



Tashi Choling Dharma Foundation Inc. Newsletter Summer 2012

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 recognized 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.

Dear All

Happy New Year. i wish you all the best during this year of Dragon. i hope everything is going well with you and your family. i had wonderful 4 month 108 spring Chod retreat in Mongolia last summer and fall. i look forward to be with you in April 2012 for 3 week Yamantaka retreat in Darwin.

Many Blessings

Rinpoche



PRESIDENT'S REPORT AGM DEC 2011

The end of another year for the organisation, and opportunity to reflect yet again on all that has occurred, inevitable change, successes and learning. Thinking back to this time last year, we were already in the midst of three amazing weeks of retreat at Dorje Ling with Zasep Rinpoche. For the first time we held two retreats alongside each other, with 10 days of Lam Rim in the gompa, led by a number of older students, and three weeks of Vajrayogini commenced in the yurt led by Rinpoche. Rinpoche was so generous to us older students, really trusting us to hold the Lam Rim mandala ourselves, and only coming to the gompa when we invited him to do so. And entering the yurt with its scarlet paintwork felt like entering the womb, being birthed at the conclusion as Vajrayogini. This time was really special too, for the ceremony held on the hill acknowledging the ancient indigenous spirits already sensed by so many attending retreats there over the years, but now with full intent inviting them to join with us in our ongoing endeavours there. Rinpoche promised a three month retreat there in 2013. Who knows whether this will manifest – the one thing I know is that you can never settle into any sense of certainty where Rinpoche is concerned.

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QR
CODE
for
mobile
devices

Rinpoche's visit was followed not long after by ten days of "Liberation Through the Body" with Leander Kane, and then two weeks of retreat with Tarchin Hearn. And somewhere in there Andy squeezed in two months of solo retreat in the Teacher's House. It was certainly a full summer, with these retreats interspersed with more than the usual number of working bees to build new bedrooms, finish the shower "ship", and further clear the centre of the flotsam and jetsam of past decades of history. So much so that thoughts of holding a second sangha-led Easter retreat dissolved as everyone felt the need to rest and recuperate. Everyone had worked so hard.

The committee has worked hard again, meeting monthly, organizing what happens at both Tashi Choling and Dorje Ling, and providing regular newsletters to all on our mailing list, far and wide.

In Hobart, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings continue, with a dedicated group of people undertaking the teaching. We have trialled a different approach to Tuesday nights with leaders undertaking month long blocks of teaching on particular subjects, to give those attending a greater continuity as well as to allow themes to build and develop as the month goes by. We also held two Adult Ed courses on Introduction to Buddhism and Meditation, but with changes to the Adult Ed system, including a 40% hike in fees, the third term did not proceed and we are unsure whether these will continue in 2012. We are instead thinking about how we might do this in other ways.

At Lorinna and Dorje Ling, Easter saw a caretaker handover, with Todd leaving to return to the UK (for about a week as it turned out) and Jack and Evelin stepping in. Easter is a glorious time in Lorinna, time of celebration of harvest and community. I am lucky enough to have made it on to the invitation list for the harvest feast and it is one of the best nights ever. I recommend to everyone to give Lance and Olga a call to receive your invitation for next year's feast. You won't be disappointed. A few of us were at Dorje Ling over Easter so we celebrated Todd's departure with a bonfire party for the Valley, with not one but two bonfires. Thanks to Todd for his extraordinary grace under pressure as he shopped and drove people to airports at five minutes' notice during retreats, cared for Andy in solo retreat, as well as the rest of use during working bees, and so much more.

Winter and Spring have been quieter at the Centre, with a variety of people making the journey to Dorje Ling for weekends and short retreats. Jack and Evelin have filled the centre with their caring presence and it is such a joy to go there and see the veggie garden in full glory, and to be welcomed with fires burning and house prepared. We are so lucky to have them there. They were also joined for two months by Abigail and Raven Star who braved the very heart of winter to try the joys of assistant caretaking, and have left *Beyond* cabin a much nicer place to be as a result of some of their efforts there. As mentioned elsewhere, numerous working bees were held over the last twelve months, and four new bedrooms are now built onto the purple house, the yurt is powered, the solar power system is upgraded with the battery bank renewed and moved to the caretakers' house and a hydro system to be completed to augment the solar, *Beyond* has been improved, a new road has been built into the centre, a dam has been constructed, and almost immediately filled, land management and landscaping is ongoing, new walking tracks have been carved through the surrounding forest, the vegetable garden is producing, and a new bathroom/kitchen on the caretakers house is partially completed. I'm sure there's more. It's been busy, and many, many people have contributed. The committee is currently exploring the possibility of the caretakers undertaking the role of attracting user groups sympathetic to the values and purpose of the centre. The aim is to make better use of the significantly upgraded facilities and so generate a more sustainable income stream for the organization.

This also marks the end of four years for me as President. I'm not sure whether some or any of you realize but shortly after first taking on the position, I was also offered a job working in the Kimberley, and in the time I spent in that place meeting people and having a look around, all that I could hear in my head was Rinpoche's profuse words of encouragement, saying to myself and some others how pleased he was that I was President. It really felt like he had handed me the task. How

could I possibly take that Kimberley job, no matter what my dreams of working in remote community were? So here we are four years later and now able to hand that task on to someone else... I have consistently said that I firmly believe that people in positions should regularly change, both for the sake of the organisation and for the sake of the individual concerned. So I am greatly relieved that someone else this year will step up to the role of President.

