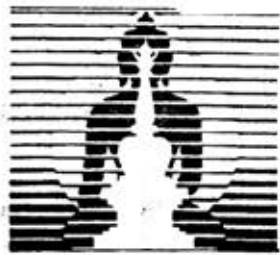


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Tara Institute News

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OCTOBER 1991

First Healing Course a success

The intensive Healing Course, conducted in August by Lama Zopa Rinpoche specifically for people with life-threatening illnesses, was an historic first for Tara Institute. It was a tribute to the strength of our resources and highlights the community rôle of our Centres.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche wants our experience at TI to be used as a model for healing courses throughout the international network of FPMT Centres. To this end, we are reviewing the Course and preparing information kits. We are arranging follow-up care for the people who undertook the first Course, and we're planning the next one for early next year. General meditation classes and counsell-



Medicine Buddha (Tib. Menlha Desheg)

ing for people with health problems are also planned.

We dedicate this newsletter to an overview of this landmark event.

Sönam Jampa

Tara Institute Program Co-ordinator

INSIDE

*Vajrasattva
Initiation and
Commentary*

October Weekend Course



**TARA
INSTITUTE**

is a branch of the FPMT - Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition - a network of Buddhist Centres in Australia and around the world.

The pathway to health

TI's Healing Course was an overwhelming experience for everyone - participants, health care workers and helpers - according to Alison Ribush, Director of Tara Institute.

"From the moment the Healing Course brochure went out, there was a lot of interest from both health care workers and from people who are ill," she said.

"Although it's generally accepted that meditation helps people to relax, and to become more positive (which helps the healing process), most people don't know how to start.

"We were able to show that meditation is a technique which calms the mind

and develops feelings of peace. It's not necessarily just a relaxation exercise.

"It was a wonderful opportunity for TI to help people who are unwell and who are suffering so much. They came to TI not just for mental stimulation but for real Dharma."

The key to all this, according to Lama Zopa Rinpoche, is love and compassion. Alison quotes from one of Lama Zopa Rinpoche's recent teachings:

"Even if you are a Buddhist and know all the sutra and tantra teachings by heart, if your heart is empty of compassion, if you do not have a generous mind

towards other sentient beings in your daily life, still there is no mind-peace."

"By helping with the healing program at TI," said Alison, "one can really practise Dharma in an effective way and relieve others of some of their suffering."

Len, 42, has had MS for around 10 years and for the last 18 months the disease has made more demands on his body. Len has been involved with yoga for 15 years which has helped him tremendously because the virus affects balance and concentration. He described his experience to Adèle Hulse:

continued overleaf

continued from front page

"When I'm relaxed I'm more centred. I have to be very careful about being around chaos. I've had to learn to turn off from it and relax. Pace is very important. If I have to hurry anything it affects my condition very much. The main message about pace is 'being in control.'

"I met Buddhism and Lama Zopa for the first time in this Course. I cherish his ability to laugh like a child and in a split second, turn to concentrate on what he has to do next. I find that hard to do.

"I had been taking my disease very internally, I was very focused on it. Since the Course I can let myself go by thinking of every other sentient being. That really helps because it takes me out of myself and gives a strong sense of healing just because I'm including everyone else.

"I need practice in getting to grips with the meditation. I need help with it. I'm really looking forward to the follow-up group. I need that.

"I've always woken up happy in the mornings, but now, when I do mantra at night I wake up with something more than happiness – I feel contented, comforted. I feel quite whole. The mantra makes me feel in control.

"You don't die of MS, you die with it. I enjoy fun, life has to be fun. Not humorous or nonsensical all the time, but fun. Especially when you've had the opposite you realise how precious fun is. To see Rinpoche's face breaking into a full smile is... like hearing bells ringing!

"It was a perfect course in every way and the food was fantastic. There was touch. Every morning Ken (Ven. Ken Hawter) would touch me, but it was not invasive, not hugs. Rinpoche holding my hands was so wonderful, such a caress.

"Rinpoche gave us all very personalised tasks. He told me to make ten little stupas. I don't understand that formula, what it's all about, but there's trust that he knows what he's doing and that

there will be great spiritual and physical help to do it for everyone else."

