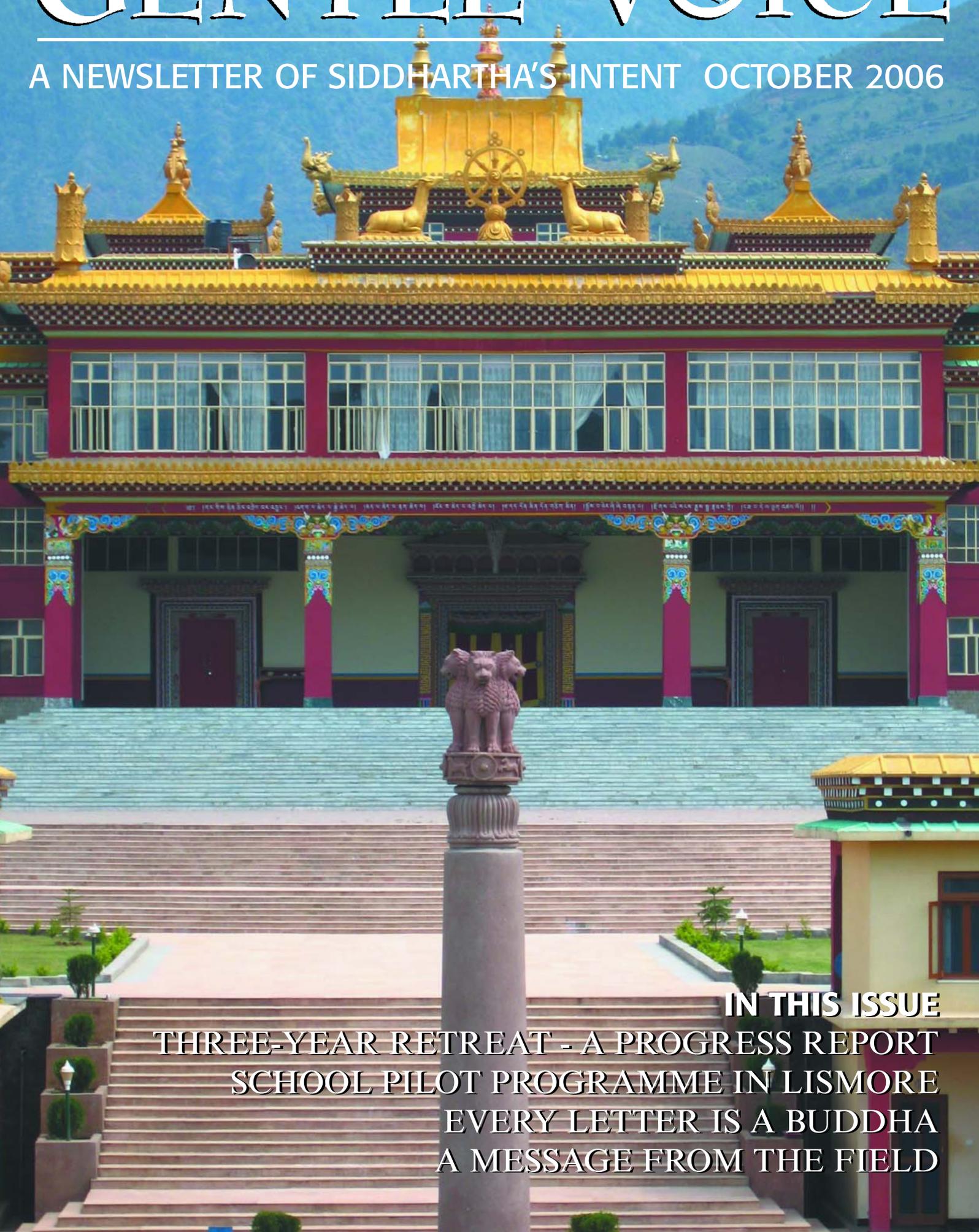


GENTLE VOICE

A NEWSLETTER OF SIDDHARTHA'S INTENT OCTOBER 2006



IN THIS ISSUE
THREE-YEAR RETREAT - A PROGRESS REPORT
SCHOOL PILOT PROGRAMME IN LISMORE
EVERY LETTER IS A BUDDHA
A MESSAGE FROM THE FIELD

How to Look for Guru and Be Student

by Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche

Okay, our discussion about *kalyanamitra* leads us to the question of what kind of guru we are looking for. Obviously we now know that the ideal guru is someone who has understood the view. We talk about realised beings: he is a realised being, she is a realised being, a vidyadhara (from *vidya* which means 'awareness' or 'realisation' and *dhara* which means 'holder').

Vidyadhara and Vajradhara are the highest ranking (*rigpa dzinpa* in Tibetan), basically someone who has understood emptiness, someone who has had at least a glimpse of *sunyata*. If you can find and be with that kind of guru, nothing drastic can go wrong. Of course, there will be bumpy roads here and there, not so much because it's a bumpy road but because our tyres have lumps and you feel that the road has bumps.

