



# Tashi Choling Dharma Foundation Inc. Newsletter Summer 2005

## **ZASEP TULKU RINPOCHE**

*Tashi Choling Dharma Foundation has a long-standing relationship with the Venerable Zasep Tutku 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.*

## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT** (Presented at the AGM of TASHI CHOLING DHARMA FOUNDATION OF TASMANIA December 2004)

This year has gone so fast and the details seem to blur in the process, but let me try to recall some outstanding events. The first retreat held at our 'new' centre was not Zasep Rinpoche's Easter Retreat. It was in fact a Yoga retreat led by the wonderful Satyamukhi Yogini ... a.k.a. Roslyn Alexander. All present had a wonderful and special time. Then the Easter Retreat with Zasep Tulku Rinpoche saw many more people enjoying Dorje Ling ... some for the first time. Rinpoche's visit to Hobart, Koonya and Lorinna was very successful on many levels, not the least of which was financial. Special mention must be made of all who assisted in setting up and contributing to the Art and Curiosities Auction. This event alone raised around \$4000. For this reason we can also especially thank all who purchased items on the night and a huge thank you to Iain Laing who acted as an amazing Auctioneer. This and well attended retreats resulted in a cash surplus which has taken a lot of pressure off the committee in the financial arena. The committee has worked very well and determinedly this year on a number of important issues. The management of Dorje Ling is obviously our most pressing and demanding task. The need for a caretaker has been uppermost in our minds and in this regard we have made some mistakes and some wise decisions. With the appointment of Anna Crotty as our resident caretaker and with the recent assistance of Michael it seems that this area of concern is being well handled. The planning of visits by various teachers has also been a very important and at times demanding task undertaken by members of the sangha. The most recent visit by Tarchin Hearn has proved that some important lessons may have been learnt which resulted in a wonderfully successful visit. We thank all concerned for their time and effort. Our committee is always in a state of flux and mixed presence. Tony Dix has escaped to the UK for a while, though we hope to see him again in the not too distant future. Our wonderful secretary Cathy Hope has resigned as of December 2004. Thank you Cathy for your dedicated work throughout the establishment of the Dorje Ling purchase effort. We hope that more people will take up the challenge of steering this fine organisation into the future. In this respect I invite anyone to consider how they may be able to contribute in the day by day running of our foundation. I would like to thank all our committee for all their time and effort this past year, and particularly Maria Grist, who has contributed much in lots of ways, not least of which is her role this year as keeper of the keys. In all the comings and goings of all our membership it has fallen to her to be at the city Centre most Tuesday evenings to open the doors and in many cases to lead the sessions. Thank you very much Maria. I hope you have enjoyed yourself and grown from the experience. We also had a Treasurer change this year. Firstly, after doing Roslyn's retreat at Dorje Ling, Monica Brigid took up the challenge and contributed much in her time as treasurer. Her personal situation changed mid-way through the year and she had to resign. We appreciate your efforts Monica and thank you very much for the time you did contribute. We then were floating in a no-treasurer state until the wonderful Ian Taylor stepped in. I must say that I feel very confident with Ian in this position for a while and our intention is to get our financial business well understood and managed so that anyone stepping into the role in future will have clear direction. Thank you Ian. There is much work to do in the future. Our scope of activity is going to increase as the years go on. We need to encourage the younger generations to take up engaged dharma practise. I will pray that they see the benefit of doing so in time to take on the responsibility and joy of the work we do. Ahead we have a visit from Cecelie Quiett (???) planned and a probable visit from Zasep Tulku Rinpoche later in the year. More on that in subsequent Newsletters. I wish all readers and all beings a peaceful and awakening year ahead.

Thank you, Guy Turnbull.

## AGM.

The AGM of Tashi Choling Dharma Foundation Inc. was held on 7 December 2005. At this meeting, two resolutions were passed:

1. That Zasep Tulku Rinpoche be invited to be spiritual director of Dorje Ling
2. That Zasep Tulku Rinpoche be invited to be a spiritual director of Tashi Choling Dharma Foundation Inc.

