



Tashi Choling Dharma Foundation Inc. Newsletter Summer 2007

ZASEP TULKU RINPOCHE



Tashi Choling Dharma Foundation has a long-standing relationship with the Venerable Zasep Tulku Rinpoche, a meditation master of the Gelugpa Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. Rinpoche received his training under some of the most competent Buddhist masters in Tibet prior to the Chinese invasion of that country. Later on in India he graduated from Varanasi Sanskrit University with an Acharya degree and spent 18 months in Thailand at the request of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He first came to Australia in 1977 and taught for three years before leaving for Canada. He has established Buddhist centres and taught throughout North America. Rinpoche has also been the Spiritual Director of Dorje Ling Retreat Centre (formerly Illusion Farm) in Tasmania for many years. He is recognised as the 13th incarnation of the great Kagyu teacher Lama Chabdak who lived in the Kham region of Eastern Tibet and founded Zuru Gompa 600 years ago. Rinpoche is known for his gentle compassion and good humoured wisdom.

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TASHI CHOLING DHARMA FOUNDATION

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Web site < www.tashicholing.net >

Our regular meditation meetings are held at 7.30 - 9.00 pm every Tuesday above Gould's Naturopathica in Liverpool St Hobart. All welcome.

2007 PRESIDENTS REPORT

This is being written in Sydney a few hours before we leave for a pilgrimage to India with Zasep Tulku Rinpoche. I am going to be brief.

2007 was a wonderful new year of energy for Tashi Choling Dharma Foundation. We had a remarkable influx of new, and in many cases, young, committee members. Our meetings became very productive and even, dare I say it, social events, with the end of the 'empty meeting room' feeling some of us remember from earlier years. I would like to sincerely thank all those committee members who participated this year and hope that the new growth will continue into the future. This turning marks a very important phase in the long-term viability of Tashi Choling, and especially of Dorje Ling Retreat Centre.



We may, collectively, now be able to bring this precious jewel back from the brink ... sounds familiar ... a bit like the task humanity faces on the world stage.

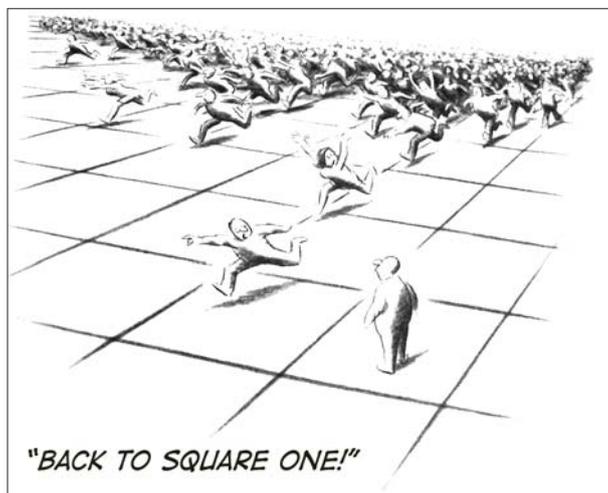
Tashi Choling hosted some great retreats and many people benefited from these. Khandro-la, Maurice Oliver and Tarchin Hearn all provided wonderful and inspiring opportunities for practice. Thank you to all those who helped organize these events. This is one of our core reasons for being.

I would like to invite all current committee members to consider returning to committee next year and also invite a re-shuffle if anyone feels strongly about taking on any of the named positions.

I am about to embark on a long dreamed-of adventure and would like to remind you all that this very moment and life is an incredible event and one not to be mistaken for ho-hum normal. This is the real tantric practice ... to experience the extraordinary in the so-called ordinary.

All the very best to you all and I hope to see you next year.

Have a great summer! Love - Guy Turnbull



2007 AGM

The AGM of Tashi Choling Dharma Foundation was held on the 4th of December 2008.

