he would be giving Teachings from.

On the 31st July 2008 it was our 30th Anniversary, however since the actual day was a Thursday, we celebrated our 30th on the following weekend.

We had stalls, an Art Exhibition with paintings by Colin, Kay and Jacqui; a shortened Summer Pantomime and live music, together with tea and cakes. All the activities were the creative offerings by members of Lam Rim Buddhist Centre and it was a very moving experience hearing them rehearsing, discussing, preparing for the Big Event - these talented young people are the next generation of Lam Rimmers – our young Lam Rim community entertaining the old Lam Rim vanguard, together with new friends and neighbours along with the children and grandchildren from our village and surrounding areas.

The Summer Pantomime – A Shortened “Quest for the Red Herring” was a huge success with Simon, Nik, Beth and Brem. Even Barney, Gaenor’s Boxer dog actively participated by growling in the appropriate places. I think everyone will remember the lines. “I’ve lost the plot.” “It’s in the bag.” “Oh no it isn’t!” “Oh yes it is!” was the excited response.

Everyone looked so happy and relaxed – for many people it had been a long since they had experienced a live performance from actors and musicians. To be sitting together in such a beautiful garden – even the flowers displayed their best blooming faces for such a special occasion.

After the pantomime (visit www.theatrespace.co.uk) we enjoyed the singers/musicians- Caroline, Paul, Nik, Beth and Jo singing some of Geshe-la’s favourite songs, especially Be Happy Don’t Worry. It was so kind of Caroline to dedicate their offerings to Lam Rim Buddhist Centre and all the help that people have received and in many instances lives have changed course into a more positive way of living.

Geshe-la would like to thank the performers for all the time they devoted to rehearsing; Ruth and David, Eric, Dan, Jed, Peter, John, Jan, Wendy and Caroline for all the preparation work they carried out; and our friends and neighbours for being so supportive. Many thanks to Wendy for being such a perfect tea lady and all Edita’s students who made such amazing cakes. Finally, Edita who worked tirelessly to ensure that everything was in its place and at its best for this celebration.

It was clearly a great success! Neighbours still stop me in the village and say – “Oh we did enjoy your Garden Party – it was great fun.” Happy Anniversary!

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LETTER FROM GESHE DAMCHO-LA

July 2008

Dear Friends,

I would like to say how happy I am to see the way people are coming to the Centre to help on a regular basis. Many of you are new and often express enjoyment and a sense of purpose within the quiet and tranquil surroundings found at Lam Rim.

Edita, Margaret and myself are getting older and in many respects frailer, so it is with joy and relief that we hear those words “What would you like me to do?” We have spent 30 years laying the foundations of Lam Rim Buddhist Centre and now it is your turn to pick up the tools of the Dharma and take on the responsibility for Lam Rim’s future developments. When Rinzong Rinpoche was at Lam Rim Buddhist Centre this March he was very pleased at the change of spiritual energy that has taken place since his last visit in 2005. Lam Rim students are taking their Dharma studies seriously and are trying to apply the Teachings sincerely within their everyday lives.

Rinpoche was also impressed by the level of improvement of my health, which is another sign of our harmonious environment brought about by dedication of service and spiritual practice. This is why Lam Rim Buddhist Centre has healing qualities both for Teachers and students, and why many Teachers look spiritually refreshed and nourished when they leave. This is a very important function of Lam Rim Buddhist Centre and it comes about because of your effort and dedication.

Another helpful cause was the number of Lam Rim students from UK and South Africa who saved very hard and went to India to receive Teachings and Initiations from HH The Dalai Lama in January, and then again in May when His Holiness gave Teachings and Initiation in Nottingham.

I went back to a full Teaching programme this year and I also taught at Lam Rim Bristol. I thoroughly enjoyed being back in Bristol as it has been a number of years since I have had the health and strength to offer a week-end course there. I would like to thank everybody who made the week-end possible.

In mid-September I hope to travel to South Africa to teach. I did promise I would visit Lam Rim South Africa as soon as I was well enough to travel long distances, so I am off to do some more Dharma jobs there. I rejoice that I am given so many opportunities by bringing the Dharma medicine to help so many beings.

I would also like to thank Paul from Cardiff, Gaenor, Alan and Eric for putting up our magnificent new Poly tunnel. We have never had a new poly tunnel, as our previous one was second-hand. Once again this has come about by your kindness and financial generosity, so now Edita is a very happy lady, growing food in a very warm and protected plastic “Palace”.

Thank you for your kindnesses.

Ven. Geshe Damcho Yonten

His Holiness opens the new Prayer Hall at Drepung Loseling, S. India

From the roof at Gya Kangtsen the new prayer hall of Drepung Loseling Monastery appears like a great ocean liner, bedecked with flags and sailing motionless over the farmlands towards Ganden. The wind flutters the orange, blue and yellow pennants, which are strung on long lines from the splendid golden pagoda roof down to the far end of the debate courtyard. The hall has been specially decorated for the visit of the Dalai Lama, as indeed has all of Drepung. Flags are everywhere, running the length of the walls that enclose the different "houses" of the monastery and strung between trees and buildings. Great loops of plastic orange and yellow flower garlands, remarkably realistic, add to the colour, as do the overflowing hedges of purple, pink and orange bougainvillea which have obligingly come into bloom at just the right time.

On the day H.H. arrives, we walk through the hot afternoon to join a welcoming river of people, lining the road on either side for miles between Ganden and Drepung. Decorating the roadside are the maroon-clad monks and nuns interspersed with lay people, including Tibetan women in their immaculately-pressed chubas and silk blouses. Hands together in supplication, long white khatags flow toward the ground over our wrists. Many have added a splash of colour by holding blossoms as offerings. It is a beautiful sight.