## TCDF OFFICE-BEARERS 2005

Guy Turnbull President  
Ian Taylor Treasurer  
Margaret Steadman Public Officer  
Maria Grist Secretary (Minutes)  
Roslyn Alexander Secretary (Correspondence)  
ELECTED MEMBERS.  
Annie Willock, Anna Crotty, Henry Patterson.



## TSUNAMI RELIEF

*Update from Sharon Gretzinger - Zasep Tulku Rinpoche's assistant at Tashi Choling, Nelson, Canada.*

Rinpoche's friend Paul Hogan has been working in Sri Lanka and has set up an orphanage for children affected by the war. This orphanage has been in operation for 15 years. It has not been severely damaged as it is on high ground but many are missing, dead or injured. Paul Hogan has opened the doors of the orphanage to care for many of the homeless and injured. Rinpoche would like any of you who wish to do so, to support this project in aid of the disaster victims.

Rinpoche's friend Robbie is the doctor who travels with Rinpoche to Tibet to offer medical care to Tibetans at Jamseng Health Care Centre. He also works with Paul Hogan in Sri Lanka. Robbie sent us the following letter which explains the current situation in Sri Lanka at the Butterfly Peace Garden and the ways that we can contribute to the care of the affected people and the rebuilding of the Butterfly Peace Garden. The website mentioned gives more information.

*Tsunami Relief - Letter from Robbie Chase in Canada.*

In one fell swoop the tidal wave Dec 26 killed as many as 1/3 the casualties from Sri Lanka's 20 year civil war. Of the 24,000 deaths thus far, an estimated 10,000 are in the north east, Batticaloa being one of the areas hardest hit. I send this large mail-out to those interested in Butterfly Peace Garden's efforts to respond to the recent tidal wave disaster that hit Batticaloa, Sri Lanka, and throughout South and SE Asia.

Please reply to me if you wish to continue to receive further information. [chaser@cc.umanitoba.ca](mailto:chaser@cc.umanitoba.ca) I offer to send out regular e.g., monthly updates for those interested. Alternatively, the website <http://www.thestupidschool.ca/bpg/index.htm> will soon be revised and will post information. A separate fund is set up to assist Paul Hogan whose house and entire belongings were lost; you can contact me for details.

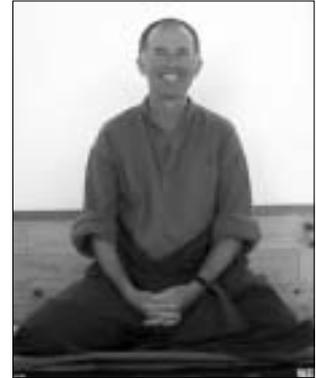
From Robbie Chase

(WUSC is helping with transport: [www.wusc.ca](http://www.wusc.ca).)

## At Weeroona House and Yoga Studio, North Hobart

### a mini-retreat in the city with Tarchin Hearn

*(Article by Ross Coward)*



**Peacemaking through the senses** - walking the path, touching the earth, bringing kindness and interest and the courage of heart to live peacefully with all that you meet.

This was the first retreat held at the Living Yoga Studio, a beautiful open light space that supports all that enter.

I enjoyed Weeroona sitting living yoga space white light flowers whooshhh breeze stifling heat one day walking slow courtyard four supports smiling breathing physical awareness embodied life supporting life cutgrass the next day cooler barefoot approaching peacemaking senses as fully as possible with Tarchin and all the other beings present.

