



LOTUS ARROW

Newsletter of the Kurukulla Center for Tibetan Buddhist Studies

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KURUKULLA CENTER PURCHASES PROPERTY IN MEDFORD



THE NEW HOME FOR KURUKULLA CENTER, 68 MAGOUN AVENUE, MEDFORD.

By Jane Larsson

The day that the Kurukulla community has worked toward for years has finally arrived! On June 6th, the holy day of Saka Dawa, Kurukulla Center completed the purchase of a new home!

Located at 68 Magoun Ave in Medford, the three-story building was most recently a nursing home. With over 7,000 square feet of living space in the main house and an unfinished carriage house, there is plenty of space for a meditation hall, a library, living quarters for Geshe Tsulga and Damchoe, and more to spare.

Prior to making an offer, the Building Committee invited Geshe-la to visit the space. Nodding his approval, he pointed to the spacious back yard and said, "We should build a stupa right there." When news of a positive divination performed by Lama Zopa came in later that day, we moved ahead, confident and excited.

What's next?

Now comes the fun—turning the building into a wonderful Dharma center! We

will need to complete renovations and repairs to adapt the property for our purposes, which we hope to have completed by September.

Of utmost importance now is working capital. Through the generous support of many friends of the center, we have sufficient funds to cover the down payment and

closing costs. But we still need a sizeable investment for renovations to construct and furnish the meditation hall as well as living space for Geshe-la and Damchoe. If you are interested in making a donation for these renovations, please contact Priscilla Sawa at sawa@verisity.com or 781-721-0196.

In addition, we plan to organize work weekends over the summer months. If you can donate your time, provide professional services at a "friend of Kurukulla" rate, or help out in anyway, please let us know by contacting Paula Moreau at drosemo@aol.com or 781-431-7320.

THE MOST INCREDIBLE THING I HAVE EVER DONE

By Venerable Kerry

I think the most surreal and definitive moment of my stay in Nepal, an experience distinguished by both qualities, was struggling into yards of maroon fabric in a tiny room along with four others, equally perplexed women all vainly trying

to dress for our ordination. The accompanying spasm of panic and exhilaration was the clearest moment in a five-month-long welter of remarkable faces, places, and moments. Which was more remarkable, the view of Machhapuchhare from Pokhara, my first mountain, or that of the rows of very young, newly-ordained nuns kneeling behind me in the dimly lit gompa? And then there was the slightly giddy feeling of walking in flip flops and robes through a tangle of cows, taxis, and garbage on my way to Boudha to sit in the shadow of the stupa and e-mail home.

All the changes in my external environment merely mirrored the shifts in my internal landscape, starting with the moment that Lama Zopa's assistant, Brian, crouched in front of me in the gompa, said, "Rinpoche would like to know if you could take ordination tomorrow with Geshe Sopa."

Everything that followed from that moment has been part of the most incredible and challenging thing I have ever done. I have learned that living in vows means an attempt to live in constant mindfulness and self-discipline. I have also learned to constantly repeat to myself Lama Yeshe's injunction that monks and nuns are not necessarily realized beings; we are merely people who are trying. It has been at times difficult. I have been sick, cold, hungry, craving coffee, and that's only the physical obstacles. At the same time, enclosed by the daily rhythm of morning puja and rambunctious, nightly debates, I felt a serenity that still inspires me with an unforeseen sense of love and purpose.

When I think of Nepal and Kopan, my mind falls into a litany of things that I miss. I miss being both an element and an emblem of a living culture; the constant need to explain myself here is both

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stimulating and exhausting. I miss the tremendous color of Nepal. I miss the monks, the luxuriously slow pace of life, and most of all I miss the permeation of daily life by the spiritual. Here there are no stupas to circumambulate, no dilapidated roadside shrines smoldering with incense, no bodhi trees casting their shade over the realized and unrealized equally. I don't intend to romanticize the wrenching suffering or waste of an impoverished culture; these things were very hard to accept. But it was such a blessing to live in a world without cell phones and SUVs, such a peeling away of unnecessary complications and distractions. I've experienced a sense of spaciousness and freedom, both at Kopan and in the vows themselves that I've never experienced anywhere else.



VENERABLE KERRY IN HER ROBES.

GESHE-LA'S 10-WEEK TRIP TO INDIA

By Sue Macy

On January 25th, Geshe-la returned to India for ten weeks, spending the first six weeks in his monastery, Sera Je, near Mysore in the south of India. There Geshe-la attended ten days of teachings on the stages of the path by one of his root gurus, Gyume Kensur Rinpoche, who lives in Switzerland. He also received initiations from his primary root guru, Sera Je Kensur Rinpoche, who resides in Australia. Geshe-la spent the last four weeks of his trip in Dharamsala in northern India attending the Dalai Lama's annual teachings there.

Help Support Geshe-la's Students at Sera Je Monastery

Throughout the year, students arrive from Geshe-la's homeland in Kham, Tibet, with nothing more than the clothes they are wearing. Others come from Tibetan Refugee Camps to pursue their studies. They all depend on the kindness of Geshe-la's students in America for books, clothes, food, even a toothbrush. If you would like to sponsor a monk or make a one-time contribution, please contact Sue Macy at sue3ij@aol.com or 617-262-5084.

