

News

March 2021



Is it possible to gain control over the mind?



Yes. It is possible, because we are not the mind and the mind is not us. It normally seems like the mind is the controller or the owner, and we feel as if we are controlled or owned by the mind. However, in reality, it should be the other way around. This is clear from our everyday use of the phrase, 'my mind', which sounds as if you - or the 'I' - are the controller or owner, and the mind is controlled or owned by you or the 'I'. But, this is not the case at all, for we have fallen prey to our mind. Unfortunately, the mind that overpowers and leads us is under the influence of, or intoxicated by, mental delusion or afflictions.

It is because of this force of the mental delusions that we are always rushing here and there. However, no matter what we do or accomplish, the result is not true happiness. But more suffering and restlessness. Even the good conditions we've gathered through hard work over a long time may end up as a further cause to increase and intensify misery and delusion; even these supposedly good and favourable conditions become bad and unfavourable, bringing suffering, instead of the happiness we seek. Take the example of achieving physical beauty: recognizing this as the cause of more happiness and self-confidence, some people have worked hard and achieved it. But they have not become happier because they feel more pride, jealousy and competitiveness in relation to their outer image.

So, if we don't counteract the mental afflictions, no matter what we do or what we achieve, there'll be no end to our suffering, because the blame for our suffering lies with the mental afflictions. Now when we talk about mental afflictions, we are referring to the various afflictive emotions we generate, such as attachment, anger, pride and jealousy. Attachment, as an emotion we experience, usually seems positive, harmless, or a cause of happiness. But, in reality, it serves as a perpetual cause of dissatisfaction and harm. The harm brought to us by other afflictive emotions, such as anger, pride, jealousy and competitiveness, on the other hand, is quite evident. Apart from all these afflictions, ignorance is the fundamental cause of all our faults. We know this from all the mistakes we have made, as a result of which we end up suffering and then regretting our decisions and actions – these mistakes would not have happened if we were not ignorant.

Excerpt from The Six Perfections teaching given on 5 March 2019.

We are without beginning or end.

The concept of a line of incarnation for the Dalai Lamas presumes the continuity between two living beings: the predecessor and his reincarnation. Buddhism accepts the existence of the continuity of a being. The Buddhist theory of "selflessness" means that there is no independent self apart from the body, because "self" or the person is designated by the combination of body and mind. There is a self, but there is no independent absolute self. With respect to continuation, not only does Buddhism accept the continuity of the being, but it also upholds the notion of a 'beginningless' self, that is, a self with no beginning and no end until Buddhahood is achieved. There are different kinds of reincarnations. An eminent Buddha, or bodhisattva, can manifest several times simultaneously, lower bodhisattvas reincarnate only in one person - that is, once at a time. But anyone, irrespective of whether they are a bodhisattva or an ordinary person, is reborn from 'beginninglessness' and will be born endlessly. Continuity is always there and will always be there, owing to karma. Now, at one stage, if you develop a certain spiritual realization, then the birth through karma will cease. Then, with will power, you can choose your rebirth. This type of rebirth we call reincarnation.

My Spiritual Autobiography – His Holiness The Dalai Lama



GESHE LUNCH AT TARA INSTITUTE

Without our precious teachers the Dharma would languish. To repay their kindness, Venerable Dondrup (Atisha Centre Director) suggested a lunch for the Geshes to get together and socialise. It was hosted at TI on Monday 18 January. In attendance were Geshe Doga, Geshe Rabten, Geshe Konchok Tsering, Geshe Sonam Thargye, Ven Shabdrung Rinpoche, and Geshe Lobsang Dorje.

They all had a great time. Lots of chatting and laughter! A selection of wonderful dishes was provided by a group of Geshe Doga's usual fabulous cooks: Tina, Jenny, Cynthia, Atsuko, Larissa and Lynn.

The lunch was held in the Kwan Yin gompa and Jenny and I made sure it looked welcoming and 'special'.

Grace Molloy was a great help moving furniture and using her hospitality skills to assist with plating.

All in all, it was a very successful event and Ven Dondrup is already working on the next lunch to be hosted at Atisha.

Social occasions like these are a way of looking after our precious teachers.

Auspicious days are calculated according to the lunar calendar. On these days, the benefits of actions are greatly multiplied, so are especially good for spiritual practice.

Monday 8
Saturday 13
Sunday 21
Tuesday 23
Sunday 28

Tibetan 25
Tibetan 30
Tibetan 8
Tibetan 10
Tibetan 15

Tsog Day
New Moon
Tara Day
Tsog Day
Full Moon

Guru Puja
Precepts
Tara Puja
Guru Puja
Precepts



37 Practices of Bodhisattvas

with Geshe Lobsang Dorje

Begins 8pm Wednesday,
March 3, 10, 17, 24 & 31, 2021
Livestreaming from the
Tara Institute Facebook Page

Gyelsay Togmay Sangpo wrote the Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas in the 14th century. His succinct and simple verses of advice summarise the quintessence of the Mahayana path to perfection. Whether in worldly knowledge or spiritual development , we need to rely on a teacher. Developing Dharma knowledge is different from worldly knowledge in that we have to hear the Dharma again and again and then contemplate it until it becomes a part of our experience. Geshe Lobsang will continue to lead us through the essence of this text. The Livestream event is open to everyone, and you are most welcome to attend with no prior knowledge of Buddhism.