After about an hour the first army jeeps of the motorcade slowly nudge along the road. There's some shouting and lathi-waving to clear the way and those who've been sheltering from the sun under trees and walls jostle into place in the line. Another jeep, another one, another ... a car, ... another ...we stare intently into the passenger sides as vehicle after vehicle goes pastand then!..... an ambassador .. and a wonderful clear view of His Holiness, beaming with delight, his hands thrown open, and leaning forward so that everyone can see him. My heart dances.

The Dalai Lama stays in Drepung for nearly 2 weeks, giving wonderful teachings and carrying out many official duties. During this time the usual population of Drepung is swelled by thousands. Monks from the other monasteries in the south and from Dharamsala, lay Tibetans from all over the subcontinent as well as from Tibet and a large contingent of people from Arunachal Pradesh, the women instantly recognizable in their long, mauve and white striped dresses and little pillar-box hats. There are also many Ladakhis as well as Koreans, Taiwanese and a relative handful of us "Injis", (white folks).

Continued...../

Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth.

(Mohamed Ali)



HELPING HANDS

A transition time is happening at Lam Rim – thanks to your response to our Helping Hands Register we are now experiencing a regular 5 day team that come one day a week to help share the workload with Edita and me. We have also enjoyed Work Party Intensives, where a group of people have come and stayed, brought their own bedding and food – (so that Edita and I have no extra work), and then have targeted particular projects that we would like them to concentrate on.

We have also enjoyed Helping Hands coming for the day, again to concentrate on a particular task. It really does lighten our load and is a great help, It also brings a whoosh of new energy through the door, which is most welcome.

We have now started to replenish the Prayer Path with Wood Chippings, so if you have some free time and would like to enjoy some exhilarating exercise then please make contact.

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OUR NEW POLYTUNNEL

Many of you may recall the demise of our old second-hand polytunnel – after the snows of 2006 it collapsed into a shape that was contorted and appeared as if it had suffered a body blow from above, which it had – so last year we were without. No home-grown organic veggies and tomatoes. They were sorely missed.

This Spring we were determined to erect a new polytunnel – Paul and Gaenor carried out the research and we chose a 14ft wide and 32ft long polytunnel from Five Star Poly tunnels. At the end of April the materials were delivered and Paul from Cardiff, Alan and Eric braved the wind and rain to erect this Earth Cathedral (Central inside height is 7 ft 9 ins) After a few weeks Edita moved in with her green fingers and the growing commenced.

With all the wet weather we have experienced over the last 3 months, the polytunnel has provided ideal conditions to work in. It is warm, dry and the interior now resembles one of Henri Rousseau's canvases with exotic foliage. We have green, red and golden tomatoes, green peppers, aubergines, butternuts, melons, cucumbers, courgettes, lettuce, and rocket together with herbs of dill, basil, parsley and coriander. There are also trays of seedlings waiting to be planted out in the garden.

Some of the science supplied by Five Star Poly tunnels is very interesting:-

Air: Carbon Dioxide(CO₂) is a tiny part of the air we breathe, yet it is vital for the energy process. It is beneficial to ensure both end doors of the polytunnel are open to make sure there is adequate ventilation.

Light: Polythene covering usually allows about 90% of light through, and far less if the film is cloudy and old. This cloudiness can be an advantage in the summer if high-density light affects young fragile plants. Netting can be used for shade inside.

Nutrients: The plants take up nutrients when they are in a solution. Fertilisers applied to a dry soil have no effect until rainwater or irrigation system water washes the fertiliser down to the roots. It is possible to control the nutrient supply more easily for plants grown in a polytunnel. This means that plants are freer from pest and disease, and are more likely to be healthier.

Warmth: The polytunnel makes use of the greenhouse effect to trap heat energy. Radiation from the sun is trapped by the polythene covering and absorbed by the inside materials, pots, tools, structures etc. As the night falls and the outdoor temperature drops, so the inside materials release the trapped energy as radiation or heat. This helps to reduce frost damage.

Extension of the growing season is aided by the polytunnel being a protection from cool winds and trapping daytime warmth. The soil and air will be enough inside to support growth when it has stopped outside.

Water: The only water to be in a polytunnel apart from condensation is by irrigation. Water can be supplied at ground level and is very effective by using the leaky hose method. For absolute control of the moisture supplied to the plants an irrigation system may be used.

Our thanks to Five Star Poly tunnels.

Polytunnels can be purchased in all different sizes, log on to Poly tunnels. They are well worth a visit.

Opening of the new Prayer Hall at Drepung continues.....

The Lam Rim group, comprising members of all the Lam Rim Centres (Wales, Bristol, Glos and Wilts and, predominantly, South Africa) are all staying in relative splendour in the newly built Gya Kangtsen accommodation block. This is right on the edge of the monastery and so we are fortunate to be able to look over fields and watch water buffalo and brahmini bulls with their attendant white egrets. There are sugar cane crops and haystacks shaped like Dougal from the Magic Roundabout or like giant muffins.

Two images in particular stand out from this lovely time. One is of going to do a kora round the old combined prayer hall one evening. It is in the heart of the old monastery and we have passed through the busyness of the main road and shopping area to reach the relative peace of the old debate courtyard, with its many trees. On the steps to the Gompa, the doors of which are locked, a line of about 10 Ladakhi women are doing full-length prostrations. They wear black woollen tunics and long plaits hang down their backs. And as they prostrate, they sing, very softly – a beautiful devotional song.

The second image is from the actual opening ceremony of the Great Hall. His Holiness is sitting at the top of the grand stairs which lead up to the Hall. Various dignitaries, religious and secular sit on either side of him and halfway down the steps the abbot of Drepung is giving his address from behind a podium. One of the guests of honour, Shree Shree Ravi Shankar a revered Hindu guru, has been delayed and the proceedings have had to start without him. As the abbot nears the end of his speech, there is a faint ripple of excitement in the crowd behind us and I turn round to see Shree Ravi Shankar, with jet black hair and beard and dazzling white robes, striding up the aisle with his entourage, his dark eyes intense and firmly fixed on the stage. As he starts to climb the steps, His Holiness, breaking with protocol, jumps out of his chair and runs down the stairs to greet and embrace him. It is a lovely, spontaneous demonstration of natural affection and totally transforms a potentially awkward moment into a joyful one.