So it's important that the guru have some understanding of emptiness. And do you know why? Because someone who has understood emptiness has genuine compassion. For example, someone who knows the disease and knows how to cure it also has genuine compassion. But if someone only knows intellectually what the disease is, he can talk about curing it, but only on the intellectual level. So his or her compassion is also on the intellectual level.

Someone who has understood emptiness, even a little bit, knows the root of suffering. Not only suffering such as getting fired from a job or facing lots of bills to be paid, but the real root of suffering, the root of the problems – this person knows that. Therefore, someone who has a realisation of emptiness has genuine compassion and that is quite important.

Another good thing about someone who has understood emptiness is that he or she is also fearless. I would like to explain this a little bit. Fearlessness is important. The gurus need this fearlessness. You know Jigme Lingpa's prayer? We pray, "May I never fall into conventional expectation." Lamas should never fall prey to conventional expectation. Phew, that's difficult, especially for ordinary lamas like us! I'm speaking on behalf of all deluded lamas. I myself don't even think about understanding emptiness. But at times – not all the time, though – when I read the prayers of the great Jigme Lingpa it hits me, especially as a lama, that we should not fall victim to conventional expectation.

Fearlessness comes when you understand emptiness. I don't know if any of you know masters like Chadrak Rinpoche and Dodrupchen Rinpoche. I think they and Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche are some of the greatest examples of fearless masters. This kind of lama is sometimes not successful on the conventional level and many students aren't really attracted to them because it's not so appealing. As students these days we're only interested in a person who knows how to negotiate. Those lamas who have understood emptiness, those who are fearless and compassionate, they don't negotiate; there is no negotiation table. That is the criterion. If you can accept that and approach them with this mentality of, "Okay, I'm not going to negotiate", then you will get a lot of benefit, I guess. But if you approach them with the mentality of, "I will give you this. Can you give me that?", it doesn't work.

So someone who has understood emptiness is the main quality of the guru. And someone who has understood emptiness is someone who has compassion and is fearless. On top of that, someone who is learned, someone who is disciplined, someone who is kind and, if he happens to be the Vajrayana master for you, then someone who has all the necessary teachings coming from an unbroken lineage and someone who has practised. These qualities are very important. In addition, someone who is accessible, someone who speaks the language, someone who has the time. If the guru has these, that's good. If he or she doesn't, it's also fine.

Okay, but now we have a problem. "How do we know he or she has understood emptiness?" because only someone who has understood emptiness, knows if the other person is realised or not. This is the main problem. Most of the time we have to trust a beautifully designed brochure. "Oh, so and so is teaching. Let's go to this teaching." Or we rely on word of mouth from our friends who are eagerly wishing to convert us to whatever.

But one big thing I don't want you to forget is karma. That's going to play a very big role here. So looking for a guru is a bit like looking for a lover. I cannot really give you a description of what kind of lover you should look for. I can do it vaguely, but in the process of looking for one, you might bump into others. As I said earlier, if you happen to be the bee, you are lucky; if you happen to be the fly, not so lucky. This is something that you have to consider. Karma plays a very important role here.

Anyway, let's get back to how we find someone who is realised. How do we know if he or she is realised or not? As an ordinary being it's impossible to know, using direct cognition, whether the person is a realised being or not. There's no way. So the only way to judge if the person has any sort of realisation or not is by using inferential logic, by using all kinds of reference and experience.

But we have a very limited system of logic, a limited system of what is so-called rational experience. These so-called rational, logical judgments are not really reliable because most of our ways of judging a guru are very much mixed with feelings. You may not be very interested in enlightenment or you may not be at all interested in enlightenment, but very, very much looking for companionship. You are looking for a *mitra*, a friend, not a *kalyanamitra*, a spiritual friend. All of this makes it so difficult to really rationally look for a qualified master.

Maybe some kind of renunciation mind (perhaps of the wanting to live like a capitalist and work like a socialist kind) has made you go to Kathmandu or Tibet. There you walk into a monastery, an incense pot is burning very artistically and these innocent-looking young monks are walking up and down. You open the door of the main hall. Monks with their elaborate robes and hats, cymbals and drums, are doing really exotic chants. Up there on a big throne, supported by eight lions – the carved ones, of course – sits this master wearing a hat that is definitely much better than a baseball cap. All this makes you think, "Wow, he is my guru!"

Or, as I was saying earlier, a very carefully designed brochure can do the same thing. In the midst of office hours you're stressed, you've had an argument with your colleagues or you're on the verge of being fired by your boss, so maybe you hop in to a health-food shop. There on the notice board you see Japanese brushwork, saying, "Do you want to relax? Come here to this or that meditation centre." That works, too. Feeling is very fickle. Or maybe you're very involved in women's liberation as a feminist. "Wow, a Tibetan woman lama has come!" Enlightenment and all that goes out the window just because she's a female and you're a feminist.

