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# Tara Institute News

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SEPTEMBER 1992

PART THREE...

## introduction to TANTRA

*From Chapter One of Wisdom Publications' Introduction to Tantra by Lama Thubten Yeshe. The book was co-sponsored by Tara Institute and will give you a good clear grounding if you are considering the Kalachakra Initiation and teachings.*

The teachings and practices known as Buddhist tantra can be traced back 2500 years to the time of Shakyamuni Buddha. The historical Buddha – to differentiate Shakyamuni from the many other awakened beings who have come before and after him – was born the Indian prince Siddhartha in the sixth century BC. According to traditional sources, he spent the first twenty-nine years of his life virtually imprisoned in the pleasure palaces built for him by his over-protective father, King Shuddhodana. Eventually, after becoming aware for the first time of sickness, old age and death, he escaped from his father's realm and began his search for the way to end all suffering and dissatisfaction.

For six years he engaged in strict asceticism and self-denial in an attempt to win control over his body and mind, only to discover that this extreme approach was as misguided as his previous life of sensual indulgence. Eventually, by following the middle path between indulgence and denial and avoiding all other extremes as well, he was able to uproot even the subtlest causes of suffering and ignorance from his mind, and thereby become a fully enlightened awakened one: a Buddha. For the remaining forty-five years of his life, he taught this middle way



*Lama Thubten Yeshe*

approach to life and spiritual development in many different forms, each designed to suit the temperament and aptitude of a particular type of person.

Buddha's teachings – known in Sanskrit as Dharma: that which holds us back from suffering and its causes – contain thousands of different methods for overcoming the mental and physical obstacles to our happiness and well-being, and all fit within the two categories of sutra and tantra. There are differences between these two so-called vehicles (yana), but the foundation common to both sutrayana and tantrayana is the fundamentally pure nature of the mind.

### Fundamental Purity of the Mind

According to Buddhist teachings, no matter how confused or deluded we may be at the moment, the underlying and essential nature of our being is clear and pure. In the same way that clouds can

## The story of TI's helping hand

*by Adèle Hulse*

I made the decision to shift funding from NAIHO because their needs were so huge and our offering so small I felt it was better to put it where it was big enough to be seen and we could learn more about it all. I would like to add that Father Bob celebrates Mass every Sunday at 11 o'clock and it is the best free show in town. He is a remarkable priest and extremely funny. Tara Institute students later refitted an old milk bar and set up a medical and dental clinic on the premises on behalf of Open Family.

The overseas beneficiary was the Sera Je Tibetan-English school at Sera monastery, Bylekuppe, India. We were not granted AIDAB subsidy for this project because the guidelines do not support projects in exclusive communities. We funded drilling for a new clean water site and installation of a submersible pump and housing. A Dutch benefactor then donated the storage tank. Since then the parasitic infections and head sores which were endemic among the children have cleared up. Even Lama Osel can drink the water.

We also investigated a health education project in Bylekuppe in association with the Sera Je Printing Press, but this was not sustainable due to administration problems.

Last year we applied to AIDAB for

CONTINUED ON BACK PAGE

CONTINUED NEXT MONTH

# SEPTEMBER

## AUSPICIOUS DAYS IN SEPTEMBER

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

FRIDAY 4  
Tibetan 8th  
Tara Day (Precepts)

SUNDAY 6  
Tibetan 10th  
Tsog Day

FRIDAY 11  
Tibetan 15th  
Full Moon (Precepts)

MONDAY 21  
Tibetan 25th  
Tsog Day

SATURDAY 26  
Tibetan 30th  
New Moon (Precepts)

### WEEK ONE

- TUESDAY 1  
8pm Study Group
- WEDNESDAY 2  
8pm Geshe Doga
- THURSDAY 3  
8pm Tibetan Class
- FRIDAY 4  
6pm Tara Puja  
7pm Nyung Nä Intro  
8pm Study Group Eve
- SATURDAY 5  
5.30am Nyung Nä
- SUNDAY 6  
5.30am Nyung Nä  
8pm Guru Puja

### WEEK TWO

- MONDAY 7  
8pm Intro to Buddhism
- TUESDAY 8  
8pm Study Group
- WEDNESDAY 9  
8pm Geshe Doga
- THURSDAY 10  
8pm Tibetan Class
- FRIDAY 11  
8pm Study Group Eve
- SUNDAY 13  
10-4 Seminar