There are many people to thank for this last year. One of the glorious things about this organization is that it provides a vehicle through which so many are able to contribute their special gifts and talents in the service of dharma and the awakening of all, making bodhicitta manifest. The effort would be the poorer without every single person and every single act of generosity of time and energy, talent and good will. Thanks are due to everyone on the committee, somehow it works, precious and miraculous and never to be taken for granted. Thanks to caretakers, Valley friends who help us keep the centre functioning, everyone who comes to working bees, everyone who gives or attends evening classes or retreats, to those who organize and cook, everyone who organizes or supports fundraising efforts, everyone who makes the newsletters happen, the email network, and to those who read what gets sent, many thanks to those who have become members or who support the mortgage or make donations. Thanks to all the teachers who support us by coming here and making the dharma available. And thanks to each person dedicated each in his or her own way, to bringing the dharma forth in their own lives and in the wider world. This, in the end, is what all the rest is about. It's been a privilege. Thankyou.

Best wishes to you all
Sue Willey



TASHI CHOLING MONTHLY PROGRAM

Tuesday evenings, 7.30-8.45 pm Suggested donation: \$5

February 2012: Starting 7 Feb, Sue Willey, speaking on the “four thoughts that turn the mind towards the dharma”.

March 2012: Guy Turnbull will present a short course on a text known as “The Precious Garland of Tenets”. (Drupta in Tibetan.) This will be based on a translation and exposition by Geshe Lhundup Sopa and Jeffrey Hopkins called “Cutting Through Appearances.” We will examine how the various main schools of Buddhism understand the teachings of selflessness and see how there is an interesting parallel with the theories of Western physics. No previous study needed for attending this course. Bring an open mind.

April 2012: Roger MacLennan, FROM DRAMA TO DHARMA What’s really important in our quest for happiness and ease. Week 1: Why meditate - what does it really have to offer and how can we implement and integrate the techniques? Week 2: What did the Buddha have to say? How can we best utilise his advice? Week 3: What has changed in the history of Buddhism and how does this vast body of wisdom help us now? Week 4: Dharma in the West - Eastern tradition or tuned to our society?

Wednesday evenings, 6:30-7:45 pm : Introduction to Meditation Suggested donation: \$5

An opportunity to investigate and practice simple meditation led by experienced practitioners. Learn a way of finding some peace and centredness in an often painful and busy life. Join us for a regular weekly practice to develop awareness and stability in your daily life. This class is open to anyone at any time. You do not need previous experience in meditation to attend, just curiosity and an open mind.

Introduction to Meditation – These regular courses extend over several weeks, and are intended to provide participants with an introduction to the Buddhist view, with the main emphasis on being able to try out a range of meditations, and having the opportunity to engage in lively discussion. Four or five of us participate as leaders, with each person taking it in turns to lead one evening, but with all of us participating in the discussion and questioning that follows. More details on times and bookings are through **Adult Education**. The funds raised from this course will be put towards the ongoing improvements at Dorje Ling.

Buddhism for Mothers – An opportunity to take some respite from the challenging path of motherhood. Includes Buddhist meditation practices and teachings to enable us to remain peaceful and kind to ourselves and others. Allowing us to cope with the day to day challenges of motherhood with a good heart. These courses are run from time to time through **Adult Education**. Please contact them for bookings. The funds raised from this course will be put towards the ongoing improvements at Dorje Ling. For more details contact Madhu on 0407369012 or madhulilley@gmail.com

Location – All sessions (except Adult Education sessions) are held at the Tashi Choling rooms, Floor 2, 71 Liverpool St, Hobart. Go down the laneway to the right of the building, then look for the door between the two bamboo pots. Continue upstairs to the second floor. All welcome.

TSOG – Upcoming dates based on dark moon being day 1, Australian calendar: **March 2, 17. April 1, 16, 30. May 15, 30. June 14, 29. July 14.**

VAJRASATTVA IN TASMANIA

Zasep Rinpoche spoke to the sangha in Tasmania on his last visit about the possibility of doing a 3 month Vajrasattva retreat at Lorinna in summer 2012/2013.

Vajrasattva practice is one of the four extraordinary preliminary practices in Buddhism in the Tibetan tradition. It is generally regarded as a practice of purification, helping us to clear away the obstacles and deluded views that prevent us from more fully experiencing the full ground of our being.

More recently he has expressed some reservation about it being too big a commitment for people on a lot

of levels, financial, emotional etc. However, before we gave up the idea entirely, we asked him whether, if we had the numbers committed to doing it, would he still consider going ahead, and how many would be a minimum number for that to happen.

This is some of what he said...

“3 month retreat is some what long retreat, people have to be very committed to Vajrayana practice and this retreat could be very hard for some people on emotional level and it could be also expensive as well. I my self happy to make commitment with students who would like to become Enlightened this very life time..... lets say if there are 10 people who wants do 3 month retreat, then that is good

size and good number. I would say I could help them to start retreat in the beginning of my 3 month teaching tour in Australia 2012-2013 ,then I go away do my teachings to other centres; I could come back to check things in the middle of their retreat and return to them at the end of their 3 month retreat. This is something that we could do.....”