For those who are new, if you are feeling more depressed because of all these seemingly critical remarks I'm making, you just have to get used to this. Really, the study of Buddhism is just that. It's a very critical approach – examining one layer after another, until there is nothing left to criticise, until every skin has been peeled off. It's painful, but I think it's good spiritual insurance.

Now, we're talking about how we know that a master is qualified. We can only use very limited analytical methods based on our logic. Beyond that we can't do anything. And that kind of rational system is usually stained with all kinds of expectations and feelings. That's what we've been talking about – feelings. What does 'trend' mean? 'Fashion.' I think these, too, are driven by feeling.

There is good news, though. I will tell you the good news. The four fundamental views of Buddhism, called the Four Seals of the Dharma, will never change.

1. Fashion will change, trend will change, feeling will change, but never one day will there be an occasion when someone will find one or two compounded phenomena that are actually permanent. That will never happen. All compounded phenomena are always going to be, have always been and will always be impermanent. That will not change and that is one of the fundamental teachings of the Buddha.

2. All emotion that stems from the ego is always going to lead you to pain. Never will someone one day find emotion coming from ego that actually gives you



lasting bliss forever. That will never happen.

3. Never will someone find one or two phenomena actually, truly existing, which Buddha missed. That will never happen.

4. Also, no one will find that nirvana does have some truly existing attribute. Nirvana is beyond extremes.

These four seals will never change. That's your insurance. These cannot change, but our critical mind will change.

Then what we need is listening and contemplating. You should study, you should listen to the teachings and read books. There's actually advice given by the Buddha called the Four Reliances. Don't just depend on the person, but on the teaching; don't just depend on the teaching, but on its meaning; don't just depend on the provisional meaning, but on the definitive meaning; and don't just depend on your judgmental mind, but on your wisdom mind. One very important line is never to depend on the person, but to depend on the teaching. I'm talking about this within the context of searching for the guru. You might think it's a bit of contradiction because right now we are talking about a person. Actually, it is very paradoxical. In fact, you will now begin to realise that in Buddhism the whole guru business is not so much a person thing. It's the path; the guru should be taken as a path.

So a student who wants to seek a teacher must first study, listen and then contemplate. This will definitely help. What it does is expand that small, limited, rational mind. That's going to become bigger. Your sceptical mind will become more mature. Right now your sceptical mind is emotion-oriented, trend-oriented, fashion-oriented. If you listen to the teachings and contemplate them, this will definitely be worn out. That's a good start. Then maybe even a little bit of meditation would help.

Then after, let's say, about a year of listening and contemplating, when you look for a master you look for the first quality. If someone is learned, that will help a lot, someone who is learned in all kinds of skills, most importantly learned in the skill of making you rich - rich in the state of realisation, that wealth or realisation!

Even more important than being learned is someone who is disciplined; many lamas are not disciplined. And within that there are three layers of discipline. Firstly, there's *pratimoksha* discipline, that is, if the lama is harming others or not. That's very important. If the lama harms someone else, the lama is breaking the pratimoksha vow, especially if the lama is a *bhikshu* or *bhikshuni*, a monk or nun. He or she must respect that vow. So discipline is important.

Even more important than the pratimoksha vow is the bodhisattva vow or discipline. Does the lama forsake his students? Actually, students shouldn't really worry about the lama rejecting the students because lamas are not allowed to reject them. Really, they are not allowed! If the lama is a really well-disciplined master, he is breaking the bodhisattva vow if he forsakes even one sentient being. Is the lama well disciplined, not only in the pratimoksha vow, but also in the bodhisattva discipline? On top of that, if you have a vajra master, definitely Vajrayana discipline is quite important. So look for a lama who is learned. More importantly, look for someone who is disciplined. Most importantly, you can have a kind of idiot lama who's not so learned or you can have a kind of wild lama who's not that well disciplined. But the one thing the lama has to have is the third quality, which is kindness. The lama *has to have* some kindness or wholesomeness. Actually, they are all related. Someone who is kind is bound to be disciplined and bound to become learned, too. Basically, if we talk about the hierarchy of these three qualities, according to Patrul Rinpoche, kindness is considered the most important quality of the guru.

(The Gentle Voice thanks Tom Pengelly and Claire Blaxell for their transcription. This teaching is available from Siddhartha's Intent, Southern Door, as an MP3. For details please contact Anna Vljajkovic at annavlaj@yahoo.com or phone 02 9518 1363.)
(All photos Tom Gwinn)



Three-Year Retreat - A Progress Report

By Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche

I'd like to say a few words about the Vajradhara Gonpa three-year retreat. Some people are finding it a little difficult because theoretical renunciation is different to renunciation in practice.

The renunciation that we talk about and the renunciation when we actually practise are two different things. And maybe some retreatants are suffering a little bit because they realise that renunciation is difficult. Suddenly they realise that renunciation is not that easy. Suddenly your pet matters, your health matters, your siblings matter or maybe your house matters. Also, I think some people are finding it difficult internally to renounce this habit of being attached to our rights, our freedom and our space, especially when you're placed in a situation with twenty-odd others, not just for a few days but for years. Then, all these things become kind of big. So I think some individuals are suffering, but I never expected that they would not suffer. That's part of the process, that's part of the package.