A Long-Life Puja for our Beloved Teacher

On February 19th, I joined Geshe-la in India and within hours was navigating my way through an open-air market the size of Boston Common with two of Geshe-la's students to buy groceries for Geshe-la's long-life puja. Because of the generous donations of students back in North America, we were able to provide both breakfast and lunch for the monks. We bought huge burlap sacks of dried peaches, dates, raisins, and exotic spices, which were cooked in enormous vats of rice over an open fire.

On February 21st, the 5 1/2-hour puja for the long life of Geshe-la and his teachers was held at the new Tehor Khamtsen temple at Sera Je. Western students offered new cushions complete with beautifully designed tapestry coverings, and each of the more than 1,300 monks received a new offering scarf and one hundred rupees. Geshe-la offered a complete set of the canonical Indian commentaries (over 250 volumes), a set of tangka paintings depicting Lama Tsongkhapa's life, new banners that run the span of the temple, and a generous donation toward the new temple's construction costs. It was very moving to witness the disciplinarian reciting the names of all who gave money and to hear the chorus of the monks praying for Geshe-la's long life.

To Dharamsala and back home

We flew to Delhi on March 5th and caught the night train to Dharamsala two days later. We stayed at the OM Hotel, owned by one of Geshe-la's friends, who gave us the best rooms with the best view! Throughout our stay, Geshe-la was visited by many friends and students; one nephew even traveled twenty-eight hours just to spend a few minutes with Geshe-la. David Baker, one of Geshe-la's students from Connecticut, took us to tea.

His Holiness gave two days of teachings, after which he began the sixteen-day teaching on the *Lamrim Chenmo* on March 11th. On the 13th, Geshe-la and I offered ten rupees to each of the 4,016 Sangha, including Ven. Kerry. Center members at the teachings included John Morse, Pat Venter, and Lila Moreau. And, our own Noel McKenna took ordination on March 22nd!

Back in Boston, we were met by Center members who waited patiently for our much delayed flight. Geshe-la was tired but happy to be back. I was tired and, well, wishing I were back at Sera!

PRAYING WITH YOUR WHOLE BODY

By Christina Russo

CENTER MEMBER AND WBUR JOURNALIST CHRISTINA RUSSO SAT DOWN A FEW WEEKS AGO TO TALK TO SHARON CARDAMONE, A LONG-TIME YOGA PRACTITIONER, TEACHER, AND KURUKULLA CENTER MEMBER.

CR: *When and how did you first get interested in yoga?*

SC: I started dabbling in yoga as teenager. But I became seriously interested because of physical problems from running. I ran competitively through high school and college and later in road races. But I started having back problems, muscle pain, as well as tight hips, hamstrings, and shoulders. So, I started teaching myself yoga. And when I came to Boston, I found a proper teacher, started studying, and eventually found the Jivamukti Center in New York. I became certified to teach after taking a one-month teacher training course at Kripalu Center in Lenox, Massachusetts. That was ten years ago.

CR: *When did you meet the Dharma?*

SC: Five years ago. Two of my yoga students were Kurukulla Center members

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

At the recent Green Tara initiation, Geshe Tsulga was instructing us to visualize ourselves as Tara when a surprising moment came: Geshe-la said that since we were all Tara, he would proceed to make offerings to us. How marvelous! It was a momentary escape from the limited, self-doubting ego and a powerful reminder of our own buddha nature and our potential for enlightened activity.

Looking around at the center lately, it strikes me that this potential for enlightened activity is more than just a potential. If the activity of buddhas is to create the conditions for the flourishing of the Dharma, then the hard work being done by Kurukulla members every day is evidence of buddhas among us.

Of course, the most visible manifestation of this hard work is the fruition of the efforts of the building committee. Not so visible is the way this group has developed a remarkable level of professionalism over the past year. Jennifer Barlow kept the whole group motivated, created a good relationship with the bank, and got our finances in order. Kris Snibbe looked at many properties over the course of the year and coordinated inspectors, contractors, and engineers during the property evaluation. Jane Larsson has been consulting with lawyers to ensure a smooth purchase and has been checking into alternative lenders. As invaluable committee members, Nick Ribush, Paula Moreau, and Priscilla Sawa offered advice, support, and much of their time. Priscilla, our Membership Coordinator, also launched a successful

membership drive this Spring; many thanks to those who responded to her letter.

In other volunteer news, I'm very happy to announce that Debra Thornburg has stepped forward to be the new Spritual Program Coordinator. Debra has been practicing the Dharma for over two decades and has been a selfless contributor as a member of the program committee. We are delighted to have someone so qualified in this role.

Many people attend to Geshe Tsulga's personal needs, including Sue Macy, Amy Harris, Haim Kirschenberg, and Allison Perry. Thanks also to Eugenie Trott, who recently helped Geshe-la get to the Indian Embassy in New York on short notice, and Lila Moreau, who sponsored Geshe-la's flight to Amsterdam.