If you think this is something you feel you could make a commitment to, please let us know as soon as possible.

We will then be able to advise Rinpoche how many would participate and he will make a decision from there about whether it will go ahead or not.

Sue Willey

FROM ABIGAIL AND RAVEN

We had a wonderful couple of months being up in Lorinna, getting to know the locals and taking part in a more self sufficient way of life. We enjoy bushwalking and loved that there were so many walks to do around the place, many without even having to leave the property. As Dorje Ling is on the north face we got the all beautiful winter sun, watching the daffodils grow from their sleepy hibernation into an explosion of yellow all over the place, we could barely walk to Beyond from the purple house without standing on them, so took to skipping around them instead!

Most sunny days we would chop wood from the trees that would fall from the winter storms, and then cart and stack at various places around the property. We stayed up in Beyond and our main job was to do some much needed renovations and decorating, we converted upstairs into a relaxing meditation space with a beautiful painted mandala on the wall, and planted a fern garden of ferns we saved from the side of the road.

We hope that people enjoy staying there as much as we did and like what we have done for the place.

Love and Light
Abigail and Raven

You sit out
at night
under the stars

The milky way
winding herself
around the
bowl of the world
like a starry shawl
of caring,

And the river
sings in your cells

And the earth scent
floods your brain

And the near zero air
pricks your surfaces
into fresh awakeness

And the mystery
sounds symphonies
of reverence and love
weaving messages
of meaning

This moment
this blessed moment
this always available
intimacy

Illumined in the dark.

Tarchin Hearn

A ROOF FOR THE YURT. AN APPEAL FOR ASSISTANCE.



It has been found that the yurt is needing greater protection from the elements (mainly rain) in its location in the Lorinna valley. The climate is very different to that of Mongolia and with the prolonged exposure to driving rain in winter, the walls of the yurt become very damp and heavy.

It is not practical to take the structure down for each winter as the frame is, in relative terms, quite fragile. This has brought up the idea that we could construct a roof over the whole yurt and in this way prolong its life.

The design is for an octagonal roof with a clear (glass) centre to allow light to pass through the existing plastic dome on the yurt. There will be steel columns (painted red) and a good eave with red guttering to keep driving rain away (and give a way of collecting rainwater). There will be a green colourbond roof of a similar green to the yurt.

The current plan is to do this in two stages as we are too short of funds to undertake the whole project in one go.

We will construct the frame at Easter and then try to fundraise to buy the remaining materials before winter sets in.

Anyone who would like to contribute to this project can contact me. Time or money or both will be most welcome.

The outcome will be a roof that will prolong the life of the yurt and then, in time, will become the roof of a more long lasting meditation hall. We will just need to infill the walls and put down a floor.

Thank you.

Guy. guyturnbull@bigpond.com



Guy Turnbull (right) leads the group in the building of an extension to the Caretakers' Cottage.

TREASURER`S REPORT AGM 12th DECEMBER 2011

Well we got off to the year in Nov. 2010 with a big bang. Retreats at Dorje Ling and urban teachings were held running right through to Easter.

The previous year saw our organization acting on long term aspirations to improve the infrastructure at Dorje Ling, in preparation for Zazep Rinpoche's 3 week retreat, as well as improving the amenities in order to attract other groups and retreatants. A great deal of effort and commitment financially, saw a massive input; the shower block, the kitchen upgrade, building of extra bedrooms, purchase of the yurt as well as the ongoing maintenance of the property. Hence we were in a good position to host such a successful long retreat at Xmas.

The five retreats held by Bonni Ross, Rinpoche, Leander Kane and Tarchin (who visited twice), brought much needed income: a total of \$31,292. Rinpoche's retreat in particular brought in a total of \$21,297. On the other hand hosting retreats with large numbers also costs, particularly regarding catering, food costs, gas, teacher's airfares, retreat expenses, advertising etc. A total for retreat expenses was \$25,450, some \$18,905 being for catering and food costs. This has been a concern for the committee, and action taken place to lower those costs in the future. Gas also has been included in retreat expenses, an increased cost this year at \$2879. As a committee we were very aware that we haven't excess funds to play with and overall haven't come out of this year with much added income, but we did manage to do what we had hoped for, as well as comfortably house many retreatants who fell in love with the place all over again and vowed to return. A very big thank you to everyone who volunteered their time to make this happen. Particular thanks to Guy and Andy who held the informal position of "Property Manager", for all the added time put into planning and ordering materials, which enabled us to really make the most of our limited funds.

Other areas in which we were able to earn income have been Adult Ed courses \$3,360, the raffle \$10,804, the film at the State organized by Madhu, \$1289, Zen rent \$360 (which Roger generously passes on to Tashi Choling), membership \$544, Dorje Ling stays \$302, regular Tashi Choling takings \$1539 and various random donations \$1539. And last but not least, the Community Grant \$9988 which was a fantastic success. Big thanks to Sue, Rob, Catriona and Bart for their leg work and lots of persistence.