Sometimes we may think of going into individual retreat, but we may not think of working in a group and doing retreat in a group. And, you know, this attitude that the grass is always greener on the other side is a strong one. Some retreatants may be thinking that the group retreat is wrong, but that individually they could be somewhere in the mountains all by themselves, doing whatever they like. That's even more difficult because at least in a group situation you have someone to blame. When you're alone, you can't do that!

Also, I myself have realised that the modern world's system and the Vajrayana system do contradict each other. So at the end of the day it really depends on the individual practitioners and on how much they want to give up not only the outer things but even the inner things such as rights, space and all of that.

Basically, you have to practise the dharma and then wait and see. You shouldn't focus on a result. Nor should you deceive yourself about your practice. That's the essence of the discipline. You don't have to impress anyone.

Impressing someone is not that important, not at all important. Actually if you can, you should avoid impressing people. Who cares!

Another thing ... I've noticed that being a student of Buddhism is one thing, but being a disciple is quite another. I think a lot of people are quite good at jotting down a lecture and then scrutinising the philosophy really thoroughly. There's an intellectual tradition in the West that's very well established. So I think there's a very good foundation and there's ongoing interest in Buddhism. But I think many retreatants still act as though they're students. They want to study more, they want to learn more, they want to know more, they want to receive more teachings, they want to ask more questions. That's something I'll be advising them not to think because now is the time of practice. They have heard, let's say, about renunciation. And as simple as it may be, renunciation is actually something you can think about for three years. Just that!

But having said all of this, Vajradhara Gonpa's retreatants are in their second year, almost halfway. I must say I'm very impressed because first of all this is the first retreat in Australia. Vajradhara Gonpa has never been used as this kind of facility before. And on every level, the staff and the retreatants are doing well. I think as a pilot programme, as a guinea pig programme, it's working very well. It's very encouraging. So if things continue like this, I'm definitely going to think about the next batch. And already we have quite a lot of interest, from about 100 people, I think.



School Pilot Programme in Lismore

By Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche

During a teaching for Byron Bay Buddhists in May this year Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche outlined his ideas for education, especially for the pilot programme starting in Lismore.

I've set up a foundation, the Khyentse Foundation, and we have several aims. The foundation is relatively new, but I think we've been doing quite well. The idea came about because in the past students and practitioners of the buddhadharma had very good support. Even right from the beginning, when Buddha walked in Mangadath Street with a begging bowl early in the morning, it was guaranteed that he would get his alms on that day. And then later, of course, much of the credit for the continuity of the Buddha's teachings and practices goes to the scholars, saints and practitioners of the past. But it also really goes to the patrons, the kings, who did so much. Without them where would Nalanda University be, for instance? And if it weren't for Nalanda almost every Buddhist philosophy text that we're holding and studying may never have existed.

Times have changed. About two months ago I read in the *Herald Tribune* how Burmese monks who used to actually survive, begging alms in the city before going to the forest and meditating, can't do it any more because the city has become developed. It's becoming posh and city dwellers don't want to have the scene of monks begging. So the monks are going to the villages because there's still a support system there. Even in Buddhist countries such as Burma there are difficulties like that.

Now somehow Buddha's compassion and his aspiration must be it! Buddhism is flourishing everywhere. When I first taught in Australia I was here for a long time. I wasn't so busy in those days! I taught here for six months, can you believe it? I had four or six people listening. That was relatively not so long ago and now it's growing very fast. And many of these people who have an interest in Buddhism are really very serious.

It breaks my heart to see students from the Czech Republic driving all the way from, say, Prague to France when there's a teaching, eating one meal a day for two or three months, sleeping in their car and window-cleaning in the street so that they have enough money to go back home. I also know several girls in New York and London who do stripping, table dancing. They make money and then they go into three-year retreat. It's so touching! It must be their own merit and Buddha's compassion and aspiration coming together. So sometimes as a Tibetan

lama I feel very frustrated with fellow Tibetans who put more emphasis on painting the roof of the temple with gold instead of really helping these strippers. With all this in mind the Khyentse Foundation was set up and we're already managing not only to help Tibetans, but we're beginning to really help Western dharma students. And also some Theravadan students, which is good.

Anyway, one aim of the Khyentse Foundation is to establish a Buddhist school. Again, we're thinking about the future. Suddenly we have all these 'new age' Buddhists. (We can't really call them 'born again' Buddhists!) We have this whole new generation of Buddhists – that's you. And now, instead of just 'mating' or getting entangled with your thoughts, you really mate! You have your children. I can already see some of them playing outside. It's much easier in countries like Thailand, Taiwan and Bhutan where there's the Buddhist influence. But in many Western countries where the Buddhist community is very small compared to the rest of the population, there's nowhere for children to attend a Buddhist school. Of course, because of their love and their admiration for the Buddha's teachings, the parents want that. I guess that's what most parents try to do – they try to lead their children that way. And also the children themselves feel comfortable with the Buddhist environment. And at times some of the Buddhist children find it difficult to go to other schools. Maybe sometimes they get a little bit stigmatised for being the children of slightly abnormal families!

