



LOTUS ARROW

Newsletter of the Kurukulla Center for Tibetan Buddhist Studies

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Spiritual Director: Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Resident Teacher: Ven. Geshe Tsulga
Center Director: David Kittelstrom
Spiritual Program Coordinator:
Suzanne Persyn

LOTUS ARROW Editor: Anne Friedman
WEB: www.kurukulla.org
EMAIL: kkc@kurukulla.org
PO Box 381202, Cambridge MA 02238
PHONE: (617) 624-0177

Kurukulla Center Seeks a Home of our Own

"Buy a building. Have a plan."
—Lama Zopa Rinpoche

When he was in town giving teachings at Kurukulla Center in 1998, Lama Zopa Rinpoche said that if we invited Ribur Rinpoche to Boston, it would help remove hindrances to our buying a house for the Center. For many years now, we have wanted to own our own place and the Kurukulla Building Committee has been meeting regularly for a couple of years, but somehow the conditions have not come together. Until now.

Last May, Ribur Rinpoche did indeed accept our invitation, and while he was here, Rinpoche strongly encouraged Center members to work together to buy a permanent facility for Kurukulla. "In Tibet," he recounted, "As soon as people received their salary, they would immediately put aside a certain percentage for charitable giving."

After Ribur Rinpoche's visit, under the leadership of Jennifer Campanelli and Priscilla Sawa, members of the Building Committee spoke to many center members to see how much actual support there was for moving ahead to buy a place for the Center. We are considering setting fundraising targets of \$200,000 for a downpayment on a \$450,000–500,000 property, and gathering multi-year pledges with the aim of paying off the mortgage in five years. We were greatly encouraged in this research by three challenge grants that had been offered previously—\$3,000 by Lama Zopa Rinpoche and \$30,000 each by two center members—which meant that if we could raise \$63,000 from other sources, we'd have \$126,000 toward our deposit.

Many Kurukulla members responded enthusiastically to the Building Committee's inquiries and have begun to make pledges to the Building Fund. It now seems realistic to hope that by this time next year we could have our own place.

Geshe Tsulga-la has long been keen for the Center to find a home: "It is my wish and the wish of many of us here to have our own house for Kurukulla Center, where we can have a gompa and perhaps a library that can be open all the time, where people can come to make offerings, meditate or study at any time.

"We are here for such a short time that we shouldn't think only of ourselves. If we are able to build a facility to teach Dharma, we can benefit many generations. The Dharma will flourish here in Boston, and our children and our children's children will be able to learn and practice."

We are planning to officially launch the drive to buy a house for Kurukulla Center in the Fall with an event at

Friends' Meetinghouse. Please watch for more information. However, if you would like to get involved even now, please contact the Building Committee by email at campanel@hudce.harvard.edu or sawa@verisity.com. 

Summer Camp at Milarepa

By Debra Thornburg

As my daughter passes from being a toddler to a preschooler, I am increasingly concerned about her religious education. While in America, there are a potpourri of excellent programs for adults in the various Buddhist traditions, little is available for children. So when my daughter, Kate, was old enough to attend the weekend summer camp at Milarepa Center, I quickly reserved a space for both of us.

On the weekend of July 21, Kate and I drove up with Geshe Tsulga to the northeast kingdom in Vermont for her



Ven. Geshe Tsulga and a fellow pilgrim at Kurukulla Center's annual June outing to the Peace Pagoda in Leverett MA. Photo: Kris Snibbe

first formal introduction to Buddhism. While I found old friends, Kate quickly made new ones. We relaxed until a diner of tofu pups and other kid-friendly food and a partial showing of *The Little Buddha* quieted the children down before bedtime.

The next day was packed with Dharma crafts, games, and instruction in gompa (temple) manners and protocol. The children were thrilled when Geshe-la entered and took his seat. He then spoke to the children and offered advice to the parents. As he left the meditation hall, his face radiated even more kindness than usual out of his love for the children.

Under Joe Schoolcraft's competent guidance and uncanny ability to select activities both the children and adults could enjoy, we stenciled and strung piles of prayer flags, cast tsa tsas out of plaster of paris, and sandpainted drawings of Arya Tara and Shakyamuni Buddha. Members from surrounding FPMT centers assisted, allowing some of the parents to slip away for quiet time. I discovered that Kate's favorite Buddha is Tara because she is a girl!

Back home, Kate insisted on setting up a small altar next to mine. She placed a gold plaster Buddha on it (a prize given to the children at the end of a game) and offers flowers every few days. While she has always been vaguely curious about my altar and practice, her understanding certainly deepened after this weekend.



Animal Liberation and Medicine Buddha Practice

In June, we learned that one of FMPT's very special teachers, Geshe Lama Konchog was diagnosed with stomach cancer. At Lama Zopa Rinpoche's recommendation, we quickly organized practices for Geshe Lama Konchog's long life as well as immediate and complete recovery.