The theme of the weekend was peacemaking through the six sense doors (the sixth sense door is the mind door of thoughts, feelings, and memories) - how does one do that? The work here was touched upon and we were given exercises to practice. The eyes were first - can we discover a way of seeing more clearly with greater clarity, with the whole of one's being, without conflict, noting when we have a tendency to pull away, to withdraw from what we are seeing? The exercise involved concentration, relaxation, mindfulness, noting sensations around one eye, the other eye, both together and noting one's thoughts and emotional feeling. Seeing peacefully, pick an object, keep eyes open, soften one's gaze and begin to become *Page 2*

acutely aware of sensations in one eye. Allow the sensations to soften. Repeat with the other eye, then both eyes together. During the exercise keep saying, "seeing peacefully". Go to other objects and become acutely aware of sensations around the eyes with respect to, "liking", "not liking", "indifferent or neutral". Note which eye we started with and alternate the eye we start with each time one does this work. In various ways the other senses can be experienced in this manner, (time at this retreat didn't allow for this), and can be useful in bringing awareness to what we like, what we dislike, what is neutral. Can we bring peace to that we tend to dislike, we tend to turn away from, we tend to withdraw from?

Somebody asked me, my yoga teacher, the day after the retreat, "what did you learn?" My first response was dismissed; you clearly know that, do that. What came floating through my mind, then, amongst the flotsam and jetsam of thought stream, was the word, "remembering". Remembering the richness of Tarchin's teachings, remembering the practices I had encountered with Tarchin over the years, remembering to practice the practices, the meditations, the exercises ... remembering a phrase I heard Tarchin once utter to one student, "you have to do the work ..."

Tarchin's teachings are rich and multi-layered, where ever you are, there are many offerings for a student to taste, to engage with, to explore the archaeological dig of themselves, the world, the universe.

How to wrap up the weekend concisely is difficult, so many strands, so many threads weaving in and out, and through each others consciousness and environment, being pulled together by the overall theme of peacemaking, or making whole all the pieces of us. So I'll just mention some key words, phrases, sentences for me ... and allow this to work on you, the reader, allow you to begin remembering ...

Being able to develop, appreciate and value a state of glorious idleness where we can come into a way of being so that we can meet and engage, with increasing interest and wonderment, with what is

arising now. The difficulty is not being able to meet with what is arising now.

In meditation begin to develop an ability to just question what is, to open and go beyond our knowing to investigate.

Work to be attentive, to pay attention. The only thing we can give to another being is our attentiveness.

Work to be at home in the body. The senses, sensing work through the body. We need to cultivate awareness through the body.

Bring forth an aspiration before each sit. This could be simply the aspiration to develop peace in the body, to start doing the work of peacemaking in our own body.

Peacemaking is working with and having the capacity to support a cohesive functioning of all facets of our being.

Awakening is about functioning well in wider and wider sets of circumstances.

The practice of investigating is the practice of being functional.

Be with what is – essential to peacemaking in the world.

The instrument we are learning to play is the instrument of body-mind.

The work is to tease out our own unique talents

and to develop an ability to recognize other beings talents.

Important to do Practices that one is successful at – so that it gives confidence, pleasure and joy.

Major part of healing is feeding and nurturing the strengths of the being.

The banquet of otherness comes in through the senses but then comes the delicate work of supporting ourselves in the eating.

We need to have the courage to see where we are mal-nourished or lacking.

We need to have the courage to allow the circumstances to arise where we can be fed.

Think of meditation as an opportunity to nourish the being.

On the Sunday we ate lunch together in the studio space where we had been sitting, twenty-four beings mindfully eating in silence, being supported by the ground of the maroon carpeted floor, by all the green plants, by each other in the act of feeding ourselves, working to bring all our sensing into the eating, peacefully.

*(Photographs in this article by Caroline Shearer)*



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## **TASHI CHOLING TUESDAY MEDITATION AND STUDY.**

Tuesdays, 7.30 – 9.00 PM

Above 71 Liverpool Street. Laneway east of Gould's Pharmacy. Weekly meditation practice, and fortnightly an additional study topic is presented, with time allowed for discussion. Tara sadhana practice and mantra recitation will be the focus for the first Tuesday every month. Open to all interested people.

