

GENTLE VOICE



A NEWSLETTER OF SIDDHARTHA'S INTENT

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IN THIS ISSUE
THE TWELVE INTERDEPENDENT LINKS OF ORIGINATION
LOTUS OUTREACH IN CAMBODIA
INTERVIEW WITH LAMA TSERING EVEREST
GESAR DOWN UNDER

The Twelve Interdependent Links of Origination

by Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche

Since some of you are new to Buddhist ideas, this may be the first time you are encountering the tantric path or Vajrayana. So I would like to say a little bit based on this, the Vajrayana path. There are figures such as Tilopa, Virupa and Kukkuraja, and broadly speaking, from the mundane world's point of view, some of the things that they did weren't acceptable in society. This tradition has existed for a long time in Buddhist history — Tilopa eating live fish! A Buddhist eating live fish? While he was eating the head, the tail was moving in his mouth. Virupa was a drunk man, that's what they say. He drank anyway, he drank constantly. Kukkuraja was sleeping with his own pet dog, the bitch.

The tantric path is shocking. I'm telling you these things because when I say that Buddhism emphasises more the appreciation of wisdom, I want you to know how we do it. Yet, with all their almost inhuman, unacceptable behaviour — eating live fish, becoming alcoholic and all that — these are the people who left behind some of the most incredible paths of wisdom that today we find are the only source of solace, the path of the practice lineage that we can walk, the steps of the staircase we tread.

I'm telling you this because we are beginning to talk about the Twelve Interdependent Links of Origination and the first thing we are going to talk about is ignorance. We have already talked about ignorance that is symbolised by the pig in the centre of the Wheel of Life. What is ignorance? Very simply, I can say, ignorance is actually distraction. When the mind is distracted by something, then that is ignorance. The whole act of getting distracted is ignorance.

Based on Buddhist theory, the evolution of ignorance is an idea. Let's take an abstract idea like a table. First we create a label like 'a table', but that label is actually an abstract entity. For instance, when we look at a table, you will not really see an entity that is 'tableness'. There are legs, there is wood, there are nails, all of that. If you take the table apart, each of them is a different phenomenon: wood is wood, nail is nail. Within the phenomenon of table there are many, many parts that are not necessarily referred to as 'a table'. But when they are all together, then there's the idea or the label 'a table', and we created that table, we created that label. That is still fine, that is still not a big failure. The failure comes next when you think that abstract idea is not abstract but concrete, when

you think there is actually a table existing, *really* existing. You got it?

Actually, to put it very simply, it is attachment to a label. Ignorance is attachment to a label. Out of all this labelling — flowers, table, chairs, earth, water, fire — there is one label that is probably the most dangerous. It's not only dangerous; it has the most potential, is the most destructive, constructive and, at the same time, the most elusive. Basically, the root of all the other labels is the label of self, myself, I.

Again, like the table we were referring to earlier, when we say 'I', we are referring to something abstract. That is fine; but what is not fine is strong attachment to this self that is **represented by a picture of a blind person** (1) right under the fangs of Time, the wrathful monster. What does this ignorance do? The self is such a strong notion that it can destroy the whole world if it is given the authority, the equipment, the money, the power. We all have the potential to be, and we are in our own way, a little bit of Saddam Hussein, a little bit of Osama bin Laden, a little bit of George Bush, a little bit of Donald Rumsfeld. We all have that potential. Why? The cling-ing to the self is so strong. Why is it that clinging to the self is *so* strong? Because, ironically, it still hasn't con-firmed that it exists, that is why. It is very ironic, isn't it? It is like when something is not sure, you have this obsessive impulse to confirm it. You have to get confirmation. That's why. And that has been going on forever. This uncertainty whether the self exists or not constantly needs to be confirmed and you need to confirm it.

And what do you do? You take action — you make friends, go shopping, have sex, use whips and chains or melted wax, which makes you really feel that you exist. This is the second link, action, which is **depicted by a person making a pot** (2). In classic Buddhist terms, *karma* is action. You know how when we are insecure we have to do something, from taking Prozac to meditating or chanting mantras, whatever — all these are actions to prove that you exist. And when we talk about these links, they are sort of in order. But don't think that these things take time — like first there's ignorance and then there's a little bit of a pause and then there's action. It is not like that. It is really, really speedy. It is very fast, it is almost at the same time.