Led by Venerable Damchoe, many Kurukulla Center members participated in 6 hours of meditation and prayer that included animal liberation and Medicine Buddha practices. While we practiced, crickets chirped on the altar. After circumambulating Geshe-la and Damchoe's house, we liberated 50 crickets and 200 worms. There were plenty of worms left for members to take home and free in the suburbs of Boston.

We dedicated the merit from both the Medicine Buddha and animal liberation practices to Geshe Lama Konchog's health and to the health and long life of all family, friends, and sentient beings.

We finished this inspiring and auspicious afternoon with a Guru Puja. Geshe Lama Konchog and all our teachers remain in our prayers.



Set Them Free

by Amy Kittelstrom

Once the call went out to do extensive practice for the sake of Geshe Lama Konchog, center member Rachel Coleman took the advice to liberate animals to heart. She thought about how many lobsters are killed and eaten in New England, what great suffering they experience in captivity and death, and what extensive merit could be created by saving them from this agony. Rachel spent a lot of time on the telephone with experts at the Aquarium and others, learning how to care for and transport the lobsters between purchase and liberation. Many Center members contributed to the lobster fund so that we could purchase as many as possible on an auspicious day, Saka Dawa.

After taking precepts before dawn that morning, Damchoe, his landlord, Pemba, and I drove up to the North Shore, where we bought 40 lobsters. We carefully packed them in coolers with damp towels for the journey to the shore. The store staff assisted us, at times baffled, at others amused, at all times curious.

We hauled everything—lobsters, portable altar, saffron water—to the beachside and situated ourselves between

splashing children, sunbathers, and fishermen. We circumambulated the coolers, said some quick prayers, and splashed the blessed water on the lucky creatures. Freeing their claws was the last step we took before dashing into the water, holding the lobsters as Rachel had instructed us, their claws waving in the air, and our OM MANI PADME HUM cries cacophonating off the incoming waves.

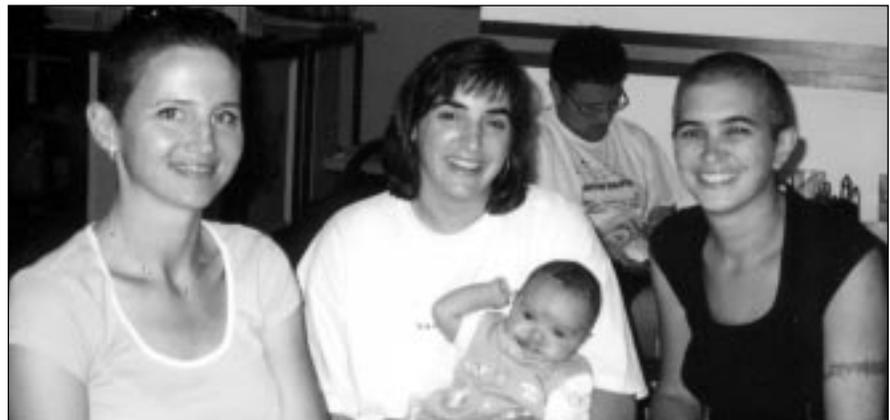
When the coolers were empty, the last lobster free, we stood facing the ocean. We earnestly dedicated that merit to the future enlightenment of all sentient beings, to the health of Kurukulla Center, and to the longevity of Geshe Lama Konchog. Thank you to all who contributed.



Congratulations, Graduate

Our industrious Venerable Damchoe achieved his G.E.D. in June, in record time. He took English classes last fall at Harvard extension school and math lessons from former Director Jennifer Campanelli. In the spring, he started the coursework to pass the high school equivalency tests in social studies, math, science, and literature.

One by one, he passed the obstacles until the final one in June, an essay test that is most challenging to non-native speakers. When he returned from Los Angeles, where he attended His Holiness the Dalai Lama's teachings, the results awaited him. Success! Rejoice for Damchoe, who plans to attend Bunker Hill Community College in the fall, preparatory to attendance at UMass-Boston. Any contributions to his college education will certainly be welcome.



Suzanne Persyn, Jennifer Campanelli, her son Max (born May 28th), and Kerry O'Brien celebrate Max's first outing to the Tibetan Restaurant. Photo: Amy Kittelstrom

From the Director

As we go about trying to perfect the circumstances of our lives, trying to get everything into balance with the greatest amount of satisfaction and the fewest shortcomings, we may be met with more or less success. The teachings of the Buddha are filled with techniques we can use to attain such an end: by becoming less attached to me and mine, our minds become more happy, and by living a life that is ethical and mindful, we create more worldly success and have more peace of mind. Even if you don't believe in future lives or take refuge in the three jewels, Buddhism still has much to offer.