# Letter from Tibet by Vichara

Part 2 (Part One in previous newsletter)

Professional success in China, as is sadly also true in Australia, is largely determined by where you go to school. Those Tibetans who can afford it, and can pass the entrance exams, attend special 'minority' universities which teach minority languages and have lower entrance requirements. But in order to get into a top Chinese university, you really need to have gone to the more expensive middle-class Chinese schools from primary school onwards. But these schools, even if you can afford them, don't teach Tibetan, and many people feel strongly about keeping their language alive. This is a serious dilemma for many Tibetan parents. Their children really need to learn two languages. Plus, of course, they have to learn English, as it is a requirement of the education system now.



Whenever I ask people here what they think would most help the Tibetan people, the answer is always: education. The Gannan Girls School, and others like it, are addressing this need, and giving girls who couldn't afford to go to school a chance for a better life.

There are lots of monasteries all over Gannan. The one in Hezuo is famous for having a magnificent, newly renovated, nine-story main hall. A town about two hours from here, called Xiahe in Chinese, or Labalang (Labrang) in Tibetan, contains one of the five main Gelugpa monasteries in Tibet. It is very large, and is in actual fact like a town-within-a-town. The circumambulation path around the monastery is about 5 km long, and it is lined with many hundreds of mani (prayer) wheels.

To see inside the various temples and halls you must buy a ticket, and find a monk with a key who is willing to show you around. I was lucky to have an English-speaking Tibetan guide, who knew the ropes, and we got to see many of the temples and halls. We were given a tour of the museum, where all the old, precious, valuable objects (like silver chalices and ivory tusks) are stored, and we were also allowed into the room containing the butter statues, which are put on public display only once a year.

The large gompas (here it's pronounced 'goomba' and means 'monastery') consist of separate 'colleges', such as the tantric college, the medical college, etc. Each gumpa has its own lineage of much-revered rinpoches, whose ashes are enshrined in special halls. There is usually one massive hall, beautifully decorated, where all the monks congregate for morning prayers. There are special temples for the fierce, angry mountain gods, who hate women and don't allow them inside their temples. And of course much of the gumpa consists of monks' accommodation. Each gumpa also has a special place on the side of a green grassy hill, where they 'sun the Buddha' once a year: the monks unroll a gigantic thangka for the day, and everyone comes and watches.

As I had no opportunity to have converse with any monks, I can only report on the lay people I live and work with everyday. They all know 'mani-mani-mani' and they all use a gesture of turning the beads on a mala, like the old people still do. They are generous, loving, open-hearted people, and they manifest the bodhisattva ideal of giving priority to the happi-



ness of others before one's own. Especially the women are naturally and unselfconsciously devotional. One night I was watching a Chinese video about the last Panchen Lama with the girls' dormitory supervisor. She refused to sit on a chair because (I surmised) it would've made her higher than his image on the screen. She hunkered down on the cold tile floor for two hours, palms together in prayer, reverently watching the video. Her devotion was moving and powerful that tears started rolling down my cheeks, and that night, through her mediation, I developed a very real heart connection with that beautiful Lama, who, although now dead, is still very much revered by the local people.

The people here are not intellectual or academic about their Buddhism. They don't have to be; they've grown up with it. Everybody here's got a brother or an uncle or an old school friend from the village who's now a monk. The monks vroom around on motorbikes and have mobile phones



Akong Rinpoche (founder)

and good wristwatches. The people visit the gompas on special days, enjoy the artwork and the smell of the butter lamps, and they do their best to follow the simple spiritual instruction they are given. They are also quite superstitious - or perhaps I should say 'in touch with the spirit realms', and they still believe strongly in the power of the mountain gods. I've nearly gotten into trouble a few times, because I've tried to wade in the mountain streams, but each time I've been informed in no uncertain terms

that the mountain gods get very angry if you pollute their streams with your feet. Regretfully, I've had to put my shoes and socks back on and resist the temptation of the beautiful cool water.