So with all this in mind, we have this small ... maybe big vision that we can create some kind of a situation, an atmosphere, to help the children of these first- and second-generation Buddhists. Not necessarily right away, but down the track. So as a pilot programme we're doing something in Australia. Simon can tell you much more about it.

Simon Thomas: Thank you, Rinpoche. I'm working with a group of volunteers who are establishing this in bricks and mortar. Also, according to Rinpoche's instructions it will be a secular type of school that would welcome children from a non-Buddhist background as well. And Rinpoche's ideas have proven to be extremely workable within the Australian system. There's a curriculum group working right at the moment and the legal structure is in place. We're absolutely certain that this can happen and will fit into the system here. Australia is an extremely good place for a pilot programme because we can get quite a bit of government funding once we get the programme up and

running. So it's really going to happen and Rinpoche has indicated that Lismore in northern New South Wales would be a good spot to start.

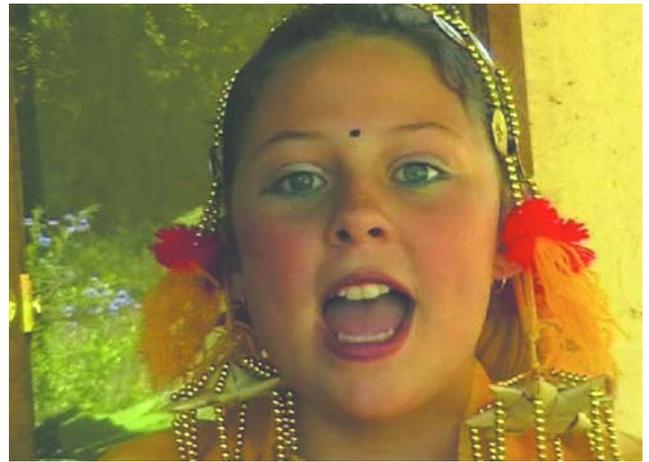
At the moment we're looking for two things. One is somebody who has experience in primary teaching and a Buddhist influence or background who can help with the English side of the curriculum. There's a vacancy in that group at the moment. And the other thing is we're going to need about \$Aus1,000,000! Everyone laughs, but if everyone threw in a bit, many hands would make light work of it. There's plenty of money out there and we've just got to see that it goes in the right direction.

I'd just really like to thank Rinpoche for choosing this area for the project because I really believe it can be of extraordinary benefit for the whole world. This is not just about finding a school for our kids. This is about having people who can be leaders in society and people who can be in the business world with thoughts other than just about lining their own pockets and people in the population who would vote for people like that! I seriously believe we can do this. Thank you, Rinpoche.

(Those wishing to support Rinpoche in this vision can find out more by initially contacting The Siddhartha School steering committee: The Siddhartha School, P.O. Box 520, Kyogle, NSW, 2474, Australia. Email sschool@khyentsefoundation.org or phone 02 6633 1257. For contributions by direct deposit: Bank: Commonwealth Bank of Australia, Account Name: The Siddhartha School, BSB Number: 062 - 563, Account Number: 2563 1007 4880. Please advise of direct payments by post or email. Cheques or money orders should be made payable to: The Siddhartha School.)

Scenes from footage taken during The Siddhartha School children's days (from top) Tara Thomas plays Asandhimitra, King Ashoka's chief queen; British Museum archaeologists, Ned Pomroy (left) and Jayden Cruickshank, discuss an inscribed Ashoka pillar; the ladies of King Ashoka's court have a snooty moment (clockwise from left Henna Baird, Tara Thomas, Dawn Johnston and Lilliana Bowen); Oak Landers plays King Ashoka in his grumpy, pre-dharma days.

(All photos Shakti Burke)





Every Letter is a Buddha

By Professor Peter Skilling

**Every single letter of the dharma
Is equal to an image of the Buddha.
Therefore a wise person
Should write out the *Tripitaka*.**

**In the dharma of the Buddha
There are 84,000 teachings.
Therefore, where there is a *Tripitaka*
There there are 84,000 Buddhas.**

This verse was originally written in Pali, an ancient Indic language related to Sanskrit. In Southeast Asia the verse is often written at the very end of manuscripts. Why is the verse written there, and what does it mean?

One reason is to encourage people to sponsor the production of manuscripts, and thereby preserve and perpetuate the dharma, the teachings of the Buddha. In Southeast Asia, people believe that to produce an image of the Buddha brings great merit, and they often devote their resources to the production of images. That is why there are so many beautiful Buddha images in Thailand and in other Southeast Asian countries.