Close encounter with a deer, Kyoto, Japan (Photos Rasa Bahls)

The moment you have action it is accompanied by consciousness that is **depicted by a monkey (3)** — clever, very clever, jumping all the time, going everywhere. Here, there, you think he's here and the next minute he's there. But, you know, those tame monkeys are chained with all kinds of ropes. It doesn't matter how clever they are, they still don't know how to undo these chains and run away from their abuser. Basically, the consciousness emerges from ignorance. The monkeys are cleverly stupid, that's all. They are clever idiots. (It's sort of unfair on the monkeys!)

So what has happened? You need to confirm this ignorance, this insecurity. You create an action; action is accompanied by this consciousness, like eye consciousness, ear consciousness, nose consciousness, tongue and touch consciousness. This then develops *nama* and *rupa*, which is depicted in the fourth image on the Wheel of Life, name and form. It could be John, Paul, democracy, a trend or a fashion. But strictly speaking, here there is a boat that symbolises identity and inside the boat there are the five aggregates that are **represented by the five travellers (4)**. Wherever this label, this identity, this trend goes, somehow the five aggregates, without much choice, tag along. Where do they go? They don't reach anywhere. They just go round and round in this ocean of samsara. Basically, what we are talking about is constructing identity, self-identity, yourself. You have now successfully constructed an identity — myself, me, Buddhist, Hindu.

So once you construct that, then what do you need? This me, this self, without all the rest is useless. Again, it will become very lonely. It needs a place to get distracted, to get occupied, like a job or entertainment, which is **represented by an empty house with five doors (5)** —

sense objects such as sight, sound, smell, taste, touch. With this identity, this notion of 'I', we go through or enter this house of sense objects. It is an empty house; there is nothing inside but we think there is something very valuable inside. Or if you happen to be inside, you think that there must be something very valuable outside and then you go outside. We go in and out; basically we create more phenomena. Then what does this give birth to? **Contact (6)**. Tibetans are just hopeless when they paint. This is supposedly **a man and a woman kissing**. Basically, we meet, we have contact between the sense and the sense object, consciousness and the object. There is contact and what does this contact lead to? It leads to feeling, which is **represented by being blinded by an arrow in one eye (7)**.

Let's go back to the self. We have the self, ignorance — insecure and at the same time very, very, very proud. Very egoistic, but at the same time very insecure and because of that we have to do something. As we do, we create consciousness, form, we create a certain kind of identity, a trend or some kind of fashion that we belong to. With the help of the form, the trend, this feeling, we go out to the sense objects and when we go out, we meet the object. The moment we meet, we then feel — not necessarily good feelings, sometimes bad feelings. A feeling is created. Feeling leads to craving, which is **depicted by a person drinking alcohol (8)**. This insecure self is going through this form and feeling and all this identity and then we meet a very good feeling. Of course, we crave for more.

But sometimes we even encounter bad contact, bad feeling, and then crave to dispel it, to outdo it, to gain some kind of victory. You know how we are so attached to fixing the problem, aren't we? *Continued on page 10*



Lotus Outreach In Cambodia

By Glenn Fawcett

Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche had expressed his wish some years back that once Lotus Outreach was well established on the Indian subcontinent, we should next work to help develop the principally Buddhist peoples of South-East Asia. Once Rinpoche said of the Lao people, "If you think the Thai people are gentle and sweet, you should go to Laos!" With this in mind it's indeed paradoxical so many of the gentle, agrarian peoples of the Mekong Delta region such as Cambodia, Burma, Thailand and Vietnam should be suffering in poverty under oppressive and corrupt governance of varying degrees.

Cambodia is still a work in progress after only eight years of peace since the last bloody civil war. Some things seem to be changing and, though its policies have often enough been badly conceived and implemented, some improvement must be due to the continuing presence of so many foreign agencies. They at least keep something like a check on rampant, institutionalised corruption and use of the military and judicial systems to ensure absolute power, while also affording some support to Cambodia's modern heroes, its moderate and benevolent elements that would otherwise be as silent as the grave....

I arrived in Phnom Penh in March this year to establish Lotus Outreach projects that would serve girls and women who were victims of violence and trafficking. Some two years of research had prepared us with an understanding of the types of projects we wanted to undertake and suitable project partners for the immediate establishment of a number of projects. I was only in Phnom Penh five minutes when I received a call from one of our friends. 'Come and meet the orange girls. Have you heard of them?' she asked.

I hadn't, but quickly agreed to join her on a night visit to an area where sex workers of a very particular bent are operating. Essentially, as it turns out, 'orange girls' solicit clients who are only allowed to touch them for the duration of peeling an orange! It's true! I've seen the oranges they carry. Of course the occupational hazards of rape and consequent pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases — a number of these girls are HIV positive — make this relatively benign form of sex work much more dangerous than it would or should be; nevertheless, many of the girls, driven by the sole and relentless force of poverty, have been doing it for years.