The commitment to improving the infrastructure at Dorje Ling continues, with work being done on the Caretakers' house, of which \$5000 was donated expressly for this purpose. Road building/earth works in the way of a dam and new driveway entrance is just one of the items that come under the title of repairs and maintenance, which totalled at \$10,403. Certain items like the purchase of a refrigerator purchased in time for the Xmas retreat have been included in the non current assets and don't show up in expenditures.



We have ongoing annual costs: Insurance \$1,840, Interest on the loan \$4,963, Forestry lease \$1047, Rates \$763, Land tax \$490, Phone \$1362, Web hosting \$192, Internet \$714, Audit Fees \$275, Petty Cash/Caretakers \$600. Also fundraising expenses; printing, photocopying, advertising, and venue hire \$1,922. And there are a few smaller amounts not mentioned.

The mortgage repayments continue to be paid monthly, however most often are falling short. To remedy this situation the committee agreed to place some fundraising monies into the account to provide some buffer. Pledges amounted to \$10,234 for the year, short by \$1,739.60 for the required repayments of \$1005.30 per month. The Committee has brought this to the attention of the wider Sangha via newsletters encouraging making a regular pledge no matter how small. Certainly after Rinpoche's visits the coffers momentarily swell with financial goodwill. These are difficult times for many and the Committee is and has always been hugely appreciative of whatever the larger Sangha is able to contribute. The mortgage at the end of October was sitting at \$106,973.65 remaining to be paid. Out of those monthly repayments in Oct. \$401.15 was interest and \$614.15 in principal. Given that the combined amount in both our accounts at the present is totalling \$8,670, we are where we have been before. Certainly any efforts towards fundraising are to be at the top of the list of priorities; likewise any ventures that encourage more retreatants to Dorje Ling. We are not certain of funds coming from Adult Ed and at this moment no firm commitments from teachers to visit, thus it's time to get creative with fundraising ideas!!

As I bow out from the position of Treasurer it is with pleasure that I am able to pass the baton to George Ramm.

*Kate
MacNicol,
Retiring
Treasurer.
December
2011.*



CARETAKERS' NOTES JANUARY 2012

Dorje Ling is looking resplendent at present. Full summer is upon us along with the migratory bird population and full bloom of plant growth. We have been rather busy trimming things up for the retreat next week. The lawn areas are getting a bit yellowish though, since we had a bit of hot dry spell...

The property has no maintenance issues at present, except one small one with the ride-on mower. I recently changed the wheel bearings due to long term disintegration, now however one of the three blades has snapped. I have been hunting for a replacement, but it is proving to be rarer than a hen's tooth. The age and make, place it in fossil status. I will end up having to get one machined to replace it. The mower still works for the interim with two blades without any imbalance or possibility of damaging the machine further. It just means a narrower cut and 30% more mowing time (hmm).

Early last month we had a community working bee at Dorje Ling specifically to attack the Californian thistle problem down at the dam. It was a small turn out but we slowed the growth. During this working bee Damien brought his tractor and slashed the yurt/Rinpoche house paddock. It was all but cleared due to Damien also breaking a slasher blade.

Sue asked that we purchase dynamic lifter for the nourishment and support of any planted shrubs and trees around the property, along with two lengths of extra heavy duty garden hose and fittings now placed down at the dam tap for watering the existing and future plantings. The large stash of bamboos donated by Andy and Chani that happily await an autumn working-bee planting are watered regularly, too. The ones in the bag seem to do fine, the one in the pot is struggling a bit.

We have spent the full cash amount on the hoses, along with electrical cable, cable clips, power sockets, switches, secondhand copper tubing (excellent bargain), braising materials etc.. For the future there are only a few more items that will be needed to complete the extension to a working standard. This list includes: some copper joiners for the plumbing, the inner lining or cladding (to be discussed with Guy), the sliding door between the two spaces in the room (this may be able to be just a door, if so then there is a suitable door already in storage here), and a few lengths of 2 x 4" pine for boxing in the bath and boxing in a kitchen bench space.

The caretaker's kitchen extension is coming together in fits and starts, due to the summer demands over the remainder of the property. At present the vanity/back wall area of the room is sealed, boxed and installed along with the foundation electrical wiring to the extension. The insulation is in. The next stage will be the plumbing to the vanity, bath/shower, and kitchen sink, along with the gas line for the stove and the fridge. The inner cladding and roof lining along with the kitchen bench space comes after that.

Over the Christmas period George brought up a scanner that had been donated.

We have had a number of inquiries regarding short stays at the centre over the summer, no one as yet has committed. Besides the five solo retreatants and one family, it has been rather quiet. We have Roslyn's retreat, then a booking for one night in early February, then March with Leander's retreat.

We were wondering if there has been any further development with a donated trailer for the centre?

The Garden is now fully set up, no more wilderness! The parts, which have been established a bit longer are looking very lush and sexy. The biggest squash is



Yoga and meditation retreat, Jan 2012

already football size, the pumpkins are bit slower, there is new silverbeet, the first beetroots have been harvested. We have been lunching on nice garden salads, nicely decorated with plentiful Marigold and Borage flowers. The Peach tree (it has nicely recovered from my butchering attempts as well as the Feijoa) is looking very proud now. It has a bug hotel, thanks to George. The hothouse has tomatoes and quite a bit of Basil. The Chilli harvest promises to be plentiful, whereas the Capsicums haven't started flowering yet. There are three experimental Rockmelon plants (there are babies from the rockmelon left here after the working bee, thanks whoever brought it along!) and a few cucumber plants. Outdoors we also have cauli, kale, broccoli, very happy black potatoes, cabbage, chickpeas, climbing beans, bush beans, carrots, leeks, spring onion, various herbs, turnips, kohlrabi, swedes and FIVE zucchini. I believe that for the coming



retreat we might be able to harvest the first baby zucchs! They are just starting to grow and with the warmth they are just rocketing along. I hope that we can substantially supplement the March retreat, at least with lettuce and zucchini. Since this year is entirely dedicated to experimenting and learning the variety is great, but quantities low... But it is great FUN!