Since people put so much value on images, the verse reminds us that the production of manuscripts – and of course, these days, the production of books – is also a source of merit. In fact, since every single letter of a text is equal to an image of the Buddha, the production of a manuscript or book brings even more merit. It is said that the Buddha taught 84,000 classes or categories of teachings, to counter the 84,000 mental defilements – the negative factors that exist in beings' minds. The Buddha's teachings were written down in the *Tripitaka*,

the collected teachings. Wherever there is a *Tripitaka*, therefore, 84,000 Buddhas are present.

Another idea suggested by the stanza is that manuscripts and books should be treated respectfully, just like Buddha images. Traditionally, images are kept in a clean and raised place, preferably at shoulder level or above. To invite an image into one's house is equal to inviting the Buddha himself: therefore the image is treated with the utmost respect, placed high up, and offered water, flowers, and incense. Manuscripts and books also deserve our respect, because they are equal to Buddha images. They are repositories of the dharma, and the study and practice of the dharma leads to achieving buddhahood.

To be respectful towards images and books has a psychological value. Our personal physical environment, as well as our social environment, mirrors our own inner space. When we reserve, outside and inside, a space for our ideals, our goals, for things we respect, we create a calm inner space, a place of inspiration. This brings strength to our daily and spiritual lives.



Palm-leaf manuscript in Khom script (Photo Fragile Palm Leaves Foundation and Peter Skilling)

Interview - Drubgyud Tenzin Rinpoche

Drubgyud Tenzin Rinpoche is the incarnation of the great Bhutanese yogi, Lama Sonam Zangpo (Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche's maternal grandfather). He is in Australia to further his English studies and to commence teaching. He kindly spoke to the Gentle Voice.

Could you say where you were born, Rinpoche?

I was born in Kathmandu, Nepal. There's a place called Swayambhunath and I was born there in 1983.

I believe His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche recognised you during a puja in Boudhanath. Is that correct?

Yes, it happened like this. My father was once very sick and he went to many doctors and couldn't improve his health. I think my uncle Drukpa Rinpoche requested some empowerments or any other suggestions about my father's health from Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. His Holiness gave some empowerments especially for my father and the rest of the family. I think that was the first time I met Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. Later on he asked my uncle to come to him for he had recognised me as the previous Lama Sonam Zangpo. I think that's how it started in this lifetime.

How did your monastic education progress after being recognised?

A year after I was recognised, I was enthroned in Bhutan at one of the monasteries of Lama Sonam Zangpo called Lhongtso, near Thimphu. I returned from Bhutan and studied for one year at the non-monastic school I had been attending previously. Then, as I think Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche had planned, I was sent to His Holiness Drukchen Rinpoche's monastery, Thubten Sangag Chöling in Darjeeling. I spent four or five years there, studying Buddhist rituals, then I went to Bir and studied mainly Buddhist philosophy at Dzongsar Institute.

Can you tell us about Lama Sonam Zangpo?

Lama Sonam Zangpo was a direct student of Shakya Shri. He also received teachings from Shakya Shri's son and many great masters. He was a renowned meditation and retreat master. He held strict retreats in remote areas and often moved the retreatants from one remote place to another remote place during the retreats. He would signal the change from one retreat session to another by

blowing a *kangling* (thigh bone) from his hut. During his life he had many students and gave teachings and instructions on meditation and Buddhist practices. He lived to be about 93 years old.

This is your first visit to the West, Rinpoche. Can you talk about your purpose for coming to Australia and what differences you have experienced so far?

I was given the opportunity by Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche to travel to the West and study English and also teach here. The English diploma class I'm attending now is quite tough. Most students doing this course are preparing for university. For me these classes will probably help me to give teachings in English to Western students and translate Buddhist texts in the future.

There's a different culture and way of living here. But in some ways it's the same. Everywhere I go, it feels the same. But I do find it amazing that Western people coming from a very different background and a different religion start to practise the dharma.

What would you like to do in the future, Rinpoche?

Well, being a Buddhist and also having this title of *tulku*, maybe I have to continue doing the same thing.

Would you like to say something in conclusion?

What we all look for is happiness. And yet our ego has its own interpretation about what happiness is. And in reality our happiness always turns out to be painful. Prince Siddhartha left the palace to look for ultimate happiness because he knew that all he had in the palace was another face of deterioration. All I want to say here is that we have this good opportunity to look for ultimate happiness and, more importantly, we have the capability not only to search for happiness, but also to transform our habitual views. So we should not waste our precious life being a slave to our ego.



(Photo Tom Gwinn)

A Message from the Field By Pema Maya

Pema Maya, a student of Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche from New Zealand, set up the first formal English programme at Dzongsar Institute in Chauitra this year. For the first time, students from Year Eight onwards are encouraged to study a language of their choice in addition to Tibetan. Ninety students are now studying English intensively. Here are excerpts from Pema Maya's journal.

29 March My first week, and the monastery feels like another world. Days start to the sound of conch shells, calling the monks to puja, and end with hundreds of monks debating under floodlights in the courtyard outside the temple.