The new committee make-up consists of:

President: Sue Willey

Vice-President: Stuart Lord

Secretary: Chani Grieve

Treasurer: Kate MacNicol

Other elected committee members: Guy Turnbull, Chani Grieve, Keith O'Hara, Maria Grist, Pamela Mears, Kirsten Mayer, Anna Crotty, Beth Chamberlain.

TASHI CHOLING MONTHLY PROGRAM

1st Tuesday of every month (N.B. - The first Tara practice of 2008 will be on the **second** Tuesday, January 8th)

Practice of Green Tara — Green Tara is the embodiment of that aspect of awakened mind which manifests as compassionate activity. This energy of compassionate activity is available to each and every one of us and the practice of this sadhana helps us to bring that forth within our own mindstream. Green Tara is said to be the most accessible of all the "deities", a protective energy and presence that is available to anyone who calls upon it. Born from a teardrop shed by Avalokiteshvara, or Chenrezig, she is the active, compassionate and skilful response to the depth of suffering in the world. Sadhana practice is led by senior sangha members.

2nd, 3rd and 4th Tuesday of every month

We will be presenting a varied program, sometimes a teaching, sometimes a discussion, and sometimes a recording of a teacher, along with a time for meditation practice.

THOUGHT TRANSFORMATION: TAMING THE WILD ELEPHANT

*“Though the pernicious mind, like a wild elephant, is difficult to tame
You have controlled it with the sharp hook of mental alertness.”*

— From the Long Life Prayer for Zasep Tulku Rinpoche

Lo Jong, the word, Lo Jong is a Tibetan word. Lo means ‘mind’; Jong means ‘training.’ ‘Mind training,’ or you could say, ‘purifying the mind.’ ‘Cajoling the mind’ or ‘purifying mind.’ This teaching is Mahayana Buddhist teaching.

According Mahayana, when we practice Mahayana teaching we experience a sense of gentleness towards ourselves and compassion for others. So the Lo Jong teaching says that it is very important to be gentle to ourselves: to learn how to be gentle and how to be kind to ourselves. At the same time how to be kind for others and how to practice compassion, the karuna. Karuna is the Sanskrit word for compassion. So that actually also means ‘the noble heart’ or ‘good heart.’ We cultivate good heart, noble heart, and this means we are willing to commit ourselves to working with all sentient beings. So when we say, Lo Jong, ‘training our mind,’ we try to kind of make some kind of commitment ourselves to working with all sentient beings.

So this is not easy, working with all sentient beings. Before we actually launch into that project of working with all sentient beings first we need to do lots of training. Training the mind, purifying the mind and meditating on the mind. Trying to have, and trying to develop, an understanding of the mind, our own mind, and how it works. How do we actually we think? What do we think in our everyday lives? What are our concerns, what is our attitude, and so on? To look inwardly and make observations; to see and meditate on it; to practice mindfulness and awareness of the mind. Like a Vipassana-type of meditation, or you could say Mahamudra-type of meditation, to observe our mind.



So then, when we observe and meditate on our mind, we find out how much sympathy we have towards other beings. Or we can also find out how much sympathy we have to ourself. And so we find out these things. And we also find the obstacles to becoming a Mahayanist, and we find out the obstacles of becoming what you might call true Buddhists or good Buddhists

– Zasep Tulku Rinpoche

Excerpted from a teaching at the Golden Blue Lotus Tara website, <http://community.palouse.net/lotus/default.htm>.

ZASEP TULKU RINPOCHE RETREAT 2008

look for flyer and poster inside this issue

THE HEART OF AWAKENING

(From Daily Puja, compiled and adapted by Tarchin Hearn)

Recognising that the experience of awakening is not something read about in books or learned from others but something realised and manifested in each moment of my life; for the rest of this day, I will cultivate the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

(Awareness of body, awareness of feelings, awareness of states of mind and awareness of all other phenomena).

Frequently I will pause to breathe mindfully and recontact a mode of being which embodies simplicity, openness, clarity, connectedness and caring.