But along with the teachings on meditation, ethics, and selflessness is the teaching on impermanence and death. No mere doctrine, this is one of the most striking observations the Buddha made about the reality we face: Even if you get everything you want—say a nice home, a caring and supportive family, and a job that you love—you will always, at some point, lose it all. It is unavoidable. And you may lose it much sooner than you think.

I read the following story in an article from *The New York Times* on August 19th:

With most of the arrangements for their wedding taken care of and their honeymoon to Bali all set, Peter Seligman and his fiancée, Sara Sinek, set off yesterday morning to get a marriage license. Ms. Sinek had taken the morning off from her job at a publishing office, where the excitement had been growing. Her supervisor said, "Every day it was another event. They were a divine, wonderful, darling, very in love and very smart couple."

A few moments before their train pulled into Brooklyn Bridge station, Mr. Seligman, a 30-year-old partner at a major public relations company, felt dizzy. He and his fiancée stepped out between the subway cars so he could get some air. Then, in a single surreal moment, Mr. Seligman fainted, tumbled onto the subway tracks, and was killed, electrocuted by the third rail.

"There is no explanation for such a thing," said Dan Klores, the president of Mr. Seligman's company. "Peter was a young man of great decency who possessed an incredible work ethic. He had his entire life, a life filled with love and continued success in front of him."

As many of you know, my life has been a bit of a fairy tale the last few months as I pre-

pared for my own wedding after a year-long engagement. Very much smitten with one another, Amy and I had been crossing tasks off our to-do list as we looked forward to our June nuptials. We really wanted the ceremony to express something meaningful about ourselves, and I relished the prospect of an extended holiday afterward.

In the middle of our preparations, Ribur Rinpoche arrived for an inspiring week of teachings and initiations. His main teachings were on renunciation and bodhicitta. Renunciation, or the wish to be free of samsara, is hard enough to develop under normal life circumstances. When one is preparing for one's wedding, that is doubly so. But there was something so precarious feeling about all that good fortune that in another sense we were all too aware of its transiency. Sometimes we even had visions of a tragedy like what happened to the couple in the story above.

Some might think it morbid to think of a potential tragic death in the days leading up to one's wedding. But from a Buddhist perspective this is being realistic, allowing one to make appropriate decisions about one's planning: the happiness won't last, and one might die first anyway. With this knowledge, the thing to do is try and use those conditions to create more positive karma, to use our blessings to create more good fortune rather than simply using it up. One way we did this was by thinking of all the happiness we wanted to give to others, rather than just to ourselves, through our ceremony. And on the honeymoon in Spain, we took a week out to do retreat at an FPMT center there to get the marriage off to a good start.

The day of the wedding was wonderful. Neither of us could sleep that night because the memories of all the kind things our friends and families said to us kept stoking the bliss. I hope that the bliss—and the trials—of my newly married state will allow me to be a better center director, that my marriage becomes a basis for reaching out to others in order to share my incredible good fortune.



Ven. Damchoe and Geshe-la celebrate with Amy & David Kittelstrom on June 24th.



Kurukulla Center
PO Box 381202
Cambridge MA 02238

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His Holiness in Washington DC

By Glenda Medeiros

This summer, the Smithsonian Institute sponsored *Tibetan Culture Beyond the Land of Snows*, a trailblazing Folklife Festival. The festival was inspiring, educational, solemn, celebratory, and so much more. But—I pause to consciously breathe, reflect, and smile—there was also an extraordinary time when His Holiness



Glenda M. waves from Washington DC

the Dalai Lama was in front of the U.S. Capitol Building, in the same physical space with thousands of other beings on the Mall. Speaking to a gathering of so many yet communicating directly to each individual, his words of love, peace, encouragement, and support were unambiguous and edifying. I recorded some of His Holiness' teaching:

- Affection is the foundation of our survival. Aggressiveness comes later.
- I/my/me. These words bring early heart attacks. Self centeredness brings disaster.
- We've had wars—the former Yugoslavia, WWI, and WWII. These are temporary solutions. It's just getting emotional satisfaction rather than solving the problems.
- Think: "If I harm you, I will suffer.." Keep in mind their interest.

- No need for big weapons! The workers in the Pentagon can retire!

Does everyone else feel like His Holiness smiles directly at you, even in a crowd of thousands, and that he knows exactly who you are, how you feel, and helps you whatever your need? His glorious endless smile communicated inner and outer love that is an antidote to any obstacle I can imagine. May His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso remain in life until samsara's end!

Can you tell I had a great time in our nation's capitol? I also sent many silent messages of fond greetings to Kurukulla Center members! My gratitude also went out to Geshe-la for his honorable direction and support. And I did say many mantras for all the ants, worms, insects, and grass I know we sat on in prayer!

