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Tara Institute News

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March
1991

❖ DEBATE CLASS ❖

A MAJOR NEW PROGRAMME EVENT FOR TARA INSTITUTE

Starting Sunday April 7th 10am

These new classes commence in April. Although anyone can join, a knowledge of Tibetan pronunciation and ability to read Tibetan script will prove invaluable. This is because Buddhist debate terminology is precise and with few obvious counterparts in English. It is therefore recommended that prospective Debate Class students join the Beginners' Short Course (see above).

BENEFITS

Debate plays a pivotal role in Buddhism where it is used to slice away the confusion and superstition preventing realization of our Buddha nature. Profound logical investigation stimulates spiritual insights so that we can begin to liberate ourselves and others from suffering. Even on a mundane level, debate training helps us develop into a sharp and accurate thinker with coherent decision making abilities.

COURSE STRUCTURE

This will follow the classical curriculum of the great Tibetan monasteries. In broad terms there are three levels -

a) Elementary

The starting topic is "Dura" or "The Collected Topics of Elementary Debate". This is specifically useful in introducing preliminary rules which enable us to distinguish between dif-



ferent objects of knowledge, for example, the general and the particular. Everyone accepts that a cowboy has a horse but does he also have a tail? The fun begins.

b) Intermediate

Study of "Lo Rig" or "Mind and its Functions" and "Ta Rig" - logical methodology.

c) Advanced

Study of five major treatises - "Prajnaparamita", "Madhyamika", "Pramanavartika", "Abhidharma" and "Vinaya" - completion of which qualifies one to sit a Geshe examination.

WHERE WE START!

We aim to finish Elementary and Intermediate levels this year.

OUR TEACHERS

We are extremely fortunate in having Samdup Tsering, as our teacher in these classes. Samdup has

studied debate extensively at the Tibetan School of Dialectics where he stood out as one of the distinguished younger debaters. His long experience as a translator means he is rarely placed to translate these teachings into a Western idiom.

Samdup will teach for three weeks and every fourth week the Venerable Geshe Doga has kindly offered to attend to lead a question and answer session on the current subject matter. This four week format will rotate throughout the year.

COURSE FEE:

Tara Institute Members \$30 per eight week block; non-Members \$40. Please note that this is a facility fee and not a fee for the teachings themselves.

COMMITMENT

Students must attend regularly and commit themselves to at least an eight week block in order to participate. As we are all starting out together the main pre-requisite is keenness to study and an interest in philosophical enquiry.

WHEN

Classes will run regularly every Sunday morning 10-11.30am unless interrupted by other programme events such as weekend courses.

For further information, contact Samdup Tsering or Sonam Jampa.

▼WEEK ONE

SUNDAY 3
Sunday School 10am

▼WEEK TWO

MONDAY 4
Introduction to Buddhist
Meditation 8pm

TUESDAY 5
Study Group 8pm

WEDNESDAY 6
Evening with Geshe Doga 8pm

THURSDAY 7
Introduction to Tibetan
Language 8pm

SUNDAY 10
Guru Puja 6.30pm

▼WEEK THREE

MONDAY 11
Introduction to Buddhist
Meditation 8pm

TUESDAY 12
Study Group 8pm

WEDNESDAY 13
Evening with Geshe Doga 8pm

THURSDAY 14
Introduction to Tibetan
Language 8pm.

SUNDAY 17
Sunday School 10am

▼WEEK FOUR

MONDAY 18
Introduction to Buddhist
Meditation 8pm

TUESDAY 19
Study Group 8pm

WEDNESDAY 20
Evening with Geshe Doga 8pm

THURSDAY 21
Introduction to Tibetan
Language 8pm

SATURDAY 23
Tara Puja 6.30 pm

▼WEEK FIVE

MONDAY 25
Guru Puja 6pm,
Introduction to Buddhist
Meditation 8pm

TUESDAY 26
Study Group 8pm

WEDNESDAY 27
Evening with Geshe Doga
8pm

THURSDAY 28
Introduction to Tibetan
Language 8pm
Karuna Hospice Meeting
8pm

FRIDAY 29 8.30am - MON-
DAY 1
5pm EASTER COURSE:
Jewel Rosary of an Aw-
ing Warrior

SUNDAY 31
Sunday School 10am

MARCH PROGRAM

AUSPICIOUS DATES

Tibetan 25th - Sunday 10th Tsog; Tibetan 30th - Saturday 16th New Moon Precepts; Tibetan 8th - Saturday 23rd - Tara Day; Tibetan 10th - Monday 25th Tsog; Tibetan 15th - Saturday 30th Full Moon Precepts.