I will endeavour to bring a continuum of compassionate awareness into all my life's activities.

Frequently I pause
Mindfully I breathe
Simplicity, Openness, Clarity
Connection and Caring
Flowering forth.

(Sitting quietly with awareness of breathing for at least five minutes.)

KHANDRO THRLINLAY CHODON RETURNING TO TASMANIA

After visiting Tasmania this year for the first time, during just her second visit to Australia, Khandro Thrinlay Chodon is set to return in March next year. Khandro-la will be giving a number of public talks, conducting a sunrise puja at Truganini reserve, as well as a candlelight puja for removing obstacles and the dead. Khandro-la has a beautiful singing voice and one of the public talks will be built around the songs of Milarepa, with whom her family and lineage have a strong connection.

Those children who were fortunate enough to make it to the Easter Retreat this year have many wonderful memories and Khandro-la was keen to spend time with more children on her next visit, so there will also be a special picnic with children's activities in the Royal Botanic Gardens. In addition there will be a fundraiser for her Khachodling projects which includes supporting a nunnery in Zanskar.



Khandro Thrinlay Chodon was born in Lahoul, which is known in the dharma texts as the 'Land of the Dakinis'. The daughter of Apo Rinpoche and Sangyum Urgyen Chodon, she was born into a family of great Tibetan yogis renowned for their extensive and pure practice. She has been trained since childhood in the practices of Vajrayana Buddhism, and grew up in an environment where spirituality was an integral part of everyday life.

Khandro-la has a B.A. in Psychology and an M.A. in East-West Psychology, the latter obtained after study in the U.S.A. She has also trained and practiced with many other great Dharma teachers, including Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, and is the widow of the Shabdrung Rinpoche, head of the Bhutanese Drukpa Kargyud lineage. Khandro-la provided invaluable input to Tsultrim Allione's book *Women of Wisdom* and is currently devoted to bringing to life her long time vision of Khachodling.

See schedule below, visit khachodling.org or phone Sue 6265 7387 or Dianne 0432 954 587 for more details.

Khandro Thrinlay Chodon in Tasmania 2008

Friday 7th March, 7.30pm
Love and Compassion in Daily Life
Hodgkin Hall, The Friends School,
23 Commercial Rd, North Hobart.

Saturday 8th March, 7.30am
Morning Shamata Practice and Riwo Sangchod incense burning Puja
Truganini Reserve, Mt Nelson Signal Station, Mt Nelson.

Saturday 8th March, 7.30pm
Khachodling Fundraiser
Upstairs at Sirens, 6 Victoria Street, Hobart.

Sunday 9th March 2.30pm
Working with difficulties - emotional & psychological issues and Buddhism
Hodgkin Hall, The Friends School,
23 Commercial Rd, North Hobart.

Sunday 9th March 7.30pm
Candlelight Puja for removal of obstacles and for the dead
Tashi Choling Dharma Centre,
2nd Floor, 73 Liverpool Street, Hobart.

Monday 10th March 12 noon
Picnic Lunch and Children's Activities
Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens,
Queens Domain, Glebe.

Tuesday 11th March 7.30pm
Songs of Milarepa
Tashi Choling Dharma Centre,
2nd Floor, 73 Liverpool Street, Hobart.

WORKING BEE AT DORJE LING

– Australia Day Long Weekend



Come and help put some energy into the centre which has been a source of energy for so many people in the past, and hopefully many more into the future. You are also welcome to lend a hand anytime in January if you can't

make it on that particular weekend. Contact Kirsten on 0413 535 950 for more details on working bees.

GYUTO MONKS



The Gyuto Monks will be visiting Hobart again in 2008. We are in need of volunteers to help organise this visit, which always has great benefit and is very popular among both the local Buddhist and the non-Buddhist community. Their chanting and sand-mandalas are sublime, not to mention their wonderful teachings and workshops. Please contact Pamela Mears if you can help – email pamela.mears@education.tas.gov.au or phone 0427 348 766.