### WEEK THREE

- MONDAY 14  
8pm Intro to Buddhism
- TUESDAY 15  
8pm Study Group
- WEDNESDAY 16  
8pm Geshe Doga
- THURSDAY 17  
8pm Tibetan Class
- 8pm Healing Group
- FRIDAY 18  
8pm Study Group Eve

### WEEK FOUR

- MONDAY 21  
6pm Guru Puja  
8pm Intro to Buddhism
- TUESDAY 22  
8pm Study Group
- WEDNESDAY 23  
8pm Geshe Doga
- THURSDAY 24  
8pm Tibetan Class
- FRIDAY 25  
8pm Study Group
- SATURDAY 26 to  
● SUNDAY 27  
9-5 Weekend Course

### WEEK FIVE

- MONDAY 28  
8pm Intro to Buddhism
- TUESDAY 29  
8pm Study Group
- WEDNESDAY 30  
8pm Geshe Doga

## MONDAY NIGHTS

### Introduction to Buddhism

- Mon 7, 14, 21, 28 at 8pm

The September series of classes will be led by Damien Busby.

These classes are ideal for those wishing to explore Buddhism and its meditation techniques.

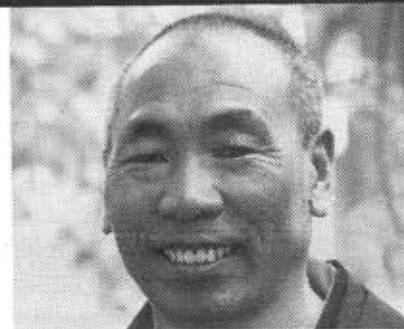
*A facilities fee of \$5 per class is asked to help cover administrative expenses (members free). Just turn up around 7.50pm or phone 596 8900 for more details.*

## TUESDAY NIGHTS

### Study Group

- Tues 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 at 8pm

Geshe Doga continues the regular teachings on the Graduated Path to Liberation (Lam Rim). These Lam Rim teachings provide a simple framework for understanding how to integrate the varied elements of the spiritual path into our daily lives. You are invited to 'sample' the Study Group at any time however to join, you must be committed to attending regularly, prepared to take



*Venerable Geshe Doga*

Refuge and willing to undertake a one week Lam Rim meditation retreat.

*Contact Wendy on 596 8900 for more details. There is no charge.*

## WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

### Evenings with Geshe Doga

- Wed 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 at 8pm

Geshe Doga draws on his own experience, and that of his teachers, to give practical advice on how to make each day worthwhile. Using Shantideva's *A Guide to the*

*Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, Geshe-la provides a commentary on methods for enhancing the quality of our lives. In this way we are able to fulfil our human potential and handle positively any situation with which we are faced.

*These nights are suitable for both new and old students. There is no charge.*

## WEEKEND COURSE PENETRATING REALITY The Ultimate Insight

- Sat 26 & Sun 27, 9am-5pm

Emptiness is the highest development of Buddhist insight. The wisdom realising emptiness cuts through the mistaken perception of the way things and events exist, allowing the mind to remain transparently calm, clear and mirror like. With this understanding, all delusions and obstacles can be eliminated from the mind and all good qualities totally attained. Lama Zopa Rinpoche once advised a Geshe (Doctor of Buddhist Philosophy), who wished to study this topic, that Geshe Doga, out of all the Geshes around, be requested. In this weekend course Geshe Doga, who undoubtedly epitomises the integration of such insight, will share his practical wisdom with us.

*Facilities fee: \$75 (Members \$60) Includes lunch, refreshments and course materials. Please book by calling Wendy on 596 8900.*

## Geshe Doga at Atisha Centre

● Sat 19 and Sun 20

Geshe Doga will be teaching on Patience at Atisha Centre, Bendigo on Saturday evening and Sunday morning.

For more details please ring  
Bernice Smight on (054) 423 686.

## NYUNG Nä Fasting Retreat on Compassion

● Fri 4, at 7pm to Mon 7, (am)

Nyung Nä is an intense purification retreat based on Chenrezig, the Buddha of compassion. Lama Zopa Rinpoche has said that this two day retreat can be more effective than a relaxed three month one. The practice involves keeping the Eight Mahayana Precepts plus, on the second day, additional vows of not eating, drinking or talking for 24 hours. The sessions include praises, prostrations and mantra recitation. The retreat finishes early Monday morning in time for breakfast and work. An introduction to the retreat will be held Friday 4 September at 7pm.