A few days later His Holiness leaves Drepung, and over the next couple of days the flags and garlands are taken down and busload after busload of visitors leave. The monastery seems to settle back into itself, strangely quiet and empty after all the excitement.

By Caroline McCookweir



WHO'S TEACHING WHO?

Now that Buddhism is part of the Curriculum of Religious Studies, Lam Rim hosts many visits from schools ranging from Primary to University. When schools come to visit they are asked to send in questions from the children so that Arthur, John and Margaret can format the session around those questions. Recently Raglan Primary School Year 5's arrived at Lam Rim for their visit; their questions received in advance. What a selection of questions it was too! Here is a sample of their enthusiastic questioning:

- Does Buddhism have one religious leader?
- Is there a limit to the number of Buddhas?
 - Do you keep having lives forever?
 - How long do you meditate for?
- Are there any special festivals and what are they?
 - How do Buddhists believe the world was made?
- Has anyone ever remembered their other life?
 - Why did you become a Buddhist?
 - Is it hard being a Buddhist?
 - Is it hard trying to reach Nirvana?
 - Who do you look up to?
 - How do you pray?
- Why do Buddhists shave their heads?
 - Do you get 'christened'?
 - What do Buddhists eat?
 - What is life like as a Buddhist?
 - Do Buddhists have 'normal' jobs?
 - Do they take kindly to other religions?
 - How do Buddhists celebrate birthdays?
- When a Buddha is chosen as a child are they told what to do?
 - In another life could you be an animal?
 - Can girls become Buddha?
- Buddhists don't believe in God but do they believe in Jesus?
- Can you really see a calm happy place in your mind?
 - If Siddhartha Gautama had stayed in the

- palace wouldn't he have seen his father grow old?
- Do you have to be a certain age to become a Buddhist?
 - What do you do when you meditate?
- Why is the wheel the symbol of the Eightfold Path?
 - Do you pray in a special place?
 - Do Buddhists go to a special school?
 - Does art or anything have a place in Buddhism?
- Do people act the story of Siddhartha Gautama at a special time of the year?
 - Are animals special to Buddhists?

Before the session was over the children had the opportunity to meet Geshe-la as many had never had the opportunity to have a discussion with a monk, especially a Tibetan Buddhist monk. Then after the discussion they sat with Geshe-la and meditated together. While Geshe-la was sitting in his armchair with the children he was asked "Do you just meditate or do you have to prepare your mind to meditate?" Geshe-la's reply was "Well sometimes I just meditate. Sometimes I spend time preparing my mind for meditation—this is the best meditation. Thank you for that question, that is very good!"

Arthur, Margaret and Geshe-la had a most enjoyable time with the children listening to their remarkable questions. Later they received a lovely thank you letter from the children, thanking Lam Rim for their wonderful hospitality and teaching, and for the wonderful experience they had with Geshe-la. They were also amazed by the brilliance of the shrine room and wonderful array of statues. At the bottom of the letter they all signed their names, with some kisses tucked in!

Such Blessings.



the 1970s. Britain is now a net importer of fossil fuels, the North Sea oil fields are in decline. It is also worth noting that like the last few drops of petrol in the tank of your car where the dregs sit, the quality of oil declines as we reach the bottom of these fields. Oil will never run out, but the economic feasibility of extracting those last remnants will most probably render the final barrels worthless.

The world is now reaching a time when the peaking of global oil production is not far away, if it has not already been passed. We will not know until after the event, in the same way that you will not know when you have reached the half way point in your own life until the day that you die. The peak might be a bumpy plateau; geopolitics and the occasional oil field find might prevent a quick sharp down turn. However, when we do reach the peak a world with increasing energy demands will be met by dwindling supplies. This in turn will force up the price of oil - at the time of writing, oil has topped \$135 a barrel. The end of cheap oil is over.

With oil prices rising, the effects will be felt right through our lives. There is little in modern life that is not touched by oil. We can remember the oil refinery blockades in Britain during the lorry drivers strike of 2000. Within no time after the industrial action started, refineries were closing up and down the country. Queues were forming outside of petrol stations, which soon ran dry. Within days the roads were as quiet as early on a Sunday morning. Panic buying set in at the supermarkets as shelves were stripped bare. Sir Peter Davis, then chairman of Sainsbury, "wrote to Tony Blair warning him that food would run out in 'days rather than weeks'." (The Last Oil Shock, D. Strahan; 2007)

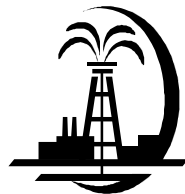
What does all this mean for Lam Rim Buddhist Centre? In Tibet, small monasteries would serve and be supported by a local community of villages, which might also be from where the monks (or nuns in the case of a nunnery) for the monastic community would come from. Western Retreat Centres on the whole serve a distant community who visit the Centre from afar. They might also find themselves situated in remote areas, far from facilities that are needed for day to day living. Lam Rim's two main sources of heat are oil for the main house, supplemented by two coal burning stoves, and gas for the Coach House. Most of Lam Rim's food is brought in, despite Edita's wonderful garden each summer and her year round supply of chutneys and jams. That food requires at the very least, for Raglan, an eight mile round trip, but more normally one is looking at a journey of twenty miles or more; and of course that food is flown, shipped and driven in from further afield. Then there are the people who visit the Centre, who in the pragmatics of day to day living help to finance Lam Rim Buddhist Centre through the fees that they pay for the courses that they attend. All of this before we get into books for the shop, goods from India, electricity in the house and many more items that could easily be added to an almost endless list.