**INTRODUCTION TO
BUDDHIST MEDITATION**

Monday nights 4th, 11th,
18th, 25th at 8pm



The March series of introductory lectures will be presented by Jill Gillies. Jill has studied Tibetan Buddhism for seventeen years, including 4 years of intensive study and meditation in northern India and Nepal.

Her subject will be "Thought Transformation" - a practice fundamental to all aspects of Buddhist philosophy and meditation. The essence of this practice teaches us how to make choices about our actions, thoughts and speech so that we can achieve happiness both now and in the future, for both ourselves and others. Each evening will consist of guided meditations, discourse and discussion.

A facilities fee of \$5 per class goes towards TI's enormous mortgage expenses. There is no charge for Members.

STUDY GROUP

Tuesday nights 5th, 12th, 19th, 26th

For several years Tara Institute has offered the Study Group to those students wishing to develop a deeper understanding of the principles of Buddhist practice. The enthusiasm of over fifty students who attended regularly throughout 1990 shows its popularity.

But why study? Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey said - "If we never study, our mind will become even duller and we will never learn how to improve our condition. Our precious human life will have become a complete waste. So we must study the measures for developing our mind, then ponder them until we understand and finally build them up as habits."

Joining the Study Group gives first hand experience of the power and clarity that these teachings bring to our practice. Having taken Refuge, being committed to attend regularly and willing to undertake a one week Lam Rim meditation retreat are prerequisites for joining.

This year Geshe Doga will teach on the Lam Rim or Graduated Path to Enlightenment. The Lam Rim teachings

provide a framework for understanding all the steps that lead from our current state right up to full Enlightenment. Through studying and meditating upon Lam Rim, steady spiritual progress is assured.

Having read this far you may be thinking "I would love to join but I have left it too late - the Group has already started and everybody ELSE is so learned!" Nonsense. We all have our own wisdom and in any case the group is entirely non-competitive - each student approaches the topic according to their own understanding. The experience of all members is that they joined at exactly the right time. Straight-away every teaching proves vital and perfectly attuned to their own situation. This is a testament to Geshe Doga's great skill as a teacher. He cares for each student equally. How inspiring to learn in such an atmosphere.

Please ring Wendy in the TI office on 596 2465 or contact the Study Group Co-ordinator, Sonam Jampa for further details. New students are always welcome.

EVENINGS WITH GESHE DOGA

Wednesday nights 6th, 13th, 20th and 27th
Commentary on "A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life"

Chapter 7: Enthusiasm

This year Geshe Doga will continue his commentary on the famous Buddhist text "A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life". Written in the eighth century by the great Indian teacher Shantideva, this text is much loved throughout all Mahayana Buddhist countries for its direct and practical explanations of techniques for developing spiritual qualities such as love, compassion, patience and wisdom.



This year, Geshela will be teaching from the seventh chapter which deals with the development of enthusiasm or joyous effort. Drawing from his own experience and that of his teachers, Geshe Doga will describe methods for enhancing our commitment to travelling the spiritual path. For those of us who find that our energy for meditation practice wanes at the first hint of any obstacles, these teachings will provide a welcome boost. The teachings are suitable for all students, both new and old. There is no facilities fee for the teachings.

KARUNA HOSPICE AT TI



A Meeting will be held at Tara Institute on March 28th at 8pm, to explore the formation of a Karuna Hospice Group. Karuna was founded by Ken Hawter in Brisbane at the wish of Lama Zopa Rinpoche, to help the sick and dying. All are welcome. Any further enquiries, please contact Thubten Sheden on 596 6197 or 596 4350.