This little story has a silver lining as we were also accompanied by Bernie Kirchner, founder and editor of the *Cambodia Daily* (a brave and moderate voice in the wilderness). After Bernie interviewed the girls through an interpreter, a number were inducted into a project he is managing, training victims of trafficking and former sex workers in small-business development, including soft loans to set up small vending operations selling food and other produce. We hope at least a few of the half dozen girls receiving the training are able to make a living that will free them from work they would not contemplate outside the urgency of sheer poverty.

Not long after that, I was invited by one of Lotus Outreach's partners, the Cambodian Women's Crisis Centre (CWCC), to visit their shelter for victims of violence and abuse in the far-flung and desperately poor province of Banteay Meanchey where we would be funding two counsellors. Counselling services for abused and trauma-tised victims of violence are in short supply and training programmes for them are not well developed. The girls and women, being victims of extreme abuse, multiple rapes, confinement, violence and trafficking, are often severely psychologically damaged and would ideally receive much more professional counselling than currently available. However, that said, victims are given a full six months and sometimes more to heal and gather their resources before leaving the shelter with work skills learned during their stay.

I met many of the young girls, some as young as thirteen, who had been sold into prostitution, and it always shocked me how much more childlike Asian children are. They are not nearly as developed as Western kids, so even a thirteen-year-old seems more like what we know as a nine- or ten-year-old. It's really heart breaking.

Poipet, just an hour from the shelter, is a wild-west town on the Thai-Cambodian border, home and gateway to traffickers in people and drugs and a place where organised crime flourishes as long as it pays the right people. I went there to meet some of the girls that had been through the six-month shelter programme and were now being monitored in the twelve months reintegration follow-up that helps them to establish a livelihood after they leave the shelter — a time when hunger, desperation and poverty drives many of the graduates of various shelter programmes straight back into prostitution.

Mali (not her real name) was seventeen when I met her and would have been just sixteen when she was trafficked by members of her own community who lured her and some other girls to Thailand on the promise of high salaries and easy work, only to be locked in a brothel. There Mali worked for some three months before getting the chance to jump into a river from the back of a client's motorcycle in order to escape. I wrote a *Postcard from Phnom Penh* (see it on our website www.lotusoutreach.org) that describes her experience. She now has a job in a market that earns her US \$1.25 per day, which is average for the area and suffices when added to a family income. It is an ongoing struggle for her to be a normal member of the community, as everyone knows what happened to her. Working with communities to teach them to help and support victims of trafficking and HIV

While around twenty-five per cent of girls in Cambodia make it to year nine, most girls in villages only attend primary school and then only in accord with the vagaries of wet seasons and the all-important planting and harvesting of rice. This makes them extremely vulnerable to trafficking, especially during natural calamities where poor farmers and their children are literally starving. Forty per cent of Cambodians, all living under the poverty-line, received Food-Aid in 2003 and 2004.

To help prevent these problems we are funding a mobile, community health-care outreach programme that includes a doctor, nurse and social workers to teach poor urban communities to be aware of and how to deal with traffickers. We are also considering support for preventative education enrolment programmes in 2006 that build



Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche with a Cambodian child at a health clinic

AIDS (which thankfully Mali didn't have), rather than stigmatise them, is important work being undertaken by our partners and various agencies in communities all over Cambodia.

Forty per cent of Cambodians live at what we call 'below the poverty line', on an income of around US \$1 per day, and half of this forty per cent live on less. There has been a drought for two years that followed on the heels of floods, which also devastated the rural economy. These conditions cause massive rural migration to cities where the poor compete for only a handful of jobs. In such a climate it's very difficult for girls and women to support themselves after leaving the shelter so we are supporting the establishment of vocational training projects, the first being in screen printing, at a very busy shelter for girls and women in Phnom Penh. We are also supporting the development of a forty-member women's sewing cooperative (ten groups of four women and girls) into a more mature business venture with transport, more sophisticated machines and the management skills necessary to take them to the next level, dealing with larger orders and markets within a cooperative framework.



Village girls vulnerable to trafficking in a scholarship project (Photos Glenn Fawcett)

community child protection networks, enrol girls in school and provide jobs in teaching and administration of village programmes for those girls completing year nine. I don't think any of us knew when we first set out to work in Cambodia just how desperate the situation was and is. There are many agencies working there and yet still not enough to cover the many gaps we have found and are set to work on. More shelters, counsellors and adequate training programmes are needed for victims, as well as preventative measures such as educating a poorly educated rural population about how traffickers operate and to help villagers set up child protection networks.

