



Tashi Choling Dharma Foundation Inc. Newsletter January 2004

TASHI CHOLING DHARMA FOUNDATION 2003 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

What a year!

Firstly let me thank most sincerely all those tireless committee members who have given so much time this year. Especially to Sue Willey who is leaving this year to take up a Caretakers position at Wangapeka in New Zealand. Go well Sue and hopefully a happy return in the not too distant future.

The following is a short summary of the main events that spring to my mind in this busy time. Please forgive any important omissions that are due to a slightly stretched brain pan at present!

Dorje Ling Retreat Centre.

The ongoing efforts to gather the necessary funds to purchase Dorje Ling Retreat Centre at Lorinna was probably the overshadowing theme of 2003. This effort required much dedication and soul searching, not to mention cash searching, from a small group of hard working people. We are greatly indebted to all those who helped in this effort and I believe that our faith and energy will be rewarded with the continuing unfolding of this beautiful home for the Dharma. Special mention must be made of Katie McNichol who has made it possible for this purchase to happen.

A recent Yoga/Meditation retreat led by Roslyn Alexander was well attended and brought rapturous praise of the place, and people who have worked to keep it going, from the delighted retreatants. We are currently looking for a Caretaker and many on the retreat echoed the wish that they could be in a position to take on this task. I believe it will not be too long before some lucky person(s) takes on the position.

Visiting Teachers and Retreats.

We started the year with a visit from Tarchin Hearn and Zasep Tulku Rinpoche. Both teachers gave wonderful, inspired teachings and all who attended were enriched by these. Later a visit from Bonnie Ross included well attended public talks and not so well attended weekend retreats. All her teachings were profound and well received and even the kicks up the backside were most useful!! We are learning some important lessons regarding the need to take deposits and organise our catering and other details ahead of time and with the necessary clarity to make sure the maximum benefit is realised from these rare opportunities.

Tashi Choling Activities.

The regular Tuesday evenings at Tashi Choling have developed nicely this year with an alternating program of one week of practise (usually simple sitting and walking meditation) and one week of study. The beginning of the year saw us studying The Uttaratantra Sutra Alamkara. This is a teaching given by Matrieya Buddha through Asanga and transmitted to us by Zasep Tulku Rinpoche and the wonders of modern CD recordings. I can still recall going with Vishi to buy the CD Player for this purpose. In that context, how precious are the teachings that turn our awareness of the inevitability of death into a spur for awakening.



PO Box 593, North Hobart, TAS 7002. Room 1, 2nd Floor, 71 Liverpool St, Hobart.

Meditation time: Tuesday evenings, 7.30 pm - 9 pm.

Contact: Maria Grist -< info@mariagrist.net> or

Guy Turnbull <guyglass@southcom.com.au >

Dorje Ling web site < www.dorjeling.go.to >

We then moved on to the study of the Lam Rim Chenmo (The Graduated Path to Enlightenment) by Tsong Ka Pa. We are coming to the final two topics and this will complete a worthwhile year of gathering together.

Gyuto Monks Visit.

The Tashi Choling committee was also asked to assist with the visit to Hobart of the Gyuto, Monks. In the past we have auspiced these visits and in this case we helped with some financial donations and assisting in small ways to generate awareness and help lift attendances. Next year will be the 10th anniversary visit of the Gyuto Monks and we will help in any way we can once again.

Passing of Vishi.

One of the big events for us as a Sangha this year was the passing of our dear friend and for some their Teacher, Vishwananda. He was such a character and wise fool (in the best tradition of crazy wisdom teachings) and his passing was bright and clear. Many people celebrated his life and times with a marvellous funeral and wake. In fact, the whole week turned into the Vishi Festival of Life, Death and Laughter. Go well dear friend. May we meet again and again as long as sentient beings need a pebble in the shoe or a grin to wake them up.

Guy Turnbull

REGULAR MEETINGS.

Our regular meetings are held at the Centre, above Gould's Pharmacy, on Tuesday evenings, from 7.30 to 9 pm. Currently we are alternating weeks of meditation with weeks of study and discussion.

OUR CONSTITUTION.

The Constitution of the Tashi Choling Dharma Foundation Inc. is now available on our web site. Go to www.dorjeling.go.to and click on the About page. Here you will find the link to the Constitution.