Bob Sharples' work at the Yarra Valley Living Centre brings him into constant contact with many ill people, many of whom have terminal diseases

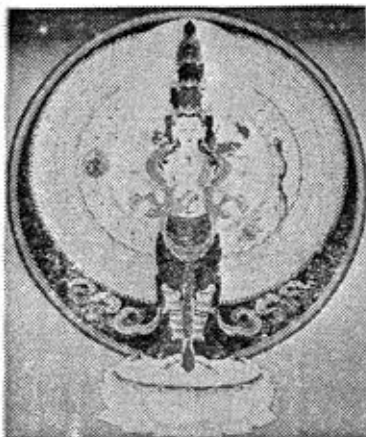
"I was particularly impressed throughout the Course by Lama Zopa Rinpoche's incredible teachings on love and compassion, his detailed attention to the individual, and his very clear message that the path to recovery and wholeness was through that practice of altruism," said Bob.

"As well as giving extensive teachings, Lama Zopa gave detailed instructions for a number of meditative practices. Each participant had extensive personal contact with Rinpoche and he gave them individual practices, advice and Tibetan medicines.

Fasting Retreat on Compassion

Sunday evening October 27
to Wednesday morning October 30.

A Nyung Nā fasting retreat will be conducted over this period for Lha Bab Duchon, the anniversary of Buddha Shakyamuni's Descent from Heaven. It is an extremely powerful time for performing a Nyung Nā which is a strong purification practice based on the Buddha of Compassion, Chenrezig. Such short intense retreats are very effective for clearing the mind this allowing deep compassion to arise.



The thousand-armed form of Chenrezig

The retreat proper, led by Richard Garward, begins at 5.30am Monday.

Cost: Residential \$35 members, \$40 non members; non residential \$20 members, \$25 non members. If you would like to sponsor someone to do this retreat on your behalf or would like to make an offering, please mark your donation *Tara Institute Nyung Nā Fund* and give to the office.

● Please book by contacting Wendy in the office on 596 2465 by Friday October 25.

Spiritual Program Resource Group

Is it for me?

Following Geshe Doga's advice we are seeking nominations for various volunteer positions so that we can keep our ever-growing program rolling.

Perhaps you would like to help *EITHER* as a co-ordinator *OR* member of a management team. A range of jobs exist, from making pots of tea through to managing tours. You *may* like to help for one month, three months, etc. Co-ordinator rôles can also rotate. All this is open to negotiation. No genuine offer refused!

JOB AREAS

Introduction to Buddhist Meditation; Study Group; Geshe Doga Evening; Debate Class; Sunday School - Kids' Programs; Weekend courses; One day courses; Healing Course Meditations; Pujas; Initiations/gompa ritual; Gompa Care; Taping/Archival; Newsletter; Bookshop; Library; Tours; School talks/visits.

If you would like to help, please contact Sönam Jampa or Kaye Miner on 596 2465 for further details. Written job descriptions on each area are available. Please think seriously about this important request and the deep value of making Dharma available to others. And if everyone thinks it is the next person who will do it, then nobody will come forth and I will age prematurely – not a pretty sight!

Sönam Jampa, on behalf of the Tara Institute Program.

these practices are ancillary to the essential practice of transforming the mind into one of love and compassion.

"We've noted ourselves at the Centre that the cancer patients who make a good recovery are those who look most deeply at the meaning of their lives, and use their disease as an opportunity to get unstuck and to make major life changes."

Gail, 39, had never tried meditation before she got the disease two years ago. After surgery, she changed her diet and went to a spiritualist who was a great help. "He was into re-incarnation but not as animals".

Gail discovered the Course through her sister. "She saw the ad in the paper and knew I wanted to get more into meditation. So she rang up and thought 'Tibetan Lama, that sounds good'. She knew I'd enjoy it.

"The book Lama Zopa gave us, *Trans-*

forming Problems, was great. The first few nights I read it and kept up well. But then I got too tired to read at night and fell back a bit and then what Lama Zopa said just went right over my head.

"I didn't take notes. I wanted to meditate. The meditations I had in that place were so beautiful, you can't imagine. I can't describe it. It was magic.