SLIDE NIGHT

The Dalai Lama: Melbourne 1982

As a run-up to the Dalai Lama's 1992 visit to Melbourne, there will be an evening of Slides and Audio-Visuals from his 1982 Melbourne visit.

When: Thursday March 21st, 8pm

Where: South Yarra Library,
Toorak Road, South Yarra

Donation: \$5 - all proceeds go toward organizing the 1992 Tour.



Tara Institute
3 Mavis Avenue
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NEWS ITEM

The Venerable Sonam Jampa, Tara Institute's Program Co-ordinator, has structured his timetable so that he is available 9am-10.30pm Monday-Wednesdays. If you wish to contact him it would be very helpful if you could do so in these times. Sonam will still attend Program events outside these three days but needs to concentrate his administrative duties so that he can fulfil other work commitments. He thanks you for your co-operation.

P.S. Patrick Campisi is Sonam's assistant and is always happy to assist with Program business. Wendy in the Office is always happy to take messages, organise appointments etc.

ROOMS FOR RENT AT TARA INSTITUTE

One of the best things about living at TI is that you know in advance exactly what you're paying each month - there are no nasty gas and electricity bill surprises...

Charges include: Room rental, Evening Meal Service (for 3-course meals Mon-Fri), Service Fee (covers gas, electricity and maintenance costs), and TI Membership.

And where else could you get 24-hour access to a meditation hall? And share a house with a Tibetan lama opposite the most beautiful park in Brighton?

Rooms available now are:

Room 34: a large room, downstairs, with heating, sink and cupboards, a

separate entrance and a view across Landcox Park

Room 20: a small room on the ground floor with its own entrance

Room 18: a large, light, airy room, downstairs, with built-in robes and lots of cupboard space

Room 9: a light and airy room on the first floor, carpeted and with pleasant views

Rooms 4 & 5: two smaller rooms on the first floor, fully furnished with built-in robes, cupboards and parquet floors.

Please contact Patrick Campisi, Alan Molloy or Wendy Cook for more information and to arrange for an inspection, on 596 2465 during office hours.

INTRODUCTION TO TIBETAN LANGUAGE BEGINNERS SHORT COURSE

Thursday nights March 7, 14, 21, 28; April 4, 11, 17
Tara Institute Library All classes commence at 8pm

These beginners classes will be held for seven weeks and are open to any interested students. The Tibetan alphabet, pronunciation and basic grammar will be taught. This will allow students to commence reading in Tibetan.

The aim is to enable as many people as possible to read and pronounce Tibetan sufficiently well to allow them to join the Debate Class beginning in April (see below).

Course Fee: \$25 members. \$35 non-members. Students are requested to attend all classes.

SAFE WANTED

A safe with combination or key lock is needed for security in the Office. If anyone is able to donate one, it would be greatly appreciated.

THE VENERABLE GESHE DOGA

An interview by Heather Kennedy, journalist & TI Member

"The visit to India was not just a holiday; I had a special purpose in going to India this year. I think that it is really extremely fortunate that the holiday to India at this time coincided with His Holiness' teaching the initiations at Sarnath (near Varanasi), the place where the historical Buddha turned the Wheel of Dharma for the first time, where he gave his first discourse.

It is also very special for me; without any element of doubt, His Holiness is the actual manifestation of Chenrezig, the compassionate embodiment of the compassion of all the Buddhas, which belongs to the most beautiful sacred teachings of the Tibetan Buddhism's line of Buddhism.

And also it was special because of the attendance. There were between 200,000 and 300,000 people there, of whom 10,000 were ordained monks and nuns. I felt very positive being with that group - the majority of that group are all faithful, devout Buddhists.

While there I felt so happy - perhaps happier than I have ever been. It was particularly important for me to have an opportunity to hear and see His Holiness the Dalai Lama again.

Also among the crowd for His Holiness' initiations there were many other spiritual beings - you can feel something positive in their presence - and I am quite sure that the same feeling was also experienced by all who were there.