While we are helping many young girls and women victims of rape, sexual exploitation, confinement and domestic violence, all their pain and suffering is best summed up in one sweet, young girl, whose life was snatched from her because she was vulnerable, her family poor and uneducated, and some people base enough to trade people as commodities.

This girl is the reason Rinpoche's Lotus Outreach is working in Cambodia.

Interview - Lama Tsering Everest



Lama Tsering Everest
(Photo Eduardo Barcellos)

Lama Tsering Everest has been a student of Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche since 1979. After translating for Rinpoche for several years, she completed a traditional retreat in 1995 and was ordained a lama. She is currently the resident lama at Chagdud Gonpa, Sao Paulo, Brazil. During a visit to Australia in January 2005, Lama Tsering spoke to the *Gentle Voice*.

You met Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche in 1979, I believe. After being his student for some time, you became his translator. Could you say a little about your connection with Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche?

Well, it was a very good connection. When I first saw Rinpoche, I was very taken by him. He's visually interesting. And at that time he didn't really speak English, so he needed to have translators. I was very moved by him. At first I wondered whether that's what they mean by 'yogi'. And then I thought, maybe he's a medicine man or maybe he's a sorcerer. Those were the kinds of powerful images I had about him. But, more than that, I really didn't know how to relate to him. It's just really a karmic connection, I think. It's kind of a funny thing to say, because what isn't? But it's a very strong connection. And then, as it turned out, it grew because I was very interested in what he wanted to say. But he didn't really have language skills. So it meant you had to listen with more than just your ears, you had to listen with your skin.

After having studied with Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche and having translated for him, you completed a three-year retreat and were ordained a lama. In fact, you did four years...

Almost four.

And you did retreat in your own home, albeit at a retreat centre. Now there are retreatants starting at Vajradhara Gonpa. Do you have any advice for those retreatants?

Chagdud Rinpoche gave me advice when I went into retreat! But it was Rinpoche's style. He told me, 'Some days you're going to feel tired, some days you're going to feel sick and some days you're going to be in a bad mood. But always remember the four thoughts because that's what gives you power.' (The four thoughts are this precious human birth, impermanence and death, the law of cause and effect, and the nature of suffering that is samsara.) And you will know when you are not keeping them in mind. It's not that you don't get sick or that you don't have a mood, but you won't lose sight of your intention if you remember the four thoughts. The four thoughts give you the ability to apply yourself, to realise this is your precious chance, your human body, and that it is brief. You may not think so; you may think that over a thousand days is a long time, but actually it goes so fast. I noticed when I hit the mid-way mark in my retreat that I had a kind of sadness, a poignancy of impermanence. Because now it's like over the hump, almost over, almost out! Remember that it's impermanent and remember the four thoughts – it really does give you the power to apply yourself.

And the only other thing Rinpoche told me was that I should practise like my hair was on fire! A pretty woman whose hair catches fire doesn't sit around and think, 'Oh, tomorrow, or next week...' with a *laissez-faire* attitude. She responds immediately. The more instantaneous the response, the more you can cultivate that intensity (and yet be relaxed in it), the better. Because intensity isn't enough. It'll just give you stress. But if that intensity is coupled with relaxation, you can really make some headway.

And for practitioners who are still leading a worldly life?

The advice is no different. What's the difference? I don't think there's any difference at all. It's still the four thoughts. Maybe more so because phenomena swamp our boat. We can get completely swamped by phenomena. So I think the answer is just the same. And again, it's good to remember the advice about your hair being on fire. I don't think I would change the advice.



A statue of Guru Rinpoche is being sculpted for the Padmasambhava temple (Photo Elka Andrello)

It sounds like good advice, especially the part about not getting into effort, but relaxing in the immediacy of it.

You see, people fool themselves with relaxing. They think that they're really relaxing and they're really not. They're still just picking and choosing instead of relaxing in the moment. We can't really help but to pick and choose, but even with the picking and choosing we must learn to relax. But people get really confused by that, I think. It's true, you must relax; but it's so easy to just rationalise relaxing in your mind, when you're not really relaxing at all. Effortlessness is the most difficult!

Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche has been to Brazil several times now. He's been teaching Shantideva's Way of the Bodhisattva there. You may have perhaps witnessed him with Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche. They were very close.