Lam Rim Buddhist Centre in a World of Rising Oil Prices, continues.....

So what would Lam Rim Buddhist Centre look like beyond the oil peak? I have no exact answer for that, but in the brief space of this essay I would like to suggest what the Lam Rim community might be looking to create. It is very easy to be lulled into a false sense of security if life at the moment is allowing us to at least get by - but change can happen quickly as the teachings all too often remind us. Look at the truck driver's strike mentioned above. I reiterate that the end of cheap oil has passed. I believe that it would be more prudent, indeed it is an imperative to start preparing for the future now rather than waiting to see what will happen. We should not be waiting around until the petrol pumps start running dry, or food prices start getting beyond our reach. Living our lives in that way we would find ourselves living in a space of fear and hope. Fear of something that we know will happen and hope that it will not happen tomorrow. To use an analogy of our practise - to not prepare for our death time is not wise. We all know that we will die, but we don't know how or when, so much better to start preparing now. Embracing the reality of our death brings life into more perspective, life becomes sharper, more focused and we use our time better. We don't embrace death to live a morbid life, rather to live a more full, meaningful life. The same can be said of preparing for a post fossil fuel age. We know that it will come, we live on a finite earth. So much better to prepare now than wait until the results of price increases paralyse our options. Embrace an inevitability and look to create a Centre that continues to benefit people into the future.

I would like to introduce a term that I first heard about in this context from Rob Hopkins, a person who will be known to some of you. Rob is known for starting the Transition movement - www.transitionculture.org - and he speaks of the need to build resilience. Just to touch in on the Transition movement, it seeks to build a plan of action for moving a community (town, village, neighbourhood) from a highly oil dependent existence to a more self-sustaining community with lower carbon footprint (if you are interested, more can be found out from the link above and Rob's book "The Transition Handbook").

So returning to the term "resilience", our society supports itself on a network of systems that come from afar - it has little inbuilt resilience or ability to withstand a collapse from within even a small part of these systems. The brief look at Lam Rim's vulnerability above in terms of its dependence on oil illustrates this. Lam Rim has few means to support itself if oil prices were to sky rocket and necessities become more scarce. The same goes for Penrhos, Raglan and most probably where you the reader live as well. By building resilience, we are looking at building a local network that enables you to better withstand the shocks. In the same way that you might look to stay healthy so that you can better fend off illness, a resilient community can better keep its head above water when supply lines are threatened.



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Geshe-la are very moving. It is the same with all of the monks we meet who knew Geshe-la, even though 45 years have passed.

Later, after Paul has climbed high above the monastery and met a snake right on top of a ridge, behaving for all the world like a guardian spirit, we retrace our steps to Julichan. Tonight we sit in with nuns as they do their evening puja. Their chanting is very fast and powerful and virtually pins me to the seat. There is a wonderful strength and resonance in their voices and genuine devotion, even if some of the little ones fall asleep. Afterwards one of the nuns describes their daily routine. Morning puja is at 5.30, breakfast at 7, then lessons until 1. After lunch there is a break, then more lessons, work in the fields and evening puja at 7. Supper is between 8 and 9, and (apart from the younger ones) they are still up and reciting texts till gone 10pm. Despite what seems (to me!) to be an arduous schedule the nuns are full of fun and enthusiasm and their blithe spirits inspire me.

I am sad to leave, but we have learnt that Rizong Rinpoche is, in fact, in Leh, so we head back, this time bouncing about in the back of the monastery managers van. We rejoin John and Janine, who are in much better health, at a guest house right next door to Rinpoche's labrang in a part of Leh called Changspa. Until very recently this was farmland. It still has a spacious, leafy feel to it (away from the motor-cycle ridden main road) and you don't have to wander far along the eccentric lanes and pathways to find fields and livestock.

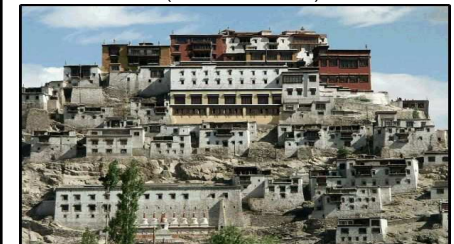
Shortly after returning from Julichan, we are able to pay our respects to Rinpoche. It is lovely to see him and, fired with enthusiasm and energy after the meeting, I rashly suggest to Paul that he and I climb the 1,000 steps to Shanti Stupa. My pace steadily decreases the nearer the top we get and I feel quite faint by the time we reach the wide, flat viewing area below the Stupa. Feeling a bit giddy we gaze on Leh far below. Half the "city" is glowing golden in the evening sun while steadily a purple mountain shadow moves across the rest. The Himalaya fill the horizon to the south, while behind us rise more mountains which form the barrier to the Nubra Valley, which we will visit later. As the sun drops, so does the temperature, dramatically and

we head back down the steps as fast as we safely can.

Some days later, on the auspicious occasion of Saka Dawa, John, Janine, Paul and I are once again bumping along the road to Rizong. This time we don't turn off to the Monastery, but continue west, hard by the Indus, until we reach another cleft in the mountain wall. We have been invited by Rinpoche to Timusgang, a tiny Gompa, perched dramatically on a rocky outcrop high above the valley bed. We are hoping to attend a special puja, where prayers for Geshe Damcho-la will be offered, and are eager to arrive. However, halfway up from the main road we grind to a halt, and like many before us, are forced to abandon our vehicle and walk. The cause of this unlikely traffic jam in this isolated setting is not ice or snow or fallen boulders, but an impressive convoy of vehicles, their drivers determined to get as near to the monastery as possible along a virtually single track road, and then equally determined to return the same way.