Zasep Tulku Rinpoche (2004) in Mongolia, visiting his teacher, the incarnation of Trijang Rinpoche

Poem by Zasep Tulku Rinpoche:

So many people in this world don't know what they are missing
If you practise meditation every-day you will see the world better and safe place to be
Dharma practice makes our life more meaningful and we appreciate life more
Dharma practice helps to transform all obstacles into blessings
Dharma practice is your best friend
Without Dharma practice life is empty somehow
Your Dharma practice will always look after you in this life, the bardo, and next life
You have nothing to lose if you practise Dharma except your delusions and suffering
Why not practise meditation as much as possible

TCDF OFFICE-BEARERS. 2004

Guy Turnbull	President
Monica Brigit	Treasurer
Margaret Steadman	Public Officer
Maria Grist	Secretary
	(Correspondence)
Cathy Hope	Secretary
	(Minutes)

ELECTED MEMBERS.

Annie Willock, Roslyn Alexander, Ian Taylor.

MEMBERSHIP - FINAL REMINDER!!!

Become a member of Tashi Choling Dharma Foundation. Membership costs \$30/\$15 p.a. Memberships fall due 1 December annually. (This is your FINAL REMINDER - if you haven't paid for 2004 already - this will be the LAST newsletter you receive.) If you donate money towards Dorje Ling, you are automatically a member and need not apply. (But please still notify us if you wish to receive your newsletter by email!) Fill in the form below:

NAME

ADDRESS

PHONE

EMAIL

I would prefer to receive these newsletters by email.

I do not want to be a member or receive the newsletter, but I would like notification of visiting teachers.

(Send with your payment to Tashi Choling Dharma Foundation Inc., PO Box 593, North Hobart. TAS, 7002.)

Touching the Earth in Six Prostrations

from an unfinished article on Refuge and the Ground of Being
by Tarchin Hearn



“I bow in all times and directions to the magnificence of creation.”

Have you ever had the courage to admit that you try to find refuge in an extraordinary range of temporary fixes.

Perhaps you try to find refuge in shopping, in maintaining power, in being loved; refuge in your bank balance, in relationships, in physical sex, in an idealised body shape. Perhaps you look for refuge in travel, in eating or in any one of the myriad addictions that are so rampant in today's world. Or do you try to find refuge in philosophical beliefs or outward religious practices. All of these attempts are doomed to failure. They may provide a temporary rest, a momentary lull in the driven-ness of seeking, but these infinite mirages of refuge are undependable. They are all subject to loss.

In a sense, the only real refuge, the only dependable “place” from which we can never fall, is the ground of reality. It won't let you down. As a Sufi saying goes, “It doesn't matter how fast you run, or how hard you dig your heels in, you can't get away from your own two feet.” Well, no matter how fast you run or how hard you dig your heels in, you can't get away from the totality of being that is manifesting this present moment. From this perspective, refuge is the goal, the practice and the fruition of all Buddha Dharma. The knowing of refuge is certainly much more than a ritualistic prayer at the beginning of a class or meditation.

The following piece of writing is part of a larger unfinished article on refuge and the ground of being. It came out as a breath of inspiration, a sadhana which hints at a fresh way of experiencing. I offer it here, without much elaboration or explanation in the hope that even as an unfinished article, it will inspire some valuable contemplation and experience. If you are unable to physically prostrate, you can, as the Buddha did on the night of the awakening, reach down with your right hand and touch the earth, a metaphor for the ground of being; the ground of clear, spacious, responsive awareness, the ground from which we all came and to which we all go; the ground of becoming in which we are all embedded. I'm indebted to Thich Nhat Hanh and the four great lineages of Tibetan Buddhism, Kagyu, Nyingma, Sakya and Geluk, for inspiring this practice.

Basic Practice

- 1 - Recollecting all my teachers, an ocean of inspiration, I feel your presence within and around me, with deep appreciation and gratitude, I touch the earth.
- 2 - Recollecting the genetic and historic ground of my ancestors, feeling this vast river of talents, with profound gratitude and appreciation, I touch the earth.
- 3 - Recollecting the ecological ground, the matrix of living beings that support this very moment, in wonderment and appreciation, I touch the earth.
- 4 - Realising that myself and these three have never been separate, I touch the earth.
- 5 - Letting go of negativities and clinging, I touch the earth.
- 6 - Radiating lovingkindness to all beings, I touch the earth.

An Expanded Version

1. Standing - feet firmly upon the earth, I soften into my body and explore the exquisite dance of fine muscular adjustments that support this upright posture. Breathing - I move with the tides of air, the ebb and flow, the endless intimate breathing with a green living world. Present - all my senses are open: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and thinking, all vibrantly alive and responsive.