Even for people who are not fully Buddhist, just meeting or seeing His Holiness will give some kind of light in their mind too, and guide their life.

So in my opinion there are many benefits obtained from just being there, receiving His Holiness' teachings."

Geshe Doga expressed some concern about the health of some of the students who accompanied him. He doesn't worry about getting sick himself, but he did not like to see some of his people "off-colour" in India.

"But they were receiving such benefits spiritually, that none of them felt bad about a few physical problems. They may have been a little unfit - but all of them looked very happy.

All the TI students who travelled with me were doing their practice very well during the trip. For example, in Varanasi, the students were always saying mantras and prayers, and doing circumambulations around the relics, and also prostrations.

So they did many things to gain merit for themselves and also to inspire other people to rejoice in their merits.

After the ceremony at Varanasi we headed towards Bodh Gaya, and many other places in India and Nepal. Everyone was aware that this was not just a trip, a tourist holiday - they all had some special

Geshe Doga is home, safe and well after a seven week trip to India and Nepal which included attendance at the Kalachakra ceremony led by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In this interview, granted soon after his return, Geshe Doga talks of this wonderful ceremony, and encourages and praises his students - both those who travelled with him to the Kalachakra Tantra and those who stayed home and kept Tara Institute open - and emphasises the urgent need for increased Dharma practice.

aim in visiting these places. All the students felt happy just being in those places. I got the impression from them that they had no worries or unhappiness - they were almost liberated from all inner problems. They all looked very happy.

I also got the impression from this trip that many of the students had become more confirmed in their belief in the importance of Buddhist practice, and they realized and gained a clear understanding that the practice they engage in is very beneficial. Some of them, however, felt that they need more study, because the main aim of the practice



is to gain complete control over the mind - and so to reach that goal they have to work hard and learn a lot. They have, however, a fresh courage and confidence in their practice, and some of them even want to learn Tibetan.

Geshe Doga said that he is sure that the Kalachakra ceremony would have contributed a great deal to the cause of the Tibetan people in and out of Tibet.

It showed that the Tibetan nation has something to offer - and particularly that His Holiness the Dalai Lama has much that is beneficial to offer the world's people.

So this is good for the cause of Tibet - the more the people of the world can see the power that Tibet can offer, or His Holiness can offer - the more they see these things, the more the world can acknowledge the cause."

Geshe Doga and his students visited the Kopan Monastery in Kathmandu and spent ten days there. Geshe Doga spent three years teaching in that monastery before coming to Australia. He said it didn't occur to him to want to stay - he is an Australian now.

"While we were in Nepal we visited all the sacred places, and afterward there was a split in the group; most of the students headed home, but three remained and travelled with me.

We went to Sera Je, the monastery where I did all my monastic studies, and I was able to see my friends who were the ones who belong to the monastery. Also at the moment one of my dearest friends and teachers is also there, Khensur Rinpoche - I saw him at Varanasi, but because I didn't have enough time to spend with him, after Nepal I definitely wanted to go down to Sera.

In Sera, as well as catching up with friends, I also had an opportunity to make some offerings to the monastery.

Although those who came back from India might have spent a lot of money and may now be "broke" - they have obtained a lot of wealth inside, which they will enjoy forever.

I highly admire those who stayed in the Centre during the holidays because they looked after the Centre and also ran

the spiritual program by themselves - so what they did is also very good.

I would like to thank them. I now know that in the future when there is no special teacher in the Centre I can feel quite confident the students can fill up that gap."

There was one aspect of the trip which was very sad for Geshe Doga. The Chinese put so many restrictions on people hoping to attend the Kalachakra that few Tibetans could come. Only 200-300 people from Tibet attended the

ceremony, and most of them had escaped their occupied country illegally.

There were only two people from Geshe Doga's village. Some small children who escaped were chased by Chinese soldiers but were brave enough to cross anyway. Two of these children were killed as they tried to cross the border. Geshe Doga said, "Several of the kids have decided to become monks and have joined a monastery in India."