PILGRIMAGE TO MT KAILASH

My first response to the invitation made so carefree and spontaneously by Beth to make a pilgrimage to Tibet ... was fear filled. Too old, too slow, I'll hold everyone up, what ifs and that was that. Two months later striding to work, the realisation struck that I had cast off the best invitation to adventure in years because of trivial concerns. I was on my way, powered by the prospect of adventure rather than pilgrimage. Unlike many of my fellow travellers I was yet to discover the significance of Mt Kailash to Buddhists all over the world especially the Tibetans: the opportunity to wipe the karmic slate clean, make heartfelt and sincere prayers for a good rebirth. I felt my time had come and being beautifully supported at home, hung up my parental hat and stepped out the door. I couldn't have been more overjoyed to be swept about by the tides of the global travelling community at Bangkok airport. Me, a minority amidst all those chadors, exotic complexions, robes and holiday makers, I couldn't help but feel all those deluded fears I'd been fed in Australia, that do more to separate than unify, fall away.

Of course the preparation for this travel ignited the inward journey making. Doubts and fears arising and falling, culminating in a dream. I was managing a community centre that had been battered by massive storms, threatening the roof and walls. Grief stricken I'm thinking I will have replace the whole building, when I register the wooden floors were indeed solid. The walls then fell off the building and all about me and yet the bigger than normal power lines miraculously remained attached. Needless to say the message was clear. Its OK, the foundations are solid, let the walls and ceiling fall away, you are firmly connected to the source of power. That dream seemed to say so much to me, the significance of what it meant to make a pilgrimage externally to Tibet and inwardly to myself.

It's not difficult to feel deepened by Tibetans. The few days spent camped in accommodation attached to the Gyentsen Monastery in Kathmandu saw us immersed in maroon, early morning chants, golden light and bells ringing. Glorious mornings inhaling the perfume and flavours, we joined the big family that is the Tibetan diaspora and others circumambulating the Boudanath Stupa. Standing watching was a complete joy: an ocean of humanity in all forms, malas and dress, the old and even older, nomads newly arrived, families, traditionally dressed, young people in hipsters and tee-shirts, beggars, babies, children dogs and pigeons all began and ended their day making prayers and reciting mantras, just as they have always done. All of those faces reflecting a story, a story of a life disrupted, in exile, hearts yearning for a homeland out of reach. To feel that community, I had a resonance deep within that this was the way we should be living together, immersed and enmeshed in the fabric of our shared lives, shared in prayer, aspiration, celebration and faith.

So many images delight: sitting on the Stupa, a favoured place of contemplation. I so loved the young nun fulfilling her commitment to untold prostrations. Heavy robes bunched around her waist, a strong muscular torso drenched in sweat, so concentrated and rhythmic. Up down slide and back again. And again. Pause for a moment, hands on hips to engage in hearty laughter with fellow sister prostrators, followed by back slapping and then back to business. Always joy, always heart.

It would be easy to romanticize Tibetans. Already I felt the sombreness and seriousness of their situation within Tibet, the oppressiveness and restrictions of Chinese rule was palpable. People felt fearful of the repercussions of doing the wrong thing, being in the wrong place, not having permission.

Travelling in a large mob like we were, five Tibetans drivers and guide, five beautiful Nepalese as the trekking company and 16 westerners. There was ample opportunity for miscommunications, differing agendas and ways of resolving conflicts. Despite the tension and challenges that came with attempting to have everyone's needs met, we all reflected our own inner struggles with our own particular baggage. The Tibetans who were dealing with their own issues, job insecurity, low pay, distance from family and hardships on the road and dealing with us, never made it personal. The poorest of road workers, working in miserable conditions, earning barely enough to feed themselves, extended generosity and kindness of heart that belied the suffering in just getting by. Tibetans, at least in the west where we were, seemed worse off in some ways,



greater poverty, begging, scant medical facilities and schools only in the bigger town, in Chinese, and only if you could afford it. The population of Chinese now in Tibet is greater than the Tibetans. Towns and settlements have popped up where there was none before. Grasslands are fenced, restrictions are placed on permitted numbers of yaks, sheep and goats and villages, once sustainable are heavily taxed. Valiant efforts at roadworks crumble under the constant erosion, meanwhile one can't help but be impressed at the sight of the telecommunication lines traversing the landscape, intact and permanent. One for the military and the other, civilian use.