Standing, breathing, present; I open the doors of appreciation to all the beings who have been dharma teachers for me. Lamas, yogis, gurus of many lineages and traditions; artists, musicians, philosophers, scientists, adventurers, writers, educators, social activists, healers, and friends; beings who have inspired the unfolding of my life in the direction of Wisdom and Compassion. I open the doors of appreciation to all the teachers of the past, all the teachers in the present and all the teachers yet to come. I feel your presence around me and within me. You continue to inspire and shape me in innumerable wondrous ways. You are expressions of the very foundation of my being, reminders of what is truly functional and meaningful. Feeling this vast river of inspiration flowing through my body, speech and mind, with deep gratitude and profound appreciation, I touch the earth.

Contemplating in this way, I bring my hands together in a gesture of prayer and touch them to my forehead, throat, and heart, with the mantras OM, AH, HUM. Then I lower myself down to the floor, resting there for a while, physically touching the earth while feeling the union of myself and these myriad sources of guidance and inspiration. On each exhalation I relax more deeply into the ground. After three or four unhurried inhalations and exhalations and I mindfully stand up.

- 2, Standing, breathing, present; I open the doors of appreciation to the genetic and historical river of becoming. My mother and father, grandparents, great grandparents, a beginningless chain of ancestors extending back as far as I

can imagine. I feel the presence of whole societies, peoples migrating across the earth, meeting new challenges, discovering ways of surviving, passing on knowledge to future generations, a river of talents, flowing through as an eternally creative present. I feel your presence in the shape and workings of my body, the dance of my senses, the play of my attitudes, the history of mammalian life, the history of the mystery of living forms weaving the story of becoming that is this planet making itself known, through me and around me. I feel your presence flowing out into my children and my children's children, generations of ancestors yet to come. Knowledges of healing, of educating, of growing food and building shelter, of arts and sciences, of religion and philosophy. Feeling this vast repository of talent and knowledge empowering my body, speech and mind, with profound wonderment and respect, I touch the earth.

Contemplating in this way, I bring my hands together in a gesture of prayer and touch them to my forehead, throat and heart, with the mantras OM, AH, HUM. Then I lower myself down to the floor, resting there for a while, physically touching the earth while feeling the union of myself and these myriad sources of talent and knowledge. On each exhalation I relax more deeply into the ground. After three or four unhurried inhalations and exhalations and I mindfully stand up.

3. Standing, breathing, present; I open the doors of appreciation to the ecological ground. I feel myself embedded in a vast dynamic ecology of life, an unfolding of myriad interdependent manifestations of intelligent shaping. With each breath I breathe with the green plants. My body, speech and mind are expressions of air, water, earth and radiant solar energy, weavings of becoming, journeyings of atoms, molecules, cells, and organs, a matrix of living beings, bio systems, planets, solar systems and cosmic phenomena. I feel the rivers and oceans in my blood and tears. I feel the mystery of transforming vegetables and animal flesh, the continuous coming into being and passing away that is my body, feelings and thinking. Sensing the beginninglessness and endlessness of everything that is, with awe and wonderment, I touch the earth.

Contemplating in this way, I bring my hands together in a gesture of prayer and touch them to my forehead, throat and heart, with the mantras OM, AH, HUM. Then I lower myself down to the floor, resting there for a while, physically touching the earth while feeling the union of myself and this vast ocean of becoming. On each exhalation I relax more deeply into the ground. After three or four unhurried inhalations and exhalations and I mindfully stand up.

4. Standing, breathing, present; with deepening confidence that myself and these three great treasures, these three faces of the ineffable ground of being, have never been separate in the least; sensing the unbroken wholeness of totality, a seamless un-pin-down-able mystery appearing as the fullness of now; with awe, vitality and presence, resting in the mystery of non-separation, the spacious openness of interbeing, I touch the earth.

Contemplating in this way, I bring my hands together in a gesture of prayer and touch them to my forehead, throat and heart, with the mantras OM, AH, HUM. Then I lower myself down to the floor, resting there for a while, physically touching the earth while feeling mystery of union revealing itself in every moment of knowing. On each exhalation I relax more deeply into the ground. After three or four unhurried inhalations and exhalations and I mindfully stand up.

5. Standing, breathing, present; I recognise how clinging to patterns of body, communication and conceptualising are habits inherited or arising from this same triple ground. Feeling the suffering of clinging, the struggle of trying to make permanent that which is impermanent; feeling the anguish, pain, hopes, fears and confusions of uncountable beings weaving these present patterns of dysfunction and defensiveness in my own being, with courage and determination to uplift everyone, letting go of clinging in body, speech and mind, I touch the earth.