I must admit to feeling a bit daunted at the prospect ahead. We must follow the road up for a mile or so, squeezing between vehicles and dodging the al fresco car washing which is going on, and then follow a narrow path which zig-zags up hundreds of feet to where the monastery sits. As we get nearer the start of this path I can see a circle of maroon-clad backs, which I take to belong to monks and nuns, probably in a puja with Rinpoche. When we finally stagger into this auditorium, the "monks and nuns" are schoolchildren in red uniform, and, when we've elbowed through the crowd hoping to see Rinpoche, there is a concert of folk music taking place. Our mood is not helped by the cheerful pelting of small stones we receive from the cackling old women whose view we have inadvertently blocked.

(To be continued)





Ladakh Part 2

A story of a visit to Ladakh.

By Caroline McCookweir.

Rizong Monastery seems to hang vertically on the mountain, rising through some 200ft, from the school building at its base to the Yamentaka mandala house on the roof. We are welcomed by young monks in the school courtyard, given home-grown chamomile tea and invited to shelter from the fierce sun under the canopy of an army-surplus parachute. Then we meet Geshe Konchog Wangdu, a friend and class-mate of Geshe Thinley, who has excellent English, and is an engaging and enthusiastic guide. He takes us on a tour of Rizong, through dim passageways threading this way and that, up steep steps and under low lintels. The walls outside some of the shrine rooms are beautifully painted and old gompas are unlocked so that we can tiptoe through the permanent dusk inside to marvel at the thangkas and statues. There is a photograph of the previous Shas Rinpoche, bearing a striking resemblance to the present one and we are shown the "cave", a tiny room hidden behind a shrine, where Tsultrim Nyima, the founder of Rizong gumpa, meditated in solitary retreat for many years. The atmosphere is peaceful, yet charged, and other worldly. I'm brought back down to earth, literally, when my head connects with a particularly low lintel leading to the toilet block. I'm thrown onto my back on the mud floor of the passageway. Geshe Konchog Wangdu later confesses that he had several altercations with the lintels when he first came here.

From the top of the monastery one looks out past the skull-topped poles, past the "elephants-head" ridge and the folds of the ravine falling away, to a far distant crest of snow peaks. It is breathtaking. There is an extraordinary silence and depth of stillness here. One can understand why a meditator would choose to found a monastery here, in spite of the lack of water and difficulty transporting

materials up the hill.

After our tour we are kindly fed with delicious, vegetarian food and then taken down the mountain to Julichan, the nunnery associated with Rizong Gumpa, where we have decided to stay a couple of nights. The "new" nunnery is built on top of the old one, which is crumbling gracefully into the hillside. It is a very humble entrance way, the old white building half hidden from the road by apricot trees. A wide passage-way, which is gated at night, climbs up past the older rooms and then emerges into a courtyard. At Rizong, vegetation is scant, but here there are clear streams and little irrigation channels, groves of apricot trees and dusty bean fields, which the nuns tend. They also have a small herd of cows, which are driven out to graze by day, and driven back to the nunnery at night. The nuns are a cheerful, lively, bright-eyed group, mainly young, from about 5 to 21, with just a couple in middle age, and two venerable older nuns, who live in the crumbling lower storey. They number about 30 in all. The little ones share very basic rooms on the "ground floor", while the older ones share rooms in a newly constructed terrace, with big windows that look straight out onto the scree slope opposite. For Julichan is somewhat hemmed in by the sheer sides of the mountains, rising steeply all around, so much so that during the winter months, they do not see the sun at all, and it must be freezing. Three nuns kindly vacate their room for our use, and for this and all the kindnesses shown to us by them and the monks of Rizong and Samstenling, I am very grateful.

The next day Paul and I walk up to Rizong through what I imagine to be the archetypal dusty ravine of the 10 kadampa jewels. It is bleak and unforgiving, but the reward is rounding a corner to be met with the astonishing and unlikely sight of Rizong in its lofty isolation. This time we are allowed to wander about by ourselves until waylaid by an old room mate and friend of Geshe Damcho-las, Ven. Thubten Tsondrus. He invites us into his room, which is basic, blackened by yak-dung smoke and has a picture-book view of the bright blue sky and snow mountains. He gives us butter tea, which, to my relief, I find very nice. At first he thinks that Geshe-la has been able to travel with us, as was originally planned, but we explain he has been too

ill. Ven. Tsondrus's concern and affection for



Now resilience does not mean that a group becomes isolated and insular, just working for itself - in many ways that is an opposite extreme of what we have now. Resilience means reaching out and working with the local community, the community here possibly being Penrhos. Some within that community are good at growing food. Others might have a coppiced woodland for supplying wood to the community. Another might have facilities for storing food through the winter. Local farmers become just that, farmers for the local community.

As fuel prices rise, Lam Rim will have to start looking at what it offers and how. The Centre will need to rethink how and in what ways it wishes to serve the Buddhist tradition, while remaining viable. Sunday teachings will become a thing of the past as a Sunday afternoon trip to Wales becomes just too expensive. In time weekend courses will probably also become impractical. Perhaps one day Lam Rim Buddhist Centre will become a place solely of retreat? These are things that need to be discussed.

The sense of overwhelm can seem huge when considering the challenges that oil depletion will cause us to face. For the next generation the world will be a different place. The current generation will probably see the beginning of that world. What I believe is needed now for Lam Rim Buddhist Centre is for the community to start preparing for that time - complacency is not an option. There are models out there for working towards a post carbon world, and a very good place to start is Rob Hopkin's Transition Initiative.

By David Johnson

Oct 17-19 (Friday eve' from 7pm, to Sunday afternoon)

LAM RIM AUTUMN REJUVENATION with Chris Jarmey

Here's the chance to do some:

- Qigong to renew & boost our vitality.
- Meditation in a space where its hard NOT to meditate.
- Healing sounds to regenerate our organs & tissues.

and ...