One can't travel in Tibet and not feel what has been lost. Loss of freedom and culture, language and history, pride, the ease to cross a border, to move where you wish, the loss of families, monasteries, traditions, teachings, the Dalai Lama and hope. Yet in spite of this the Tibetans I met still showed this propensity for openheartedness, the fundamental tenets of Buddhism, kindness and compassion. Like the old woman bent cripple but not broken, propped up by a little huddle of children, who stood taller than her ... old body

bearing the pain of an incarnated life, her look and murmurings to me so gentle, so loving. Like the four beautiful nuns carrying nothing more than a little food, hurtling up and down the slopes of Kailash, wrestling my pack off me to lighten my load, laughing all the while. Like the endless streams of kindness bestowed on us weary staggering westerners, climbing the rocky scree, breathless at 18,000 ft, cooing, singing, belting out encouragement, smiling and happy for them and us to be there.

I felt us all in the Pure Land ... the kora of Kailash that takes Tibetans young and old, one long hard days walk, beginning and ending long after the moon had set. For us, a leisurely six days camping by rushing mountain streams. This place that is both a metaphysical and actual centre that connects various planes of existence, the chakra of the world. The magnificence of the place was so completely astounding. The vastness of space always left me feeling the landscape to be forever receding, just out of grasp. I got the big picture. Mt Kailash, Kang Rinpoche. Jewel of the Snow, sitting so many millions of years old. Rock-solid. Old, towering, soft edges, four sided. Over yonder the elusive, jagged, knife-edges of the Himalayan range. Ice rock, plates still shifting, shovelling and splitting mountain peaks into the snowy heavens.

From Kailash radiate four of Asia's mighty rivers: the Indus, Sutlej, Brahmaputra and the Karnali (a major tributary of the Ganges). How wondrous to witness the eager trickling beginnings of these life-giving rivers: to walk, cross and *be* with so much life force. Always the thinness of air and reduced oxygen assisted in stripping away the superfluous, the habitual baggage I seem to be so fond of. What a relief! The choice between breathing or thinking. It feels so simple: breathe it all into space. On a good day I loved it, rose to the occasion, revelled in being so pared back, reduced to elementals: to be so bone weary at the end of another big day in Tibet. What to do but relish the preciousness of this life, this time and this body and feel utterly blessed.

– Kate MacNicol



Does money equal happiness?

You may think the question is rhetorical – or even facetious, but how often do we hear in the media that more money is the key to alleviate suffering? Every social, political and environmental problem we tackle, seems to have a “bottom-line”. It is all smokescreen, of course. It has only ever been the kindness, compassion, skill and dedication of sentient beings that will alleviate suffering. Money is a convenient excuse – when we are short on compassion, we pretend we are short on money. Government sets a particularly poor example in this regard.

We love commerce! Indeed, we may not be able to have a society without it, so money is a convenient way to exchange energy, what we can afford. We only agree on the face value, the money itself is worthless. (During the Great Depression of 1932, many currencies were not worth the paper they were printed on.)

Money has no inherent existence. (You knew that!) Even less than this – it is a mental construct that temporarily energises some brain cells. No more than a thought ...

So why do we give it so much attention, praise and scorn? Perhaps, like many other intangibles – love, honour, worship – we are inspired by its power to move us, and to move mountains.