Contemplating in this way, I bring my hands together in a gesture of prayer and touch them to my forehead, throat and heart, with the mantras OM, AH, HUM. Then I lower myself down to the floor, resting there for a while, physically touching the earth while completely letting go, softening in every aspect of my being. On each exhalation I relax more deeply into the ground. After three or four unhurried inhalations and exhalations and I mindfully stand up.

6. Standing, breathing, present; experiencing a vast glow of kindness and interest for every manifestation of life; radiating lovingkindness to all beings of present, past and future, with a deep wish that everyone recognise the true nature of being; with body, speech and mind, I touch the earth.

Contemplating in this way, I bring my hands together in a gesture of prayer and touch them to my forehead, throat and heart, with the mantras OM, AH, HUM. Then I lower myself down to the floor, resting there for a while, physically touching the earth and feeling the healing presence of lovingkindness flowing out in all directions, supporting and nourishing every arising manifestation. On each exhalation I relax more deeply into the Ground. After three or four unhurried inhalations and exhalations and I mindfully stand up.

After completing these prostrations, if time and inclination allows, I continue with a more traditional form of prostration, infusing the practice with this knowing of the presence of the Triple Ground.

After finishing the practice, I sit for a while and share the merit aspiring that through practising in this way, all beings will come to know their own true nature.

A few further hints:

1 Learn the general format. Feel free to use your own words, one's that touch your own life most relevantly. The words I have used in the expanded version are just to give a hint at the vastness of these themes.

As you familiarise yourself with the spirit of these contemplations, you may find your words becoming simpler as you silently deepen into the essence.

2 Explore each of the three aspects of the ground as a flow-through. Guidance and inspiration from the past and present, flowing through you and inspiring all the beings that you meet. Talents of past generations flowing into you and out through your children and so forth. The continual flowing of materials and energies, revealed in the dancing of transient forms that is this ecosystem of life. Everything is an expression of flow and transformation.

3 Come to know this, not just intellectually, but with your body, speech and mind.

4 Do each prostration as an exploration of exquisitely sensitive body awareness, a kind of Tai Chi or Kum Nye or Feldenkrais movement.

5 Learn to see other beings, family, friends, strangers, co-workers, enemies and so forth as expressions of this vast creative ground.

6 Practise touching the earth in every moment of the day - walking, working, cooking, driving the car etc. Not stepping out of the ground for an instant! Like water returning to the sea - at rest, attentive, even, loving, appreciating, respectful, responsive, clear. Living refuge - a profound sense of belonging. - Wondrous!

THE WANGAPEKA EDUCATIONAL TRUST
RD 2 WAKEFIELD, NELSON, NZ

Wangapeka Retreat

Cleansing the Senses And Re-enchanting the World

Feb 20 – 29/04

Wangapeka Autumn Retreats

April 10 – June 28, 2004

April 10 – May 14 Mandalas of Awakening – a Creative Path of Unfolding

May 15 – 20 will be a time for retreatants to deepen their individual practice. .

May 21 – June 20 **Ngondro** – the Preliminary Practices of Vajrayana Buddhism according to the Nyingma and Kargyu traditions of Tibet.

June 21 – 27 Individual practice and gradual withdrawal from retreat.

FOR MORE INFORMATION; please contact the centre at

ph 03 522-4221 fax 03 522-4980 (NZ), email wangapeka@ts.co.nz

For more details about the retreats see their Web Site

<http://wangapeka.nelson.org.nz>. We have limited extra info here in

Tassie, email info@mariagrist.net or phone 62349404.

A Tree Was Formed

The gathering of the tribes was called
They came from across the land, over the seas
They heard the Call
It whispered to them through the wind

We need a forest some said, the sun and the wind
Peace, tranquillity, soft earth
The laughter of the birds

With gentle love in their hearts they moved towards the gathering
The process took years, even lifetimes
The movement kept going, their longing sincere

Mother Earth beat her drum
They followed the sound
The beat beating with their own hearts

Their journey complete
They moved into their own place
As it was expected

The circle formed
Their arms moved out in an embrace
Towards each other

The circle bonded as their hearts connected
The time came when their hearts beat as one
In that moment another tree was formed

Flesh, hearts, earth, life, wood, fire
The majesty of the Tree

In love and Respect
Blessings to Tara

Yogapadmananda
December 2003

POSITIONS VACANT

CARETAKER
(for Dorje Ling property)

LIBRARIAN
(For Tashi Choling Library)

Contact us if you are able to help.