Oh, they *are* very close! Yes, it's wonderful. Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche is very kind in his responsiveness to Khandro Ling, the gonpa's students and Brazil. Very

kind, as I think he is with everyone. I don't think it's any different. He's quite universal.

I read recently that in accordance with Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche's last wishes before he died in November 2002, a Padmasambhava temple is being created. Where is that up to now?

It's beautifully perched on the highest point of the mountain and the basic construction is done. Roofs are being applied and now the artists are working on the statues. What's going on there is magnificent, absolutely breath-taking. And when you come round the mountain to approach the gonpa, it looks like some kind of spaceship landing. It's very, very pretty. It's such an amazing, awesome kind of appearance there. And the beauty of the statues and the construction! There's liberation by taste and there's liberation by touch and this is, for sure, liberation by seeing. Chagdud Rinpoche always wanted to be able to receive people who were non-Buddhists and that's why the tourists really come to the temple. Rinpoche created everything so that they could see, so that they could fulfil their interdependent connections, even after his death and on through this time. It's beautiful Buddha activity, I think.

In conclusion, Lama Tsering, what would you like to say? Is there anything you'd like to say on this visit to Australia or to Rinpoche's students?

I'm just so happy to listen to the teachings. It's my kind of fun, to listen to the teachings, to be with the sangha, to travel and do pilgrimage and to see the teachers. I'm just happy. There's not much more to say than that.

(To find out more about Chagdud Gonpa Foundation and the Padmasambhava Pureland temple, go to www.chagdud.org)



A view of the Padmasambhava temple (Photo Elka Andrello)

A Throne Upon Which The Dharma Rests

Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche spent six months earlier this year at the secluded Sea to Sky Retreat Centre in British Columbia, enjoying a much-appreciated retreat. Several times during his retreat Rinpoche mentioned how thankful he was to the Khyentse Foundation for making it possible for him to take this time off from travelling. He wrote this letter as a “small gesture” of his appreciation and gratitude for the sangha’s contributions and hard work to support the foundation.

Dear Friends,

From its conception until now, everyone has been so generous, giving all that they are able. A number of individual financial contributions became the cornerstone of our foundation. Others have donated their time, energy and expertise. Some of you may think that your participation is minor, but the contributions of everyone combined, large and small, financial and effort, have become something very big and very influential. Like the ocean, your contribution will not be exhausted or spent; it will only continue to grow and last well into the future. With the investment committee’s help, the Endowment for Monastic Education is now generating enough funds to support more than 700 student monks at the various Dzongsar higher education institutions.

On a personal level I am most thankful because the endowment has taken a great burden from me and freed me to do the things that I feel will benefit the dharma. Without the endowment I would be running around trying to make ends meet. Instead, I can write books, teach and go on retreat. For example, the six-month retreat I recently completed would not have been possible before the endowment.

Even though over US \$3 million has yet to be raised to fund the remaining four Khyentse Foundation projects, we can say for sure that these projects are already making a difference. Many western lay students are already benefiting from Khyentse Foundation scholarships. Some are on three-year retreat, others are attending Tibetan translation courses and many are attending teachings that they would otherwise not be able to afford. The Publication Fund is supporting Professor Peter Skilling in preserving the fragile palm-leaf scriptures of the Theravada tradition in Thailand.

The fund also supports Gene Smith and the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Centre, which preserves and distributes precious Buddhist texts. The University of California at Berkeley and the KF-endowed professorship committee are creating a wonderful opportunity to enhance authentic buddhadharma in university classrooms. And there has been a lot of enthusiasm about the schools for children. Khyentse Foundation is trying to be as non-sectarian as possible, not only helping Tibetan Vajrayana and Mahayana Buddhism, but planting the seeds of helping the Cambodian monks, even if it is just a little at this point.

Please understand that, in this degenerate time, you have become a very big part of supporting the platform or throne upon which the dharma rests. All of us together form the pillars that support the Buddha’s teachings. Even though some of you may find it impossible to put yourself into long-term study and practice situations such as three-year retreat, remember that the connection between the patron and the practitioner goes in both directions. As a patron, you are not only helping the dharma and sentient beings, you are also planting the seed of attaining enlightenment yourself.

So please may I remind you to have this grand motivation and to dedicate the merit for the benefit of sentient beings. I shall also do the same on your behalf.

May all your activities benefit sentient beings and support Shakyamuni’s teachings.

Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche

(Sea to Sky Retreat Centre is open to the sangha for retreats of varying lengths throughout the year. Rinpoche has showered the place with his blessings, from the treetops to the shining lake. The sangha is encouraged to make use of the comfortable retreat facilities. Email: ssrc@siddharthasintent.org or call 604-932-1677. To make a contribution to Khyentse Foundation, visit khyentsefoundation.org.)