- Receive shiatsu to open our sinews & joints.

Cost: £133pp for 4 bedded shared room residential + £16 Single room Supplement if required. Contact Lam Rim to book.

Participants are requested to bring outdoor clothing & footwear.

Lam Rim Buddhist Centre

There was a land so far away
Where apple blossom grew,
Where dappled hills rolled all around
And were my only view.

From this window I could see
Orchards old and wise,
And trees that whispered in the wind
And graced the open skies.

Birds would fly in from above
To land upon their table,
And eat their food and flap their wing
And play amongst the stable.

Sometimes you'd sight a buzzard
Funnelling in the air,
And if you watched, so silent,
At times you would see a pair.

Some Personal Reflections
Some Personal Reflections

Sheep and cattle shared a field,
And a mountain was in view,
And early mornings I would walk
Barefoot amongst the dew.

This was a place where I could live
And breathe in all the calm,
Where goodness was a state of mind
And healing was true love's balm.

Although I am so far from home
And my window has a different view,
When I think about the place I love
I will return to you.

© Beverley Ferguson (*Written by Beverley during a long stay in hospital last year.*)

The Sarabha Story continues.....


Such were the thoughts of the Sarabha as he turned and went back to the chasm. On reaching the brink he looked down and saw his enemy lying in the dust, moaning. And, bending over, he spoke to him in a gentle voice: "King of men," he said, "do not fear me, I am not a goblin who does harm to those who are lost and far from home. I drink the water that you drink and eat the grass that grows on earth. I am able to help you, O King, and bring you out of this chasm. Trust me, I will come." "Do my eyes see truly?" thought the King. "Is this not my enemy, who has come to help me?" The King looked up at the Sarabha and his heart was full of shame. "Fair one, he said, "I am not hurt over much, for the armour which covers me is strong. But the thought that I have been your enemy hurts me more than my wounds. Forgive me, blessed one." Hearing these words, the Sarabha knew that the King trusted him and loved him. He descended into the chasm, and taking the King on his back, he climbed the high walls with strength greater than that of the mightiest elephant, and brought him into the forest. Then the King threw his arms around the Sarabha, "How can I thank you?" he said. "My palace, my country is yours. Come, dear one, return with me to the city. I cannot leave you here in the forest to be killed by hunters and wild animals."

"Great King," said Sarabha, "do not ask me to go to your palace. Here is my country, in this forest; the trees are my palaces. But if you wish to make me happy, grant then this favour, I pray. Hunt no more in the forest, that those who live beneath the trees may be happy and free."

The King gave his promise gladly and returned to the palace, to the great joy of his people, who welcomed him with cheers. Then without more ado he published a decree that henceforth none should hunt in the forest again, wherefore the King and his people and the animals in the forest all lived happy ever after.

From the Jataka Tales



 As the bus slowed down at the crowded bus stop, the Pakistani bus conductor leaned from the platform and called out, "Six only!" The bus stopped. He counted out six passengers, rang the bell and then, as the bus moved off, called to those left behind: "So sorry, plenty of room in my heart—but the bus is full." He left behind a row of smiling faces. It's not what you do; it's the way you do it.

Francis Gay

A Childrens Story

THE SARABHA



There is a deer who lives so deep in a certain forest that no one ever sees him. Men call him the Sarabha. My little one, if you listen when all the world is quiet, and the sun is far away, you may hear his voice coming faintly from the woods. One day a king was hunting in this forest, and he wandered so far, so far, that one of these fair Sarabhas passed within his view. "Who are you, beautiful creature?" he cried. But the Sarabha ran on and disappeared through the trees. "I will catch him." exclaimed the King furiously. "He cannot escape me!" And darting forward upon his horse he shot arrows at the beautiful one. The arrows flew around the deer, but he feared them not, and ran over the grass as a bird flies through the air.

The King's horse raced faster and faster, and the forest, the hills, the valleys passed by unseen. His hunting-men, his army, his elephant-troops were left behind in the forest, searching in vain for their King. All were forgotten; nothing more on earth existed for the King; only the beautiful one he was pursuing. "Run, run....faster.....faster!" cried the King in fury. The hoofs of his horse hardly touched the ground as he galloped through space. But suddenly they reached a deep chasm, which the Sarabha had leaped easily across. The King did not see the chasm; his eyes were set only on the quarry he was pursuing, but the horse perceived it and, not daring to jump, stopped suddenly at the edge, and the King was flung over his head deep into the chasm.

"Why do I hear no more the clatter of the horse's hoofs?" thought the Sarabha. "Has the King turned away, or has he perhaps fallen in the chasm?" The Sarabha looked behind him and saw the horse running here and there riderless, and his heart was filled with sorrow. "The King has fallen in the chasm! He is all alone! His army is far away! Surely he is suffering more than another would suffer in such a plight, for he has an army, glittering with gold, a hundred elephants, and men to guard him and await his call. But now he is alone, poor King! I will save him, if he is still alive."

Continued...../

Civil Partnreship Vows of Janie and Fiona

We have been blessed with some very loving advice on how to live together happily.

This advice was very simple-
be kind to each other and live in harmony.
be kind to each other and live in harmony.

So together we have written some of the ways we could show our love for each other – to the best of our abilities

- One day at a time
- We will honour our joys and our sorrows
- One day at a time*
- We will make time to share our successes and achievements*
- One day at a time
- We will make time to talk about any concerns or worries
- One day at a time*
- We will give space to listen*
- One day at a time
- We will laugh together
- One day at a time*
- We will enjoy silence and peaceful companionship*
- One day at a time
- We will share our love with others
- One day at a time*
- We will look at our list of things to do and try to do what we can. The rest we will tie to red balloons and send off up into the sky!*

And so we hope that, by doing these simple things each day we have together, we will continue to love each other - as we do today.