Every one of us has personal capital. Are we not worthy? How do you invest your worth? Will you contribute to Gross National Happiness? You will probably agree that this “bottom-line” is more precious than all the wide-screen plasma home theatre units in (non) existence! We work to increase our personal worth – so choose to spend it wisely.

At Tashi Choling, we are all Buddhist practitioners (last time I checked, anyway). By sharing our personal capital, we have created an opportunity to practise together, to maintain a beautiful retreat centre and to welcome teachers who can shine a light on the path. You are contributing to that investment with your subscription, donations and

regular pledges. A wise investment, don't you think? If this works for you, please consider contributing more, and encourage your friends to invest too.

Every investment involves risk. Relax! We are good risk managers. Let us share that risk together with each small, regular contribution that we make.

I would like to welcome the TCDF Inc. newly elected Treasurer, Kate McNicol, whose firm hand on the financial helm will steer this fine vessel through many obstacles to find safe harbour. Welcome Aboard!

– Keith OHara (a.k.a. Anand)



GREAT GIFTS AND WISH FULFILLING JEWELS – OUR CHILDHOOD OF DHARMA

I was flicking through a photo album the other day that my mum [Sue Willey] had put together of Tenzin's and my childhood, a kind of brief history of my life in pictorial format. It starts at birth, pictures of my first few days, a bundle of blankets and sleep. Then photos of being taken home, which at the time was Illusion Farm, Lorinna. Dad had a huge bushy black beard and Mum was smiling with long straight hair and a woollen shawl, both looking the picture of hippie parents living in the bush.

The album continues, featuring some of the other kids living at "the farm", whom I would grow up with, play with, learn from and form lifelong friendships with. Most of them had funny names too! And there were the adults – surrogate parents, role models, playmates and mentors.

You see, it's not a very normal childhood to grow up in a community of people seeking spiritual awakening, but so much of my childhood was spent at Lorinna and places interstate hanging out with the other kids while our parents meditated and spent time with Zasep Rinpoche. We didn't really understand what the adults were doing, and looking back now I don't know how they sat peacefully with us screaming around the gompa paddock, completely oblivious with childish joy. When we were invited into meditation sessions, some of the gestures and seriousness of the adults would have us in uncontrollable laughter, the kind of irreverence that only kids can get away with. What were those funny hand movements? And what did all those strange words mean?!

Rinpoche loved having kids around and we loved him, his cheeky laughter and gentle nature. We would play music, tell stories, paint, draw, perform plays and theatre and then share them with Rinpoche and the adults. We would also have kids meditation with Rinpoche, where both we and the occasion were made to feel really special.

Being at retreats meant trampolines, bushwalks and snake watching, swimming at the lake and covering ourselves in mud, appreciating the preciousness of life and all sentient beings, running around having a grand old time, and eating our weight in peanut butter and milo. Most importantly, we were allowed the space to be kids. Occasionally we would have to be reminded to try to be quiet while people were meditating, but kids memories are like goldfishes when it comes to having fun! Our creativity was celebrated and our friendships nurtured.

Being a child in that environment you are unaware of your spiritual development. There are questions without answers, mysteries that only time can unravel, hardships and heartaches, and all the while you are being shaped by your experiences, as unknowingly and innocently they percolate into your being and into your becoming. It is only now that I can look back and appreciate what a rich and unique upbringing it really was. My role models have been people who are deeply committed to spiritual practise, awakening in action, wisdom and compassion for the benefit of all beings.

For me, Lorinna and Dorje Ling is home and all the people who have passed through it are family. There is a connection that is inexplicable but incredibly strong. All the kids are my brothers and sisters, and the "adults" teachers, mentors, parents and now friends. It is difficult to describe how incredibly precious these connections have been and will always be, and I feel so blessed to have this network of love and support as my history.

And now when I am on retreat, sitting in the gompa listening to kids playing outside, I smile to myself with gratitude for the energy and joy they bring to the retreat environment, reminding us that there is always time for laughter and fun.

May there always be kids on retreats!

– Chani Grieve