Gesar Down Under

by Simon Thomas

I wake up with the birds. Literally. A chorus of currawongs, cackling kookaburras, the melody of magpies. A symphony of song. Enmeshed in the lush green beauty of the sub-tropical ranges, the peace is disturbed only by the call of the wild. That is, except for the sound of an occasional vehicle on the dirt track to Vajradhara Gonpa and the distant tolling of a bell up on the nearby mountain, summoning the three-year retreatants. My home is a hand-built house on the Buddhist community of Gesar Springs, tucked neatly away in a long-forgotten valley of New South Wales' Border Ranges, a few miles south of Queensland, Australia. Wet and muddy one day, hot and dry the next, what tempts a city boy to nest his family so far out in the sticks? Fresh air and water, peace and quiet and abundant wildlife are certainly a bonus, but to live and breathe the air of the dharma and to place ourselves firmly within Rinpoche's mandala are the true driving forces behind our decision to move to this extraordinary land.

Where else can one be drawn into the circle of Australia's first three-year retreat centre and still go home for dinner with the kids? Where else can our children grow up in the safety and stability of Australian society, the beauty and adventure of their own jungle playground, and still receive the blessings brought by the visits of so many spiritual masters? How else can we hope to help bring Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche's visions into worldly

existence, while providing those around us with their own opportunities to grow? I guess we all grapple with those questions as we try to make sense of our lives in light of the Buddha's words. To live in a place of magic and majesty with brothers and sisters of the sangha is a wonderful option with which we have been blessed.

This 800-acre paradise is owned collectively by the community members with Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche as a major shareholder. Each community member is entitled to their own house site with a few acres of land. Rinpoche, for his part, holds the 200-acre site occupied by Vajradhara Gonpa. Separate yet connected, it currently hosts 26 people in three-year retreat.

Of course, life on the land does have its challenges. We generate our own power, source our own water and deal with our own poo, literally as well as metaphorically!

We hope that the strength of this community will increase, bringing continued benefit to the gonpa, the land and the spread of the Buddha's wisdom throughout Australia and the world.

(For enquiries regarding Gesar Springs Community, contact Simon Thomas on 02 66 33 1257 or email evasimon@dnet.aunz.com.)



Children raise prayer flags at Gesar Springs community (Photo Eva Thomas)



It's Up to You: The Practice of Self-Reflection on the Buddhist Path

We all experience obstacles on the spiritual path - fear of change, self-absorption and lack of awareness of others are among the most common. How do we face these challenges? According to Dzigar Kongtrül Rinpoche, the first step in working with these difficulties is to recognise them. Rinpoche presents the contemplative practice of self-reflection as the best way to bring the Buddhist teachings into our experience.

Self-reflection is the common thread among all traditions of Buddhist practice. Its emphasis is on bringing awareness to one's own blind spots - with honesty and kindness. By examining our own subtle tendencies toward self-centredness and other negative habits, we can learn to take responsibility for our behaviour and our state of mind and well-being. In the spirit of taking responsibility for our own spiritual growth, we accept the challenge and personal empowerment in the book's title - it's up to us.

In the preface Venerable Pema Chödrön writes, "In trying to articulate what is so profound about Dzigar Kongtrül Rinpoche's style of presentation, I find that partly, it is the way he never holds back but always challenges himself; partly, it is his good heart and his humility; partly, it is that he has immersed himself whole-heartedly in western culture; partly, it is that he knows the minds of students; partly, it is his almost ruthless directness; partly, it is because you feel understood and appreciated; partly, it is because you feel you can't get away with anything."

It's Up To You will interest seasoned practitioners as well as newcomers to the spiritual path. It is published by Shambhala and released in Australia by Random House.



The Twelve Interdependent Links of Origination

Continued from page 3

In both ways basically what's happening, whether you are just enjoying the experience or maybe not necessarily enjoying it, there is some kind of a sense of addiction to get rid of the problem, to fix the problem. In both ways you have gained craving, craving for more.

Craving leads to taking, which is **depicted by a person picking some fruit** (9). So we then take — information, possessions, food, drink. Once you take, taking leads to grasping which is symbolised by the pregnant woman. Then you hold on to what you crave and what you have just obtained by taking. That holding on is what we call existence and that's **depicted by the pregnant woman** (10), which then leads to **birth** (11). Birth automatically leads to old age; **old age leads to death** (12). These are, briefly, the Twelve Interdependent Links of Origination. What I have been explaining to you is only really, really the basics. This is a very big subject; it is taught in the

Abhidharmakosha and *Abhidharmakosha-karika* really extensively.