MEDITATION CORNER

Patience
is one of the most
important virtues for
developing
mindfulness and
concentration.

Dipa Ma



Hamburg 21-27 July 2007 – Part 2

Teachings with H.H. the Dalai Lama

Wednesday

Since Monday, before the teaching started, from the stage, a group of monks or nuns sang the motivation and another prayer of their choice in their language, Vietnamese, Chinese. But on Wednesday, a Tibetan monk started to sing the text of the 400 verses. The stadium was only a third full, with lots of noise and movement around, but it felt proper that those sound waves filled that stadium, by then, such a special place. That evening, I went with Colin, my husband and fellow student of the Dharma to the Charity Concert of John McLaughlin and his Indian percussionists. It was a very enjoyable evening in this extremely well attended ex-warehouse now concert hall. The long walk to and fro showed us more of the town and the Alster Lake but it proved quite tiring. With hindsight it might have been best not attempted.

Thursday

With the whole second part on “Elucidations on Wisdom” still to be tackled, H.H. Dalai Lama’s lecture ate well into the lunch break. He then extended the afternoon session to cram in another two chapters on the refutation of special points. He left at 4.55 after enjoining us not to eat meat or eggs, in preparation for the Manjushri: Initiation into the Buddha of Wisdom and also asking for a prompt start at 8.45 instead of 9.30. I asked around and was told that drinking milk was OK. Colin was relieved.

Friday

Our last and longest day! Today, we arrived at 7 am, our earliest so far.

More people did their prostrations as this Tennis Stadium was now more and more of a Buddhist Temple. The atmosphere was warmer and the immense crowd was a supporting element, not as intimidating as on the first day, as my new found German friend confided. I see the crowd as a pedagogical help giving us an idea of what could be the sea of our mothers and the multitude of our past reincarnations for example. This gives a tangible though rough dimension to the limitless of our..... there I get caught in the naming of the unnameable!

8.18: H.H. Dalai Lama arrived and started his prayers, facing the altar and thangka, his back to the rest of the hall which is filling up slowly, oblivious to the hum of anticipation of those already seated.

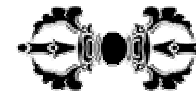
The Taking of Refuge was preceded by long explanations and made sense, to me, as a conclusion to the week’s teachings. For us both, this was to be our first initiation. It started earlier on with

Hamburg Part 2 continued

Dharma can help us by encouraging us to be more compassionate and

non-violent with ourselves as well as others. Many of us avoid an honest examination of our lives for fear of exposing our contributions to global problems. However, once we realise that it is our collective irresponsible action which is the root of our ecological breakdown, Dharma can help us to be more reasonable and sensible towards our environment. The teachings can encourage an understanding of many complex ways we affect others and our environment. Only by recognising how we are all part of this system can we actively work together to disengage ourselves from these life-denying structures that we have been pursuing so persistently for our comfort and in the name of development.

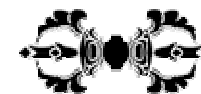
The Buddhist doctrine of *karma* is based on cause and effect of one’s deeds. In simple understanding, if we keep on with ecological destruction, we are not only making this world a lot worse place to live in but also leaving behind a legacy of human deeds irreparable for the future generation. Therefore, understanding the connections will help us to focus on the fundamental causes and tackle the ecological crisis effectively and efficiently. I think Dharma has and can play a pivotal role in sowing the seed of awareness and responsibility towards Mother Nature.



The development of bodhichitta is the core of the Buddha’s teaching, and the main path. Once the development of bodhichitta has taken place, the practitioner endeavours to apply the altruistic principle throughout his or her life.

This leads to what are known as the ‘bodhisattva ideals,’ including the ‘six perfections’ - the perfection of **generosity, morality, patience, enthusiasm, meditation or concentration, and wisdom.**

His Holiness the Dalai Lama





Dharma & Ecological Responsibility

His Eminence Khondung Gyana Vajra Sakya

In recent years, it has become apparent that we are experiencing a wide range of global environmental problems - toxic contamination of food chain, rapid exploitation and depletion of natural resources and in the impact of global warming. For higher economic growth and sustaining rapid economic developments, we have been consistently ignoring to resolve the global crisis. The 'Dharma and Ecological Responsibility' seminar brings forth the holistic and distinctive views and linkages between human beings and their environment. This discussion will highlight and influence the social behaviour by encouraging moral and universal responsibility towards every sentient being and future generations. This note will try to explore ways in which Buddhist traditions might contribute to the discussion and to the practice of a more ecologically aware lifestyle.

In Buddhism, we have the principle of interdependence - the unity of all life, the inextricable web in which nothing can claim a separate or static existence. We are living in a world in which any action influencing a single part of the system can be expected to have an effect on all other parts of the system. Therefore, we should respect nature and other

living beings. The very existence of every living being on this earth is interdependent, and the notion that the world belongs only to the human beings is too foolish and naïve. We should also refrain from altering the nature and flow of the life cycle.

In Buddhism; we believe the principle of impermanence. The Buddha's teachings are about change and impermanence in the nature world. We are taught to accept the ever-changing flow of life in the biosphere, the cycle of birth and death, the impermanence of all beings. However, the changes brought by globalisation are based on a denial of the impermanence in nature observed by the Buddha. The massive extraction of natural resources, the manipulation of genetic material through biotechnology, and the production of excess materials to appease human comfort are not part of a natural flow of life and process. These are instead manifestations of a worldview which seeks to dominate nature and which pretends that life can be manipulated in a way to suit and satisfy the needs of human beings. But human beings have endless and limitless needs, thus a sense of contentment can be derived from Dharma.

Continued..../



saffroned water distributed from small mineral plastic bottles at the entrance to the hall. The Initiation into Manjushri, again, meant more explanations linked to aspects of the teachings of this week. It was very intricate and precise, with lots of visualisations involved, that, I had hardly time to do before the next instruction was explained. The build up of emotions was relentlessly mounting. I have felt under its spell for many days after, needing rest and silence.