"But then you get home and the kids are great, but it's busy and later on that magic just wasn't there. But it was so helpful. I don't forget it.

"There isn't a single thing I'd change about the course except I wish it was longer. I can't say how wonderful all the people were. It was incredible how well we all got along together.

"I've never done mantras before. I enjoy them, they make me feel good but I'd like to know what mantras mean. I'd like to know a lot more."

For Healing Program Co-ordinator Jill Gillies the Course was "one of the most moving experiences of my life.

"The main feature was Lama Zopa Rinpoche's presence. He was exquisitely gentle with everyone, some of whom were not familiar with Buddhism at all.

"Some personal issues about practising what one preaches came up for me. Here we were setting up a course for terminally ill people, yet I could worry about a runny nose.

"It was wonderful to watch ill people, who had had no experience of meditation and what it could achieve, blossoming like flowers. Their bodies visibly became healthier and they looked happier."

The team spirit that pervaded the Course was fantastic. The residents, too, showed great co-operation and respect for the healing environment that the team was setting up.

The real healing

by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

Extract from the Healing Course.

The purpose of my life is not just to solve my own problems but to free each person who wants happiness and separation from suffering. This is my purpose for breathing, for being alive, every hour, every minute, every second. Such a purpose is as vast as the sky.

I must free those who are obscured and prevented from experiencing the highest peace of mind, the perfect state of peace, full Enlightenment. To be able to bring each to this peerless happiness I must develop the qualities of wisdom and compassion for everyone, generate the inner qualities necessary to progress on the path. In other words the whole purpose of my life is to heal everybody's body and mind from every single problem together with its causes and to bring these beings into the state of everlasting happiness. The definition of the ultimate healthy state is the state of having a perfect body and mind free from every danger.

The reason for healing the mind by developing inner wisdom, method and compassion, is none other than being able to do service for others. For this purpose I need a long life and a healthy body. It is

to be able to benefit others, that I am doing this healing course.

The best way to find real happiness in life, achieve the greatest peace of mind, the best satisfaction and mental enjoyment is to dedicate one's own life for other sentient beings. If we make our own life beneficial for others then it doesn't matter whether we have personal problems or not as our aim is to give meaning to the lives of others. Even if we have diseases, relationship problems and so forth, we can use them as a path to obtain happiness for ourselves and others. This is the way to use problems to heal body and mind. But of the two, the most important is healing the mind. Though medicines may cure the physical disease, they can return. As long as the mind is not cured the danger of disease remains. The mind keeps creating the same action with the capacity to make us physically unhealthy.

It is the mind that produces problems such as disease. It is also an internal mental cause that creates the external conditions that bring the problems. On the other hand, if there is no inner mental cause, then even if outside phenomena exist with a capacity to harm, they cannot function as endangering conditions.

For example, an epidemic disease may become rife in a particular place. Yet even though the majority of people get sick, colds whatever, there are always some who don't. This is a common experience.... Laying down in the sun is said to give skin cancer. But if exposure to sun were the main cause then EVERYONE who lies down in sunlight would become skin cancer victims... that only some develop this problem proves sunlight itself can't be the MAIN cause. Therefore the main cause is not outside but is inside the mind itself.

The internal cause is a particular way of thinking involving disturbing thoughts. Its opposite is a healing mind which involves a different and non-disturbing way of thinking.... just as we take external medicine to cure the physical disease, we must mentally purify this inner cause of the problem.

Here we are just talking words, blah, blah blah - but the real healing which actually comes from one's own mind is wisdom and compassion. The motivation for doing this healing course is to benefit everybody.