We are not only talking about a gradual human evolution — first ignorance, then action and so on. It is definitely that; but we are also talking about what happens within one instant. When we go to a coffee shop and order a cappuccino, there is ignorance, which leads to action, which leads to everything... until you finish your cappuccino, which is death, which then leads to an appetiser or a headache or something else. In every action, in every aspect of our life, there are the Twelve Interdependent Links of Origination.

(The Gentle Voice would like to thank Tom Pengelly and Claire Blaxell for transcribing this teaching. For further details about recorded teachings contact Anna Vljajkovic at annavlaj@yahoo.com or phone 02 9518 1363.)

Dharma Dates

MADHYAMAKAVATARA — SECOND SERIES IN SYDNEY

Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche will teach the second series of *Madhyamakavatara* in Sydney from Friday 26 May to Sunday 4 June 2006. All the details will be advertised on the Siddhartha's Intent website and by email. Rinpoche has advised that those students who were unable to attend the first series will be able to attend the second series. However, he recommends that they listen to the recordings of the first series and read the commentary beforehand. The recordings of the first series will be available for purchase soon. Please contact Anna Vlajkovic to purchase recordings: annavlaj@yahoo.com or call 02 9518 1363. For those who did not attend the first series, a copy of the commentary will be issued free when you register for the second series. Contact jill@khyentsefoundation.org or call Jill Robinson on 02 9420 1340.

KHANDRO THRINLAY CHODON'S VISIT

Siddhartha's Intent Southern Door in Byron Bay and Sydney will host Khandro Thrinlay Chodon on her first visit to Australia. Khandro comes from a family of great yogis and meditators of the Drukpa Kagyü lineage of Vajrayana Buddhism and has received empowerments and teachings from masters including His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche.

Khandro has a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and acts as a bridge between eastern and western cultures, teaching around the world. She will give both public talks and weekend teachings in Byron Bay and Sydney.

Byron Bay: public talk — Friday 28 October 2005, weekend teaching — 29 and 30 October 2005. Sydney: public talk — Friday 4 November, weekend teaching — 5 and 6 November 2005. Enquiries for the Byron Bay events: byronbay@siddharthasintent.org or call 02 6685 1646. Enquiries for the Sydney events: australia@siddharthasintent.org or call 02 9420 1340.

SIDDHARTHA'S SCHOOL NEWS:

PRIMARY SCHOOL IN LISMORE, NSW, AUSTRALIA

Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche has kindly forwarded the result of a divination regarding the location of a primary school based on Buddhist principles to be established in Lismore, New South Wales, under his guidance. The new, enthusiastic Siddhartha's School Steering Committee is very excited about this project and is currently seeking volunteers and financial sponsorship for all aspects of the school operation.

It has been Rinpoche's wish for a long time to found such a school in the West and it will require generosity from all of our sangha. We hope this school will bring great benefit. For information about donations, sponsorships or other ways you can contribute, contact Eva Thomas at 02 6633 1257 or evasimon@dnet.aunz.com

PRACTICE ROOM FOR SYDNEY STUDENTS

Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche has discussed with committee members and students over the last two years his wish to establish a permanent practice space for students in Sydney.

Through the generosity of one of Rinpoche's students, Stephen Grant, we are now able to rent a space at Redfern for a reasonable weekly rental. Stephen has renovated the room in a simple, elegant style with a small kitchen, bathroom and storeroom. A shrine has been purchased, also in a simple, elegant style, made of Chinese elm in the late nineteenth century.

The first practice session was held on a Wheel of Dharma day, 10 July 2005, and approximately 35 students did a *Tsasum Drildrup* tsog offering together. Rinpoche recently blessed the practice room and did *Chime Phagme Nyingthik* tsog offering with the students.

Shamatha meditation practice is held every Wednesday evening at 7.30 p.m.; a *Tsasum Drildrup* tsog offering is held monthly on Guru Rinpoche day; a *Chime Phagme Nyingthik* tsog offering is held monthly on Dakini day and a full-day ngöndro practice is also held monthly.

Announcements for Steve Cline's weekend teachings will be advertised by email. For information on any practice sessions and teachings or to add your name to our email list please contact us: australia@siddharthasintent.org or call Jill Robinson on 02 9420 1340.