There will be an opportunity to ask questions during the Live Streaming on Facebook, or if you prefer send them via email to the Tara Institute office (admin@tarainstitute.org.au). Geshe Lobsang will answer them on the night or in a future class.

“Discovering Faith Perspectives on End-of-Life Care”

Kasih Hospice Foundation Held an Interfaith Dialogue in December 2020

Kasih Hospice Foundation, an FPMT project in Selangor, Malaysia, provides medical, psychosocial, emotional, and spiritual support to people with life threatening diseases such as cancer, HIV/AIDS, and end-stage organ failure, and their families free of cost. Catherine Ooi, general manager, shares the story about the December 5, 2020, Kasih Hospice Foundation Interfaith Dialogue.

Kasih Hospice Foundation, a community hospice based in Klang Valley, Malaysia, held its second Interfaith Dialogue digitally on the platform Zoom. The hospice invited four interfaith speakers and subject matter experts from the Islamic, Christian, Buddhist, and Hindu faiths to speak on “Discovering Faith Perspectives on End-of-Life Care.”

The two-and-a-half-hour session provided a succinct view of what comprises “a good death” from each religion’s perspective. It also helped clarify theological rationales for certain rules or established practices, and how certain framing or understandings of them might be more helpful than others. It ended with the experts’ personal views on end-of-life care and death.

In the second part of our Interfaith Dialogue, we invited Dr. Richard Lim, national advisor of Palliative Care to the Ministry of Health, Government of Malaysia, to give the public his perspective on psychosocial and spiritual care in end-of-life care as well as palliative care, and the place spirituality plays within it. We concluded with a one-hour question and answer session.

Watch “Interfaith Dialogue 2020” on the Kaish Hospice Care YouTube channel: <https://youtu.be/QmGUSySeDXY>

Kasih Hospice Foundation prioritizes psychosocial and spiritual education as well as medical caregiving as a core competency in making sure families have the skills, knowledge, and—equally important—confidence and reassurance to care for their loved ones at home. As a multicultural, multi-religious country, with diverse medical teams, patient families, staff, and volunteers hailing from every ethnic group and nationality, we believe in the importance and urgency of Interfaith Dialogues that serve to elevate and encourage the principles of universal compassion.



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Mark Emerson, a longtime student of Geshe Doga and Tara Institute who lives and studies at the Tibetan Library in Dharamsala, kindly agreed to write an article about his experience. I was astonished to learn that although he lives in Dharamsala, he is a member of the publishing team that prepares the weekly transcripts. Thanks to the internet he is able to download a sound file and transcribe it. When complete (over the next two days) he sends it back to be edited and printed here, all in time for next week's teachings. AMAZING.

Because of Geshe Doga's advice to stay single, buy property, save money, generate virtue, and not waste one's leisure time, I now have the time and resources to study at the Library of Tibetan Works & Archives (LTWA) Dharamsala (India).

I must confess that at times I totally failed to follow Geshe-la's sage advice, but for some reason I kept it in my mind and tried to practise it whenever my mindfulness (and luck) provided the opportunity to do so. What I've learned from all of this is that faith combined with habituating in the Dharma teachings can definitely provide seemingly positive results.

The study program at the LTWA is quite intense as classes are held five days a week, with different options in Buddhist Philosophy and Tibetan Language. The Library is located in Gankyi, a small village of Tibetan style buildings mainly populated by Tibetans. Gankyi also contains the Central Tibetan Administration, Men-Tse-Khang (the Tibetan Medicine & Astrology Clinic), the Nechung Oracle's monastery, an assortment of Tibetan restaurants, cafés, and shops, the FPMT Lotsawa School (translator school), and Delek Hospital. It is located between Dharamsala and McLeod Ganj, where His Holiness' temple and residence is situated. I live in Dharamsala, and it takes me about 20 mins to walk up the hill to the Library, which is really good exercise five days a week.

For me, possibly the most interesting discovery I've made are a variety of issues with translation. Because there are many concepts in Buddhism that were never previously conceptualised by English speaking scholars, our dictionaries and encyclopaedias don't have the



specific terms and meanings to accommodate them. For example, terms such as impermanence and permanence are conceptualised quite differently in the Buddhist context. Consciousness, that has no beginning or end, is conceptualised in Buddhism as an impermanent phenomenon, whereas a generic image (meaning generality) that may last for only a very short time is conceptualised as a permanent phenomenon.

Fortunately, these days we see a small number of English speaking Lharampa Geshes graduating at the highest levels. Therefore, I pray that at some future time, we'll all have the opportunity to receive the authentic teachings directly in the English language.



You are welcome to contact the Tara Institute newsletter editors Ally Andrews and Sandra Kinread at
allys.andrews@gmail.com for issues relating to the newsletter