So for now

Love and Light

Jack and Evelin

YOGA, MEDITATION AND ARTS: COMING TO OUR SENSES RETREAT.

Dorje Ling, January 2012

We were inspired to offer a Yoga and Meditation Retreat over the January long weekend when we heard that the caretakers had been planting and preparing the land for the first group retreat since their arrival a year ago. We were graciously welcomed. Evelin let go her caretaker role to participate fully in the retreat, while Jack and Guy attended to the practical needs.

Participants came from all directions; Branxholm, in the NE, Melbourne, and the Southern parts of Tasmania. Out of the 12 people present 5 had not visited Dorje Ling before.



Evelin and Jera



Jessica at "Kailash"

All the huts were inhabited, even the Villa, which now has her own access and is awaiting renovations. Retreatants commented that the simplicity and privacy of the huts, and the spaciousness of Dorje Ling enabled them to feel more rested and able to find quiet spaces to contemplate and let go of their worldly lives. Freshly mowed paddocks and carefully tended facilities helped us feel safe and welcomed, thanks to Jack, Evelyn and Damian.

Anna Yoga (yoga of nourishment)

Trialling the idea of running retreats without the cost of a cook, Guy stepped in to facilitate and coordinate the cooking. In his usual passionate love of good food and with the aid of the fresh herbs, flowers and greens from the Dorje Ling garden, meals certainly enhanced our sense of Taste and Sight.



The support from the Lorinna Valley folk enhanced our menu with fresh vegetables, milk, and freshly ground spelt flour sourdough bread each morning. Since Tashi Choling is a new member of the Lorinna Food Coop, we were enabled to buy organic dried foods. We are so grateful to have this facility, and to be able to practically support the Lorinna community.

Hatha Yoga (physical and breathing)

Each day we practiced 2 asana sessions and pranayamas relating to different elements, and systems in the body. Awareness of the breath and mind while in these postures, helped us recognize asana as meditation in action. Jera and Rosie led these sessions.



Arts as an intuitive response to reflect experience.

The intention was to feel these elements through the experience of the practices and specific art activities to heighten our awareness, raise our

consciousness and consider the inner and outer presence of the 5 elements.

We played with the white and red clay, water, charcoal and paint, yantra symbols and Sanskrit seed syllables.



Antar Mouna (noble silence)

For half of each day we held the focus in Moana giving us a precious time to share in contemplation and raise our awareness of our inner processes, honouring others being in their noble silence.

Karma Yoga (yoga of action and reaction)

This daily practice enabled people to give back to the land and feel connected to the place. Stacking wood, kitchen prep, clearing paths, thistle scrubbing. One significant result was the clearing of the space where the old storage shed had been removed, sifting through the shards of past occupation and setting up a site for sacred outside circles.



Raja Yoga (meditation)

Nada Yoga (Yoga of sound)

We shared a fire puja on Saturday night chanting 108 rounds of the Mahamrityunjaya Mantra on that cleared site offering healing to the land, the planet, each other, friends and our wider communities. This offered links with Yoga Centres and devotees world wide chanting this ancient mantra.

Om Tryambakam Yajamahe
Sugandhim Pushtivardhanam
Urvarukamiva Bandhanan
Mrityor Mukshiyā Maamritat x108



"Mahamrityunjaya Mantra (mahamrityun-jaya) is one of the more potent of the ancient Sanskrit mantras. Mahamrityunjaya is a call for enlightenment and is a practice of purifying the karmas of the soul at a deep level. It is also said to be quite beneficial for mental, emotional, and physical health."

Our evening continued with more shared singing, laughter and creative song making: "...Sittin' on this gumpa floor, 35 years or more, watching the thoughts roll in and watch them roll away...I can't do what people tell me to do,..... nothin' ever stays the same"to the tune of *Dock of the Bay*.

Introduction to meditation sessions, morning and evening were led by Rosie and Guy. Walking meditation on the Lake Loop gave people glimpses again of a sparkling lake, the tall forest, the active presence of bird and insect life. Orienting ourselves on the land and locating our hut for the retreat.



Teaching sessions on the Tattwas introduced Tantra as a path to awakening through Yoga. Our practices together shed light on our patterns and habits and our unique perceptions and understanding.

This can enable us to be more empowered to let go of attachments that restrict our whole hearted expression and wise response to each moment. Thus we can continue to celebrate this precious life with kindness and patience.

Thanks to all our teachers in particular Swami Satyananda Saraswati and Zasep Tulku Rinpoche for their spiritual guidance and inspired teachings.

Roslyn Alexander, Jera Conan, Guy Turnbull.

SURVEY.