THREE-YEAR RETREAT

Vajradhara Gonpa in Northern New South Wales, Australia is the three-year retreat centre of Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche's world-wide mandala. The current three-year retreat began in January 2005 and at this point retreatants have settled into the lifestyle of a community engaged in continual, long-term, intensive practice within a formal boundary. Traditionally the details of what occurs in three-year retreat are kept very private, especially during the time of the retreat. Speaking very generally, the retreatants are currently continuing with their practice of ngöndro, the foundation practices of Tibetan Buddhism.

Externally many individuals are making ongoing contributions to the retreat. Some assist with food shopping and other support activities, some provide health care, some send financial contributions and many send their good wishes. The retreatants and staff at Vajradhara Gonpa are very grateful to all of you. If you would like to make a connection with the three-year retreat through some form of sponsorship, assistance or good wishes, please contact Kathie Chodron, the administrative director of Vajradhara Gonpa, at vajradharagonpa@siddharthasintent.org.

For more information about the three-year retreats at Vajradhara Gonpa, see our web page at www.siddharthasintent.org/VajradharaGonpa.htm.



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BUDDHA DOWN UNDER

Buddha Down Under is a small but dedicated sangha, happily made larger now with the arrival in New Zealand of Sarah Mist from Sydney. We are so pleased to have her here with us and have tried to make her feel welcome! We practice *Shower of Blessings* together on each Guru Rinpoche Day and also on Wheel of Dharma days.

His Eminence Beru Khyentse Rinpoche has been visiting New Zealand for several months and we have enjoyed great blessings from him. When one of our trustees, Ani Dianne, moved house recently, Rinpoche accepted her invitation to bless her home and he offered many prayers for auspiciousness as a place for practice with about 20 friends attending. After about 45 minutes, as Rinpoche finished the prayers and dedications, a glorious double rainbow appeared across the bay to the southeast. As we stood together on the balcony looking out at this lovely gift, Rinpoche whispered to two of the young children: "If you go downstairs to the front of the house and look back, the rainbows are actually over the house!"

We look forward to Beru Khyentse Rinpoche's return to New Zealand, probably in September.

Anyone wishing to join for practice should call the contact numbers published below.

SSRC MANAGEMENT TRANSITION

Michiko Filipak has now expanded her responsibilities within the sangha to include management of the Sea to Sky Retreat Centre (SSRC) in Canada. Please wish Michiko success in the ongoing operation of SSRC.

After six years of service at SSRC, Melitis Kwong is proceeding with the commitments of her meditation practice. Prior to her term of service as SSRC manager, Melitis completed a three-year retreat at Dordogne. The dedication of Melitis to the work at SSRC is much appreciated and we now wish her all auspiciousness as she progresses on the path of meditative practice. The SSRC web address is:
<http://www.siddharthasintent.org/SSRC/ssrcindex.html>

LAMA TSERING EVEREST'S VISIT

Lama Tsering Everest, interviewed on pages six and seven of this newsletter, will be in Sydney from 12 to 20 December 2005. She will give some general teachings during the evenings of that week. Then, on Friday evening 16, Saturday 17 and Sunday 18 December, she will give teachings and bestow a Red Tara empowerment. The venue is yet to be announced. Please phone Chantal Gebbie on 02 9550 3085 or Shona Barker on 02 9130 3338 for more information.

RECORDED TEACHINGS

An updated list of recordings to purchase is now available from Siddhartha's Intent Southern Door. Some of Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche's students have started the long process of transferring all teachings from tapes to MP3 CDs. All current and future teachings will be recorded directly to MP3 files. MP3 CDs can be played on computers, modern CD players and most DVD players. At some time in the future, tapes will no longer be sold.

Siddhartha's Intent Southern Door also has copies of Rinpoche's teachings in Canada, the United States and Germany. For an updated list and order form, please visit the website: www.siddharthasintent.org or contact Anna Vlajkovic: annavlaj@yahoo.com or call 02 9518 1363.

PRACTICE DETAILS

To find out about practices in your area, please contact:
Sydney — Jill Robinson on 02 9420 1340 or australia@siddharthasintent.org; Blue Mountains — Pamela and Hugo Croci on 02 4757 1352, 02 4757 2339 (after hours) or 0402 894 871; Adelaide — Tineke Adolphus on 08 8362 7553; Byron Bay Buddhists — 02 6685 1646 or byronbay@siddharthasintent.org; Buddha Down Under in Auckland, New Zealand — 09 424 3334 or buddhadownunder@ihug.co.nz.

PLEASE NOTE:

Because of its sacred content, please treat this newsletter with respect. Should you need to dispose of it, please burn it, rather than throwing it away.