WEEK ONE

TUESDAY 1

8pm Study Group

WEDNESDAY 2

8pm Evening With Geshe Doga

THURSDAY 3

6pm Guru Puja

8pm Lam Rim Meditation

SUNDAY 6

10am Debate Class

WEEK TWO

MONDAY 7

8pm Intro to Buddhist Med'n

TUESDAY 8

8pm Study Group

WEDNESDAY 9

8pm Evening With Geshe Doga

THURSDAY 10

8pm Lam Rim Meditation

SUNDAY 13

10am Sunday School

10am Debate Class

WEEK THREE

MONDAY 14

8pm Intro to Buddhist Med'n

TUESDAY 15

8pm Study Group

WEDNESDAY 16

6pm Tara Puja

8pm Evening With Geshe Doga

THURSDAY 17

8pm Lam Rim Study Group

FRIDAY 18

8pm Guru Puja

SUNDAY 20

10am Debate Class

WEEK FOUR

MONDAY 21

8pm Intro to Buddhist Med'n

TUESDAY 22

8pm Study Group

WEDNESDAY 23

8pm Evening With Geshe Doga

SATURDAY 26

10am Vajrasattva Initiation

2pm Vajrasattva Commentary

SUNDAY 27

9am-5pm

Vajrasattva Commentary

10am Sunday School

Evening Nyung Nä - 'til 30th

WEEK FIVE

MONDAY 28

8pm Intro to Buddhist Med'n

TUESDAY 29

8pm Lha Bab Du Chen Puja

WEDNESDAY 30

8pm Evening With Geshe Doga

OCTOBER PROGRAM

Introduction to Buddhist Meditation

Monday Nights

October 7, 14, 21, 28 at 8pm

This month the first two of our popular series of introductory classes will be led by Michael Dunlop and the other two by Dr Tony Hammond, both members of the Tara Institute Study Group for some years.

Each evening will consist of guided meditations, discourse and discussion. These classes are ideal for those wishing to learn about Buddhism and its meditation techniques.

● A facilities fee of \$5 per night is asked to help cover administrative expenses (Members free). Just turn up at 7.45pm or contact Wendy on 596 2465 for further information.

Study Group

Tuesday October 1, 8, 15, 22 at 8pm

The Study Group is designed for students wishing to develop a deeper understanding of the principles of Buddhist practice. The enthusiasm of over 60 students who attend each week shows how popular these teachings are.

● New students are welcome to 'sample' the Study Group at any time. Please ring Wendy on 596 2465 for further details. There is no facilities fee for the classes.

Lha Bab Du Chen Puja

Tuesday October 29 at 8pm

One of the most important days of the Buddhist calendar will be celebrated with a special Cittamani Tara Puja. In order to repay the kindness of his mother and to liberate her, Buddha Shakyamuni spent three months in Tushita Heaven where she had been reborn. There he was able to teach Dharma to her and many others. This major event (known as Lha Bab Du Chen or Buddha's Descent from the Pure Realms) marks the last of the four great yearly festivals related to his life, when the effects of negative and positive actions are multiplied a million times!!!

Geshe Doga has asked that students attend the puja with the intention that through partaking in it, all obscurations will vanish and our understanding increase. Members of the Study Group are asked to attend and bring offerings for the puja.

● Please ring Wendy on 596 2465 for details.

Evenings with Geshe Doga

Wednesday Nights

October 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 at 8pm

On Wednesday nights, Geshe Doga shows us how we can apply the timeless insights of Buddhism to the problems and difficulties of life in this 'degenerate age'.

The Meditation Chapter of Shantideva's Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life used by Geshe-la focuses on topics such as developing concentration, overcoming attachment, and in particular, the development of the compassionate mind of bodhicitta.

● These classes are suitable for all. New students are always welcome. There is no facilities fee. Please ring Wendy on 596 2465.

Lam Rim Meditation

Thursday Oct 3, 10, 17 at 8pm.

Oct 3: Samsara's Suffering, Renunciation

Oct 10: Generating Bodhicitta

Oct 17: The Six Perfections

The special seven week series of Lam Rim meditation classes conducted by the Study Group ends this month. Each evening two students present a particular topic from the Lam Rim.

● Please ring Wendy on 596 2465 for details.

Vajrasattva Initiation and Commentary

October 26-27 Weekend

● (see insert for details)

AUSPICIOUS DAYS IN OCTOBER

Tibetan 25th - Thursday 3 Tsog

Tibetan 30th - Monday 7 New Moon Precepts

Tibetan 8th - Wednesday 16 Tara Day Precepts

Tibetan 10th - Friday 18 Tsog

Tibetan 15th - Wednesday 23 Full Moon Precepts Tuesday 29 - Lha Bab Du Chen Precepts