“72% approve of what they are getting from Tashi Choling and 70% of non financial members would consider being a financial member!”

Thank you for all who took the time to complete our on line survey. We had an excellent response rate with 39 respondents. The results provide great insights and many positive suggestions came from the comments.

To recap the survey was held back in September. The committee wanted to understand the growing interest in Tashi Choling, shown in the ever growing mailing list and to ensure that we were meeting the needs of all the sangha. Using the free online survey tool called Survey monkey, which helped with the coordination and interpretation of results, we asked 9 questions and asked for comments.

The survey was roughly in two parts, the first about meeting needs and the second around involvement. We came away with more conclusive results to the first half than the second half; this was probably around how we asked the questions. You may expect a follow up to this in the near future!

What we did find! In summary the result showed the following;

- 72% of respondents stated that they are getting the information they are after – general information and learning/ teaching information.
- Some newer members (5%) did not get the information they were after.
- Information sharing could be improved around the Tuesday/Wednesday teaching sessions, Visiting teachers.
- The newsletter is universally appreciated (well done to Maria and Rosie).
- 70% of people responding (many long time supporters) are not financial members, though most happy to be.
- 20% of respondents indicated that they are willing to be more involved. Most respondents are involved or are unable to be more involved due to health reasons or living away.

What next! What we need to further explore:

- Membership. The survey indicated 20 potential members, how do we get people to become financial members? Especially when we consider the general happiness with the services provided.
- Teaching sessions. We need explore why this is under utilized, but highly valued. Some comments did indicate that communication was not timely.
- Increase existing activities. The thoughts and suggestions of the sangha are needed. Some did come to light for example, having a light meal before Tuesday night session, a coffee after a session, weekend sessions such as a visit to the Botanical Gardens for a picnic and a sit or more activities like the recent Buddhist Picnic on Mount Wellington
- New participants/ members. New members may need to be mentored into the Tashi Choling Community. The needs and wants of this group need to be explored, such as what we did well, not so well and how to ensure they are still coming to activities.
- Information management.
 - Website. Improve the website to enable for to date information, possible allowing the committee to add information in the way of a blog or twitter.
 - Produce Flyers about Tuesday/ Wednesday sessions could be circulated and left in a Perspex box at the front of the Gumpa.

The committee has had some time to digest the information from the survey and you can expect to see some small changes to how we share information, develop the sense of community that is so highly valued by all and continue to involve you.

George Ramm Treasurer.

THE SECULAR DHARMA

Our teaching article this Summer 2012 Newsletter is an excerpt of a radio interview by David Rutledge with Steven Batchelor speaking on 'The Secular Dharma'.

Full transcript: [ABC Radio National, Encounter November 2011](#)

David Rutledge: This week we're looking at the 'ism' of Buddhism, from the perspective of a distinguished author and scholar, and occasional visitor to Australia. Buddhism is variously described as a religion, a philosophical system, an ethical code, a set of practices, and so on. But none of these descriptions is really in line with what the Buddha taught. Or at least that's the view of Stephen Batchelor, a Buddhist writer and practitioner whose critical explorations of Buddhist texts and traditions have seen him hailed in some quarters as a reformer, and in others denounced as something of a heretic. Stephen Batchelor has been a Buddhist monk in the Tibetan and Zen traditions; he's the author of several books, including *Buddhism Without Beliefs* and *Confessions of a Buddhist Atheist*, and today he lives in France, where he teaches and leads meditation retreats. Buddhism as it's commonly perceived, centres around the Four Noble Truths: life means suffering; the origin of suffering is attachment; the cessation of suffering is attainable; and the way to that attainment is provided by the Eightfold Path, which incorporates Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action and so on. But there's a paradox inherent in the very concept of Buddhist truth.

Steven Batchelor continues.....
I said at the beginning of my talk that the Buddha was the first Process philosopher. He's interested in how things work, how by performing certain actions, you generate certain effects. He's not interested in coming up with a definitive description of reality. This I think is a big problem. We need to think of Buddhism as a process, both individually in terms of the unfolding of our own life from moment to moment, and day to day. This is why I was saying you can't define Buddhism, there's no essence to it. It is like a wave, a modulation, and when