I stay right above the kitchen and this morning joined the cook and kitchen staff for a 6 a.m. breakfast of *tingmo* (steamed white bread). The cook gave me a cup and filled it with salty butter tea. He sliced in an extra knob of butter and showed me how to dip the pieces of *tingmo*. It was okay, but not so easy to drink the tea afterwards!

14 April Our English-language teaching assistant, Harry, has arrived from the UK. He's here for four months as part of his gap year and has been an instant hit with the monks. Harry is already playing and umpiring cricket, has a number of snooker bets on the go with the non-ordained staff, and has been initiated into the football 'scrum' in the monks' TV room. (There are two TV rooms which are open on Sundays and from 8 to 11 p.m. Saturday nights.) The monks are naturally close with each other, so Harry's had to get used to them grabbing him by the hand, leaning on him and delivering the odd friendly slap to the bottom. Luckily he has a very good sense of humour.

In class we don't use chairs or tables – the students sit on carpets on the floor. Today Harry issued the students' textbooks and ended up with a monk lying on his back, one sitting on each knee and the rest in a pile on the books. It's now the 10 to 11 p.m. break and he's out at the canteen with Tulku Ngawang, the cricket captain.

30 April Last night I talked with the Khampa couple who look after the old construction office – now more an informal guest reception and meeting/TV room for the khenpos (and also the only place to go here for non-butter tea). *Kham-ke*, the dialect of eastern Tibet, is really broad and includes a lot of different words to standard Tibetan. It's the main dialect used in the monastery, but it's new for me. I found out Ngawang has been a wood carver for the Tibetan (Kham) branch of Dzongsar Monastery, making the detailed woodblocks used for prayer flags.

The Khampa people are pretty amazing – full of faith, humour and resilience. They have kept their spirit and devotion through all the years of Chinese occupation, including the destruction of their precious monasteries, widespread persecution, imprisonment and torture of their people.

Many of the Dzongsar monks braved the Chinese border guards to come here from Kham to study. Sonam Dorje told us his story over tea and *momos* in Bir this week. He left home at night, without telling his mother or father, to hitchhike and walk over the Himalayas to the Nepalese border. There he was imprisoned along with fifty others, questioned for two days by the Nepalese police, and given no food or even tea. The Tibetan government-in-exile negotiated their release and travel to India, from where Sonam Dorje called his sobbing mother to let her know he was safe. He has not been able to return since and said he was terribly homesick for the first year. This is his final year and he will try for a passport and visa after finishing his studies.

20 May The monks invariably argue about the translations of Buddhist terminology, and with eight or nine years of debating training (two hours a day) they know how to argue! Today we basically spent the whole hour discussing four lines – the Four Seals – that come up in the sutra commentary the intermediate students are working through. Gyaltsen asks very direct questions: “In English, is emotion in the body or in the mind?” stabbing at his arm and staring at me. They all amaze me... When I think of Sonam Dorje setting out from Kham on foot, alone, with the equivalent of seventy rupees to come to India; and of Dargye, who escaped from Tibet as a nine-year-old and cried nearly every day his first year in Sakya Monastery. Then there is the monk I shared a taxi with this week, who has been trying to get a pass and visa to return to Tibet for the last three months. His brothers and sisters have told him to hurry home, as his father is very unwell. His mother has already passed away during his time in India and he said he is considering sneaking over the border if the embassy doesn't hurry up.

22 May Here's a quote from Harry's journal about the fun he had debating.

“I was halted by some of my class monks. They pulled me over and were trying to make me debate. In a hurry yet quite keen to try, I agreed and thought I could get it over with quickly. The groups around stopped to watch me try. I had learnt a Tibetan phrase: *Ny ama inchi lumpa la uri... Hakosong ey?* meaning 'My mother is from England, do you



Monks studying English at Chökyi Lodrö College of Dialectics

understand?' I decided that this was my only debating tool. I stepped back on my right foot, raising my left leg and hands up in the air. Then I came crashing down, stamping my left foot on the ground and slapping my hands, with my right hand pointing at my opponent. It was only at this moment I saw the monk sitting on the ground. It was Rinpoche. Holy Potter! I was a little taken aback by this realisation. I wasn't sure what to say next. Fortunately, he was smiling and laughing, so I said 'Okay, umm' as I raised myself up for another attempt. 'Flintoff is the best cricketer in the world', expecting no reply but a laugh. I hadn't prepared myself to defend my statement. 'No' said Rinpoche, 'Shambhu is the best.' I hadn't ever heard of this cricketer, but I guessed he was Indian. In a bit of a hurry and so unprepared, I ended the debate with a feeble, 'Well, possibly' and walked off."

28 June Luden Khen Rinpoche, a Sakya Lama from Dehra Dun, is arriving tomorrow. I've just been told that previously his incarnation was from the same monastery as Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo. Today the monks cleaned the entire monastery and put coloured flags down either side of the road. There are piles of pine branches ready to light at the entrances and *thangkas* hung in the temple.