Life is so strange; for years back in Tassy, I really wished I could meet some Tibetan women. All the Tibetans I'd encountered were men, and most of them were lamas and rinpoches, who weren't very understanding of women's problems. I was so curious about the Tibetan women - what were they like? Were they shy or assertive? Strong or submissive? How did they view the world? How did they dress? How did they raise their children?

And now, I find myself in Tibet, in an almost totally female institution. The headmistress of the school is a delightful middle-aged administrator who speaks absolutely no English. She's on the short, plump side like me, and likes to laugh (also like me). She also has an instinctive emotional understanding, and has a deep affection for the girls. We get along really well together, without much common language. And everyone is 'hands-on' here; it's perfectly acceptable to touch people, given them a massage or neck rub, or playfully invade their personal space. I really like that

People keep asking me if I'm homesick, if I miss my family, but actually, the family feeling here is so lovely, that I haven't really experienced much culture shock or homesickness. I think my 'tribal' lifestyle in Koonya was an excellent preparation for living here, because I am used to cold weather, and I don't have too many uptight hang-ups about plumbing, electrical appliances or central heating..

People nurture each other here. Everyone mothers everyone else. Older people (like me!) are honoured and cared for. Everyone looks after everyone else before



themselves. I don't know if this is only true of this all-female micro-cosm, or whether it is true of Tibetan society in general, but I do know it is really delightful. Here it is normal to fuss and fiddle with each other. Straggling hair, pieces of lint, protruding labels (my particular downfall) are dealt with by one and all. If it looks like rain, someone brings all the clothes in from the line. If the girls want to give me

some sweets, and I politely decline, they sneak them into my pocket, or slip them into my room. If I'm late for a meal, someone chases me down. If I sit down with them in the evening, someone will start massaging my back. Once or twice, when I was tired or preoccupied with my own sordid melodramas, the constant fussing got on my nerves, and I felt suffocated by all the attention, but most of the time I have absorbed it all gratefully, like the parched earth absorbs the spring rain.

This opportunity has come at a perfect time in my life. I recognize it as the fruition of years of practice and effort. I want to thank Zasep Rinpoche, and all my other Tibetan and Buddhist teachers for providing me with the spiritual, philosophical and sociological grounding that prepared me for this experience. I also want to acknowledge my tai ji teacher, Master Liu, who encouraged me to go to China; my yoga guru, Swami Satyananda, who shaped my life as a sannyasin; and all the dance teachers and the circle dance community who have brought so much joy into my life.

"People nurture each other here."

ROKPA also runs a school for orphaned Tibetan children and a Tibetan medical college in this area. These schools also need volunteer English teachers. I heartily recommend this experience to anyone who is interested in Tibet. To be a volunteer English teacher for ROKPA you need to have completed a CELTA training in teaching English as a Second Language. They also like you to have had some experience living in a third world country.

Check out their website for more information (<http://www.rokpa.org>).

### **UPDATED DORJE LING BROCHURE.**

*Please pass on or display* the enclosed updated Dorje Ling brochure. Sponsorship is barely keeping pace with repayments - the need is still there for fundraising ideas and energy, as well as new donors!

### **MEMBERSHIP.**

Become a member of Tashi Choling Dharma Foundation. Membership costs \$30/\$15 p.a. Memberships fall due 1 December annually. (So please **send your membership fees now**, unless you are automatically a member due to your donation to the Dorje Ling project.)

Send to Tashi Choling Dharma Foundation Inc., PO Box 593, North Hobart, TAS, 7002. Cheques payable to: Tashi Choling Dharma Foundation Inc.

### **TASHI CHOLING DHARMA FOUNDATION**

**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](mailto:info@mariagrist.net)> (03) 62349404 or**

**Guy Turnbull <[guyglass@southcom.com.au](mailto:guyglass@southcom.com.au)>**

**Dorje Ling web site <[www.dorjeling.go.to](http://www.dorjeling.go.to)>**