it impacts with other systems, other wave systems like Chinese culture let's say, then the interaction of the two generates what we call Chinese Buddhism. And this of course is utterly in tune with the primary ideas of the Buddha himself: everything's changing, everything is conditional, everything's contingent, everything's imperfect, nothing has any essence - Buddhism too. In fact perhaps the very word 'Buddhism' unfortunately, suggests something fixed, an 'ism'. There is no equivalent in any Asian language to the word 'Buddhism', it's a Western invention. 'The Buddha Dharma' is much better, because again, Dharma suggests law, not necessarily process, but certainly something that's not an 'ism', a fixed set of doctrines. Although many Buddhist traditions, in a sense, try to fit some kind of definition, and want there to be an orthodoxy, because that underpins authority. It's always this tension between the two. I would actually question another dogma of Buddhism, and that is that Buddhism has as its goal the cessation of suffering, or the alleviation of pain. I don't think that's the goal of Buddhism. I think this business of the stopping of suffering is a vestige, or a hangover from the classical Indian religious aim of achieving liberation from the cycle of birth and death - in other words, the cessation of suffering. It's not an exclusively Buddhist thing at all. Arguably all traditions are about the ending of suffering. Christianity, as long as you do good, after you die you go to heaven, the end of suffering. Is that Buddhism? Well, obviously not. Again, going back to the text, the Buddha's talking not about achieving a particular goal, he's talking about how we can live in this world in a way in which our lives flourish in all aspects. And that starts, not with getting rid of suffering, but embracing suffering, by opening our minds and our hearts to the reality of suffering. That is the basic emphasis I think, in Buddhist meditation. The importance of suffering lies in the fact that it's the starting point for a deep personal transformation, and how it would relate to ourselves in the world. And now here I'll cite a non-Pali text for a change: Shanti Deva, 8th century Mahayana Indian Buddhist monk. He says 'If the Buddha identifies with the suffering of all beings, then how can he possibly be happy?' How can he possibly experience joy if he has this empathetic openness and identification with the world, with the suffering? It's a very different picture to this idea of getting out of birth and death, getting into this blissful Nirvanic state, being permanently happy with a great big smile on your face. And I think the current emphasis or interest in Buddhism because it's the happiness religion, I think is also a big mistake. It fits our indulgent, hedonistic Western preferences if happiness becomes the goal. I don't think happiness is the goal. No, I think the starting point for the Buddha is opening your mind and your heart to Dukkha, to pain, and not shying away from it, and becoming more and more conscious of how you relate to it, how much of your behaviour is basically a reactive denial of suffering. It's a movement away from, rather than a movement towards. And if we don't start there, then I think our practice will largely become rather self indulgent.

Another question from the audience had to do with the objective authority of Buddhist teaching as a way of describing the world. Stephen Batchelor: I do feel the authority of Buddhism is not the kind of authority we would look for, let's say, in science. Because Buddhism as a practice, as a spiritual practice, is not concerned with objectivity, it's concerned with subjectivity. And this is perhaps what marks it out as religious, is that it is concerned with the subject, it's concerned with things that cannot be measured in kind of objective way. And again, I'm dubious - I'm uncomfortable, let's say - with the idea that if you can read the brain patterns accurately enough, you can find out which pattern corresponds to enlightenment; I'm very dubious about that. I think that approach is highly questionable, and I think one should be careful not to reduce Buddhism to a kind of technology. One of the problems in the West is that we tend to think that Buddhist meditation is a technique, without really registering the implications we have when we use the word 'technique'. In other words, technique is very much a language of technology. In German it's clearer: das Technik, technique. And I was really interested by Heidegger's work on this, his awareness of how the Western (or the modern) mind is somehow framed within the paradigm of technology - and Buddhism I'm afraid can easily be sucked into that. And sometimes, I'm afraid, Buddhists almost reinforce that view. They like to present Buddhism as an effective technique for reducing suffering: 'you've got a problem? OK, here's a technique, it's called meditation, and it's very effective. You do it right, you'll get rid of suffering'. That I think is, again, in reducing Buddhism to a technological strategy, a kind

of a self-help process that has almost claims to have a kind of quasi-scientific reliability. 'If you go through these steps of the path, you are guaranteed to end up wise and compassionate'. I don't believe that. I think you can master all the techniques of meditation and remain just as screwed up as you were before you started. So authority, I feel, has to lie within a spiritual, religious approach to life, as one that is beyond the reach of objective assessment. We have to acknowledge that authority needs to come from experience. But that experience in Buddhist tradition is not an isolated, private thing, it's something that is always embedded in social relations. One of the expressions I think that suggests this very strongly, is when the Buddha describes his awakening, and he says 'This Dharma, I have discovered, is sensed by the wise.' He uses this expression a lot - 'sensed by the wise', 'praised by the wise', 'condemned by the wise' - which I take to understand that such an experience or insight, somehow needs to be acknowledged and validated by human community, which has values of wise and foolish. It needs to somehow be registered, not just in your own private subjective experience - where of course, as we all know, we're capable of endless self-deception and delusion, and there's all manner of people who run around saying 'I'm enlightened, listen to me', and usually when somebody says that, my alarm bells ring very loudly. Very loudly. Because again, enlightenment has been reduced to an inner state. The description the Buddha gives of enlightenment, it's not reducible to a private inner state, some privileged consciousness in which you somehow gain access to the way the universe ticks, or the nature of reality, or the absolute, the mind of God or something. That's absolutely not what the Buddha says. Instead he describes a process, he describes a way of being in the world. The Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, implies relationship, work, speech, acts, it's never a purely private experience - and yet Buddhism has tended, through its history, to reduce the experience of awakening more enlightenment to something purely private. So I think yes, we do need to recognise and achieve, as it were, kind of subjective convictions, but they also need to be workable and functional and honoured and acknowledged in the social world. Another term I think we really have to re-think, is this word 'practice'. Usually when you ask a Buddhist, 'What's your practice?' I suspect people will name a spiritual exercise: 'My practice is Zen'; 'My practice is insight meditation'; 'My practice is Vajrayana Buddhism'. That I think is reductive. The closest word we have in Pali or Sanskrit, for 'practice' is the word bhavana. In Tibetan that's translated as *gong*, which does literally mean 'meditation', or is used to mean meditation. *Bhavana* in Theravada countries likewise has come now to mean meditation. In other words, the same thing has happened: the word 'practice' has become reduced to doing specific spiritual exercises on a regular basis - and then you try to bring your practice into the world as kind of the next step. But the Buddha seems to have understood the word 'practice' to embrace every aspect of the Fourth Noble Truth. So bhavana, since it applies to all eight aspects of the Eightfold Path, is far more than just doing some meditation exercise. The way you see the world, the way you think about it, the way you talk, the way you embody your actions in the world, the way you work: all of that is practice. So I wouldn't say that the discussion we're having now could not be practice. I think it is, it's the practice of - hopefully - Right Speech. I very much want to invest the word 'practice' with far greater range than it currently has. So yes, my meditation in the morning is a practice, but also my work in the office is a practice, the way I communicate to my children is a practice. It's all practice. Life is practice. I don't mean that in a sort of glib, sort of superficial way at all. I think it's just as difficult - perhaps even more difficult sometimes - to speak truthfully, clearly, honestly, to think clearly, rationally. Critically, perhaps. I think the Buddha was a very good example of a critical thinker. He didn't suffer fools gladly, as we say. He could be very sharp and cutting at times. That was his practice.