All are welcome. No pre-requisites. To book, phone 596 8900. Sponsorships, offerings, donations greatly appreciated. COST: \$35 (Members \$20) Includes accommodation and meals.

### CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

temporarily obscure but cannot damage the light-giving power of the sun, so too the temporary afflictions of body and mind – our confusion, anxiety and the suffering they cause – can temporarily obscure but cannot destroy or even touch the fundamentally clear nature of our consciousness. Dwelling deep within our heart, and within the hearts of all beings without exception, is an inexhaustible source of love and wisdom. And the ultimate purpose of all spiritual practices, whether they are called Buddhist or not, is to uncover and make contact with this essentially pure nature.

When we have developed our own inner purity, inner compassion and inner lover, we can then see the reflection of this purity and loving-kindness in others. But if we have not contacted these qualities

## Meditation and Reading

● Fri 4, 11, 18, 25, & Oct 2, 8pm

Study Group participants will be presenting this special series of five evenings to which everyone is invited. The first four evenings will consist of prostrations and preliminary prayers followed by a guided meditation on how to generate the altruistic mind of enlightenment. Then we will take it in turns to read from Shantideva's famous text *A Guide to a Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. We shall then share tea and refreshments while discussing issues raised by the meditation and reading. On the fifth night we shall perform a Guru Puja with Geshe Doga.

All welcome. There is no charge.

## Study Group Tenets seminar

● Sun 13, 10am–4pm

The third of four seminars. Tenets are the delineations of the systematic schools of Buddhist thought.

The seminar's format combines open discussion, mediation and brief presentations. All participants are encouraged to take an active part.

Facilities fee \$8 for Study Group members; newcomers free.

within ourselves, we will see everyone as ugly and limited. For whatever we see every day in outer reality is actually nothing more than a projection of our own inner reality.

The existence of this deep, essentially pure nature of mind is not a matter of belief or blind acceptance of dogma. It is a matter of experience. Countless people throughout history have discovered this great treasure of peace, love and wisdom within themselves. And countless great teachers and guides have skillfully shown others how they too can discover their own deepest nature, and experience the unsurpassed happiness this discovery automatically brings. Among these exceptionally kind spiritual guides is Shakyamuni Buddha, and the aim of all his many teachings and methods is the fulfilment of our highest human potential.

CONTINUED NEXT MONTH

NOVEMBER

## Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche at TI

### KALACHAKRA INITIATION

● Sat Nov 7, 2pm–7pm  
Sun Nov 8, 2pm–8.30pm

COST: \$110 (Members \$90) Includes supper, refreshments and materials.

### KALACHAKRA COMMENTARY

● Monday to Friday  
Nov 9–Nov 13, 10am–10pm

COST: \$280 (Members \$225) Includes refreshments and materials.

### WEEKEND COURSE

### 3 PRINCIPLES OF THE PATH

● Saturday & Sunday  
Nov 14 & 15, 9am–5pm

COST: \$170 (Members \$135) Includes lunch, refreshments and materials.

A brochure for the entire Tour is available by calling the TI Office on 596 8900. Preferential seats are filling fast. You can phone through your credit card details to Wendy on 596 8900.

## Congratulations to Sue Young

The Australia Tibet Council has just appointed Sue Young to the post of Treasurer. Sue, all your TI friends and fellow Members wish you good key punching and lots more counting. (The beans are in the mail.)

And congratulations to the head Hunters at the ATC for bagging yet another top TI scalp.

If you are not already a Member of the ATC, why not follow His Holiness' advice and join today? More information is available at TI.



# Letter from an unhappy (ex-?) reader

We received the following letter addressed to the Editor. No return address or phone number were included so we could not reply directly. However, we feel the writers genuine concerns should be addressed for all to consider.