However, after another shortened lunch break, there were another two hours' teaching. These on the last chapters about the multitude of refutations to aspects of some Buddhist tenets, which went on at break-neck speed with lots of reading by His Holiness. But suddenly, pushing his red cap away from his forehead, like a good worker, he exclaimed: "Ha! Here is the end! It has been a great moment of happiness to have studied those verses with you, but, this is really a very difficult text."

The last half hour was also quite surreal with the long speeches of thanks and the list of the expenses incurred to bring the event together, the last giving of kathaks, the last dedication prayer, then, the last farewell of His Holiness. A slightly dazed, happy, no longer exhausted crowd exited, while talks of a next projected visit in the queue could be heard. Of course Nottingham was very high on the list.

This week has just been extraordinary!

By Liz Threadgall

What an opportunity, to be at Lam Rim in June, with friends to do some gardening!

Following Chris Jarmey's bodywork weekend at Lam Rim in April four of us decided to re-gather as a working party. Jan, Andrew, Chris and myself got together (June 4th-6th) and asked Margaret and Edita what needed doing.....

We worked together to redefine the prayer path; strimming; raked hay and collected kindling. We cooked and ate together and shared puja. It felt great to relax in the evening after such fulfilling and nourishing days in good company!



Check out the "Helping Hands" register for opportunities to re-direct some energy and enjoy time at Lam Rim helping create Buddha fields. Contact Margaret or see the website.

By Peter May

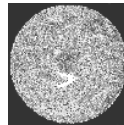
Dharma Centre Declaration

Statement of Intent

Drawn up when His Holiness visited Nottingham 2008

In gratitude to His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama we offer this Statement of Intent as a reflection of the collected aspirations of the assembled representatives and friends of Dharma Network, who participated in the seminar on 'Dharma and Ecological Responsibility' at the Nottingham Arena.

Inspired by wisdom, compassion and example of our beloved Refuge and Protector his Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, we aspire to create a beneficial example of sustainable living within the context of our commitment to the Dharma as Buddhist practitioners. Our collective intention is to cultivate awareness within ourselves and others, to highlight the current urgency of climate change and to establish a means of preventing this from continuing. Our aspirations direct us towards:



- Reducing our consumption
- Making ethical and sustainable choices about what, when and how we consume.
- Putting something back into our physical and social environment, so as to nourish and educate both ourselves and each other on the impact of our being here and now.
- Finding and establishing a gentle, open and appropriate means of engaging with others and achieving these aims together for the benefit of all beings.
- Finding and establishing a gentle, open and appropriate means of engaging with others and achieving these aims together for the benefit of all beings.
- Raising awareness based on ethical responsibility as an expression of compassion in action towards society as a whole.

Each one of us will endeavour to activate change in some small way both independently and within our groups. We will initiate simple, practical, achievable, and realistic steps from a grass-roots level so that we can develop a personal and collective ability to respond to the current climate crisis we all face.

From personal investigation and analysis as well as sourcing up-to-date scientific information, and using links within Buddhist circles and wider media resources, we will share, support and communicate with each other to take our raised awareness out into local communities, to enable groups and families to make changes – especially the younger generations who will eventually inherit the consequences of our collective actions. We will reflect on the appropriateness of how we communicate our message so that we can be heard.

Knowing that in Society there is poverty and great wealth, indifference, disability and an inability to respond to our aspirations for change, we realise that we will not reach out to others unless we practice *kalyanamitra* and listen more intently and openly to the deeper psychological issues which create barriers to ecologically responsibility.

In not holding biases, but rather as co-existing, interdependent human beings, we will pursue inter-faith, inter-cultural and secular dialogue. Through the practice of loving-kindness and compassion we will support others who seek to change, and in our endeavours to be proactive, we will be making an offering to those who simply can't.

Continued...../

Statement of Intent continues.....

As a catalyst to broaden our view and encourage behaviour change, we will carry out environmental audits of our Dharma Centres as well as our homes and lifestyles. Dharma Centres will not only raise awareness but they will be able to lead by example. As well as being a light unto ourselves to find clarity along the path, each step we take, no matter how small, will remain simple so that we can consciously sustain engagement and share our endeavours as we go.

Where possible we will endeavour to designate specific days at Dharma Centres for reflection and the sharing of information and ideas with each other, in the hope that this will spread out into and influence the wider community.

By developing our focus through regular communication, supporting new ideas, sharing practical suggestions and celebrating positive outcomes, we will be able to fine-tune the nature of our participation to reach a much wider audience through the use of the internet, meetings, workshops, ceremonies and talks. Through this we can also link to larger initiatives such as the transition-towns movement, co-housing, permaculture, local ecological and environmental projects, relevant publications and organisations, and eco-business ventures for mutual enrichment and support.

As the network widens, those elements which are obstacles to change such as ignorance, exploitation and deceit and reckless consumerism will hopefully have less impact. As a quintessential part of our Dharma practice, our realisation to tread lightly on this earth will harmonise our good intent with the miracle of life itself, for the benefit of all sentient beings in sustaining Mother Earth for future generations.

25th May 2008

It is hoped that the passing on of this Statement of Intent to as many Dharma friends and groups as possible will create a positive atmosphere of Kalyanamitra where support and encouragement of one another flourish as we grow and practice as Buddhists, Eco Buddhists and Human Beings.

Kalyanamitra means: wise counsel, good friend, counsellor, someone with knowledge, wisdom, experience; intimate friends, good mentor, (bright-eyed) knowing one, spiritual guide/advisor, good companion, honest and pure friend.

Some useful websites on
Buddhism and ecological issues.

**Dharma Network website:
www.dalailama2008.org**

www.ecobuddhism.org

www.dalailama.com/page.68