29 June Luden Khen Rinpoche arrived this morning and was greeted by clouds of incense smoke and monks playing instruments and holding banners and parasols. We stood with the local Tibetan people and held up white scarves in offering, while Rinpoche was escorted into the temple for prayers and formal offerings. It was wonderful to sit there in the temple. Although the reception was very formal, the atmosphere was happy and relaxed.

2 July Watched the England – Portugal game with Harry and the monks last night. Wow! It was so much fun. The TV was on the temple porch, in case of rain, and more than a hundred monks came to watch. They are sooo funny – cheering at every near miss, laughing when the refs started jumping around and especially when anyone cried, plus they all have bets on the go. They really get behind their team.

I'm off to Bhutan for a couple of weeks now. Will report from there!

(For further excerpts from Pema Maya's journal and to read about 2007 volunteer positions at the monastery please visit the Khyentse Foundation website at www.khyentsefoundation.org.)



*Monks receive many years of debating training, two hours a day
(All Photos Harry Elgood)*

Dharma Dates

WHAT MAKES YOU NOT A BUDDHIST?

Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche's much-anticipated first dharma book written for a broad audience is now available in Chinese and will soon be available in English. The book, titled *Almost Buddhist* in Chinese and *What Makes You Not a Buddhist?* in English, cuts right to the fundamentals of Buddhist philosophy with a thorough explanation of the Four Seals. Rinpoche explains impermanence, suffering, emptiness and liberation with refreshing clarity, using a combination of classic and modern examples to illustrate each point. The Chinese version was published in May 2006 by Navigator Culture (Taiwan) and is already a bestseller there. The English version, from Shambhala Publications, will be in bookstores in January 2007. Rinpoche has pledged all of his profits from both versions of this book to the Khyentse Foundation.

DEER PARK INSTITUTE

Since Dzongsar Institute moved to Chauntra in 2004, Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche has had the vision of turning the old institute in Bir into a modern-day Nalanda. In March this year Rinpoche

inaugurated the Deer Park Institute there with a five-day teaching on *The Sutra of Recollection of the Noble Three Jewels*. It will be a centre for individuals and organisations from India and all over the world to study and explore Buddhist philosophy, in Pali and Sanskrit traditions, as well as a centre that preserves and propagates the classical, philosophical traditions of India. For further information contact the Deer Park Institute, P.O. Bir, District Kangra, Himachal Pradesh, 176 077, India, or email deerparkindia@gmail.com.

RAPPING WITH RINPOCHE

Lotus Outreach Australia is as committed to raising awareness as raising funds. The growing global imbalance in the distribution of wealth means that exploitation and trafficking of impoverished children is increasing all the time. Images of vulnerable children touch all our hearts, but we often feel helpless to make a real difference.

Cont...



NSW 2012 • Australia
PO Box 1114 • Strawberry Hills

INTENT
OF SIDDHARTHA'S
A NEWSLETTER
VOICE
GENTLE

During Rinpoche's recent visit to Sydney, Lotus Outreach arranged a unique event, a rap session for over 200 people where we could explore the challenge of practical compassion – how do we translate that "flash of unconditional kindness" towards a suffering child into reliable, compassionate action? Two of the ways that Rinpoche supported were advocacy and education – and he emphasised that no matter how small the contribution, it was precious. With regard to compassion, the motivation is more important than the amount!

Lotus Outreach's *Girls Access to Education* programme in Cambodia works to provide educational opportunities for girls at risk of trafficking – and we welcome all offers of support. For more information on all our programmes, email meg@lotusoutreach.org or visit our website: www.lotusoutreachaustralia.com.

SYDNEY CENTRE

Siddhartha's Intent Southern Door's practice room is situated at 1/141 Redfern Street, Redfern. The regular practices held at the centre are: shamatha meditation and Madhyamika study group weekly on Wednesday evening at 7.30 p.m; Guru Rinpoche Day tsog offering practice monthly; Dakini Day tsog offering practice monthly and all-day ngöndro practice monthly. Enquiries: australia@siddharthasintent.org or telephone Jill Robinson on 02 9420 1340.

BYRON BAY BUDDHISTS

Following Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche's empowerment of *Tsa Sum Dril Drup* in May this year, the BBB sangha is now practising this sadhana as a tsog on Guru Rinpoche Day each month. In addition, shamatha meditation is held every Wednesday evening at 6 p.m. and the Longchen Nyingthik ngöndro practice is held on the third Sunday of every month. A Madhyamika study group meets twice a month on Monday at 5 p.m. For further details contact Byron Bay Buddhists on 6685 1646 or email byronbay@siddharthasintent.org.

PRACTICE DETAILS

Here are the contact details for practices in your area.

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;

Canberra: Suzie Erbacher on 02 6281 1101;

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.



Cover photo: Chökyi Lodrö College of Dialectics, Chauntra, India
(Photo Harry Elgood)

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.