Dear Editor,

*I am writing in response to your article in the July 1992 issue of the Tara Institute News – the look back to 1984 under the heading 'The Curse of Money'.*

*I was looking forward to attending TI on a regular basis until I received your first newsletter. In notice after notice about different classes one can take to progress on the path to enlightenment, there is always a demand for payment, usually ranging in price from \$5 to \$75 or above. When I read these articles, I get the feeling from your organisation that "if you want to become enlightened, then join, pay up or forget it". Your organisation sounds more like a social club than a place that reflects what the Buddha was all about. In reading about his life, nowhere did I see that he asked for money first before allowing people to hang out with him and his disciples. In fact, didn't he say that his disciples were not to handle money??*

*In saying this, I don't mean to imply that money is not needed to run anything. It's a fact that life is no free lunch. And I see that by being up-front in the demand for money you all weed out the low-life, the freeloaders and the hangers-on and wind up with dedicated people who are willing to support their religious club with money because they're obviously getting something out of it. And, in addition, it enables you to send out your free newsletters. If the tone and frequency of your requests for money weren't so demanding, I'd be happy to come down and join and contribute my time and money on a regular basis. Until then, though, I guess I'll just stick to my Buddhist textbook and try to practise (sic) it on my own. It seems to work just as well – and nobody harangues me for money.*

*Sincerely yours,*

*Shannon J Mewton.*

Dear Shannon,

Thank you very much for your letter. It arrived too late for last month's News so I can only hope you haven't stopped reading.

As was raised in our July News, your letter once again highlights the kind of pain many people suffer when 'money' is connected to Buddhism. I sincerely regret the offence I have created.

There is no point in debating the first? impression you have of TI because it is clearly a bad impression and it's obviously very real for you. It's interesting to note though, that of the nine events publicised in the July News, only three asked for money in any way. In other words, there were twice as many free events as there were fee events.

You are right that TI is a bit of a "social club", however I'm not sure there isn't a good and valid role for community feeling in a Dharma centre.

I realise you were upset but I want to make it clear that we certainly do not ask for money before people can hang out at TI. It's open every day and you are welcome to come down to talk, read or meditate – there is absolutely no charge. We don't try to weed people out, either.

You raise some other key aspects of the Buddha's life which I'd like to address. I don't believe he had any restrictions on lay people handling money – at TI it's the lay people who are responsible for the administration and for making sure their is enough money to keep TI afloat.

Let me assure you, no matter how it may appear to you, the purity of the Buddha's teachings are as essential to Tara Institute as they are to you. It's just a question of how literal you intend to be. For instance, are you dismayed that we do not follow the Buddha's instructions to beg for clothing and for food every day? It's very difficult to see how we at TI could live harmoniously in our neighbourhood if we tried to do that. How should we treat the matter of facilities for the people who come to TI – facilities like shelter and warmth, phones, electricity, toilets, public risk insurance, fire safety, refreshments and so on? What should be done about temples and gompas, for instance?

We are just a bunch of people who have banded together to ask teachers to come here to help us. We are not great ascetics. We crave a bit of physical protection while we try to listen to and follow the advice we are generously given. We are volunteers

who do a little more than we need to do – so a few extra people can enjoy what the Centre offers. That's how TI has grown. When people stop coming, when not enough support comes, then TI will close and the teachers will leave. That's all.

Though it may be badly communicated in the News, the most important aspect of the Buddha's instruction is followed very strictly at TI. Our teachers are supported by the community, but they do not get paid to teach. They do not get a commission on the numbers they teach nor are they paid by the hours they teach. They do not so much as ask for money.

No matter how imperfectly the Centre is administered, no matter how clumsily I write – please have no doubt our teachers practise the Buddha's words purely and continuously.

Without doubt, many questions arise for every person who sincerely wants to apply the Buddha's 2,500 year old advice to today's life. It certainly isn't easy.

In Melbourne and throughout the West, funding difficulties abound because our local culture doesn't support Buddhaharma as it did in the past in the East.

Our local culture is bombarded by all kinds of charities fund-raising all the time. And charities are forced to employ sophisticated, expensive fund-raising professionals because they are asking the same few people to support them. For Buddhist support, the few are even fewer.

So Buddhist fund-raising itself could become yet another minefield which may well cause new, perhaps more damaging, offence to many.

How can we raise the essential funds which provide the level of regular teachings and which bring eminent teachers to our door – without causing any offence? It's a two or three edged sword. Some don't like being asked to contribute an equal share towards the costs; others don't like being asked to donate.

And the banks won't lend us money on our karma.

Once again I apologise for giving you such a bad impression of TI and I ask you to please reconsider – at least come down and have a look at what we do for others, then decide if its worthwhile or not.

Editor