Other new volunteers include Ed Softky, who now manages the Center's mailing list and income database; Sunni McMillan, who has stepped forward to design the mailings; Ann McCann, who keeps the website up to date; Nancy Mulvihill, who is doing promotions work; and Anne Friedman, who is making deposits. Anne has also been editing this newsletter for several issues and has been doing a marvelous job in coordinating all the contributors (and dealing with my own truancy!).

These are just a few of the people who make this community hum. For good will expressed through your donations of time, energy, resources, and practice, I thank you all. May all beings benefit!

(Shelly Hubman and Tony Trigilio), and they inspired me to go to Dharma teachings and start practicing. Shelly and I became friends, and she invited me to teachings.
CR: How do these two parts of your life merge?

SC: I realized I could use my practice not only to make myself and my students feel better in body and mind but also to benefit all sentient beings by bringing more of a Buddhist focus to my classes.

There are many similarities between yoga and the Dharma. Both the practice of yoga and Dharma help individuals progress toward enlightenment. And the ultimate goal of yoga is to help practitioners benefit all sentient beings by becoming more whole in body, mind, and spirit. Yoga makes your body healthier and your mind more peaceful and happier. When you feel better, you're more likely to treat others with kindness and are better able to help them.

Unfortunately, not all teachers focus on that aspect of yoga. But I try to. I like

to start my classes with a motivation and end with a dedication. Always. In the beginning, of course it's hard to practice higher goals when you need to focus on the body, when you're so busy trying to move the tiniest muscles, breathe, and work on the postures. But when you practice with a higher motivation, it brings you joy. All the postures become prayers or offerings. In the Sun Salutation, you aren't just saluting the sun, your whole body is doing a prayer.

CR: What's the most rewarding aspect of teaching yoga at Kurukulla?

SC: It's rewarding knowing that I'm fulfilling a request from Lama Zopa for our Center to offer more varied programs. I also like having the freedom to teach more Dharma and read Dharma teachings to my class. Some health clubs I used to teach at would ask me not to chant.

CR: Is that one of the reasons you stopped working at health clubs?

SC: Yes. I realized if a gym or club won't let me teach yoga the way it was meant to

be taught, I didn't want to teach there.

CR: How do you think yoga can particularly help a Dharma practitioner?

SC: It's important for those who want to sit for long periods of time to have healthy bodies. It's easier to sit when your body is in good shape, flexible, and healthy. That's why yoga was originally invented in India. People wanted to sit and meditate, learn higher truths, and have realizations. But they found that when they sat, they were uncomfortable. So they invented *asanas* (postures) to make their bodies healthy and flexible enough to sit for long periods.

And personally, studying the Dharma has helped me become a better yoga teacher. I'm more patient with my students, and I feel happier knowing that I can teach them some Dharma, too.

CR: Has Geshe-la said anything about yoga classes at the Center?

SC: Yes. He said, "It is a very good thing what you're doing...yoga is very good for your body."



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THE REAL HEART OF A RELATIONSHIP

By Sunni Kay McMillan

On March 13th, my fiancé David and I attended a talk at Kurukulla Center given by psychologist Rich Borofsky entitled, "Being Together: The Yoga of Relationship." For us, it was a special event because David and I are going to be married this June. To be sure, wedding plans have been draining. Guest lists, budgets, family tangles, travel plans have all taken their toll and, at times, left the both of us somewhat bewildered. We wanted a small, intimate event, which we find we have to fight hard to hold on to every step of the way.

So, Rich's talk provided a bit of a respite, a chance to be reminded that, as dear as our plans for our wedding day are, the real heart of this relationship is the way we communicate with one another right now. Rich emphasized that love is

an experience of "hereness." How easy it is to forget this simple tenet: be present for your partner. How hard it is to not let the pressures of daily life impede the time we spend with loved ones. But how fitting then that a love relationship can



SUNNI AND DAVID ARE PREPARING FOR
THEIR UPCOMING NUPTIALS IN JUNE.

become a vital place of practice in our lives. As Rich emphasized, the love relationship is about surrendering control. I cannot assume that all will work as I've planned or even that David and I are guaranteed any more than each moment we have had together up to now. Thus, each moment I spend with him is precious and is to be experienced fully.

Rich pronounced that his relationship with his wife Antra has been, "the most daunting and difficult and worthwhile spiritual challenge I could undertake." As David and I exchange vows in less than a month's time, I believe that this will be the essence of our promise to one another; it is already the essence of the relationship we work at each day. Many thanks to Rich for this important reminder in the midst of all the fuss of planning a wedding.

KURUKULLA CENTER is affiliated with The Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT), a world-wide community of Buddhist centers dedicated to preserving the pure teachings of the Buddha as found in Tibetan Buddhism. Kurukulla Center was founded by Lama Zopa Rinpoche in 1989 and is named for a wrathful emanation of Red Tara, who manifests the buddhas' compassionate activity in the world.