A full transcript of this talk is available here: [ABC Radio National, Encounter November 2011](#). Also there is a new book in our library by Steven Batchelor, see right.

RECENT ADDITIONS TO THE TASHI CHOLING LIBRARY

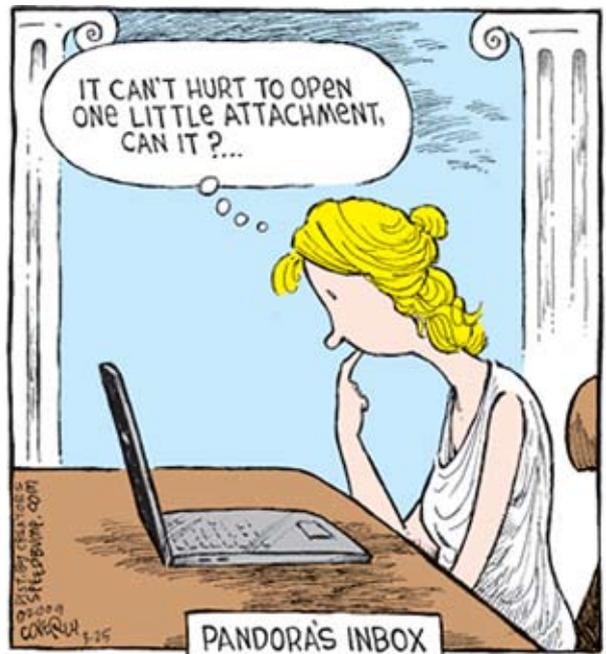
The wish-fulfilling golden sun of the Mahayana thought training
Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche
No. 1548

Stepping into Freedom: An Introduction to Buddhist Monastic Training
Thich Nhat Hanh
No. 1546

The Social Face of Buddhism: An Approach to Political and Social Activism
Ken Jones
No. 1542

The Heart of Buddhism: Practical Wisdom for an Agitated World
Guy Claxton
No. 1538

Buddhism without Beliefs
Stephen Batchelor
No. 1537



WISH LIST FOR DORJE LING

Trailer, Native Plants

Kitchen items: Blender, Food Processor, Electric Beater, Spice Grinder, Coffee Grinder, Juicer, Rolling Pin, Sharpening Stone.

The wonderful mystery called BODY

16th-25th March 2012

Residential retreat with

Leander Kane

Our bodies hold the key to profound healing. All of our past experiences – physical, mental and emotional – are stored in the body, becoming habitual patterns. During this retreat we will innovatively explore body using gentle movement sequences which free the body of its habitual patterning, allowing our natural wisdom, beauty and strength to emerge. Through paying close attention to the experiences of the physical body, and learning to recognise all qualities that may arise - clarity, openness, centeredness, groundedness, the easing of pain or brightening of mind - a deep healing is able to occur. This focused, mindful way of working allows surprising and sometimes amazing transformations to take place.

This can be both our path of self-healing and the means by which we can be fully and compassionately present to support others in their healing in a very real way. This work is suitable for people of all ages, and those with no prior experience working with the body. For those with an established movement practice (eg yoga, qi gong, massage) this work will add a new and inspiring dimension.

When: 16th-25th March 2012 (arrive 15th)

Where: Dorje Ling Retreat Centre (NW Tas)

Cost: \$580 waged/\$540 concession + dana

If wishing to come just for a few days: \$60/day + dana



Leander Kane is an inspiring and innovative teacher with many years experience. She has developed this unique and direct way of “Healing of the Whole Self” over 20 years, weaving seamlessly her deepening wisdom through meditation (many 3 month retreats) with her considerable skills as a Feldenkrais Practitioner, massage therapist and Kum Nye (Tibetan form of body healing) explorer. Participants in Leander’s retreats enjoy the freshness of her approach, her playfulness, and her supportive, compassionate presence.

A word on Dana.

Dana is a pali word meaning generosity. Dana is a financial contribution made to the teacher to support their work and livelihood.

Dana is Leander’s sole source of income so please give as generously as you are able.

TASHI CHOLING DHARMA FOUNDATION

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