



# LOTUS ARROW

Newsletter of the Kurukulla Center for Tibetan Buddhist Studies

Number 22, November 2001

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

Web: [www.kurukulla.org](http://www.kurukulla.org)  
Email: [kkc@kurukulla.org](mailto:kkc@kurukulla.org)  
Phone: (617) 624-0177  
Mail: PO Box 381202, Cambridge MA 02238  
Street: 68 Magoun Ave, Medford MA 02155

## COMMENTS BY GESHE TSULGA FOLLOWING THE EVENTS OF SEPTEMBER 11TH



*Ven. Geshe Tsulga offered the following remarks at a center Guru Puja on Wednesday, September 12th.*

For any Dharma practice, whether it be listening to teachings, meditating, or doing a puja, it is essential to begin with a proper motivation. For today's Guru Puja, we should set up a proper motivation especially in light of recent events, the tragedy that occurred yesterday. So many people suffered, so many lost their lives, something horrible happened that was without precedent. We should perform today's puja recalling especially those who suffered so much and who lost their lives. For those who have died, what we can do is pray; we can pray to the Three Jewels that they may have a good rebirth, that they may be born with a perfect human rebirth in a future life and be able practice Dharma and meet with spiritual teachers. For those who are injured and going through

so much suffering, we can pray for their swift recovery.

Out of ignorance, we might feel anger toward those who created this tragedy, those people who drove the planes into the buildings. As ordinary people, it seems quite natural to us to respond with anger toward them. But their minds are under the control of delusion; they did this act out of attachment and anger. And so, if we get angry in return, how can this possibly help? Instead of getting angry, we should have compassion for those who have committed such a serious negative action. These people thought what they did was right. They may have recognized that generally such an action is wrong, but they thought that under these circumstances, their action was justified. This shows that they are under the control of enormous delusion. And through their acts, they have created such a heavy negative action that will lead them to experience immense suffering in the future. For that reason we should have compassion for them. If we get angry, it will not harm or affect them in any way; but it will definitely harm ourselves. If we can recognize instead that they are under the control of delusion—that out of anger or attachment they did this—then we can pray that in the future they may have the wisdom that understands what is proper and what is improper.

If you know how to practice Dharma well, then, by witnessing the incidents that took place in New York yesterday, you should really be able to effect some transformation in the mind. Usually we always talk about meditating on death and impermanence. That is the most important thing to practice, or meditate

on, in order to practice Dharma. The reason we have to practice Dharma right now is that we are definitely going to die, yet the time of our death is uncertain. By seeing the incident yesterday, it should make us realize more deeply how all these things are impermanent, that all the wealth and possessions we have accumulated throughout our lives are impermanent, and how life itself is impermanent.

The twin towers were huge, and they seemed very strong, very stable. No one thought about how one day they would come down. But as the nature of all such things is impermanence, sometime they had to disintegrate. They were disintegrating on a subtle level moment by moment, but nobody realized that. When they came down, however, then everyone could realize how impermanent they were. Since they were constructed on the basis of causes and conditions, therefore they disintegrated depending on causes and conditions, too.

Yesterday around 7:00 or 7:30 in the morning, the people that were going to work in that building did not think that in one and a half hours they would die. They went about their business as usual. They looked into the mirror, put on makeup and ties and good clothes as usual. Then, an hour and a half later, what happened to them? By seeing that, we should not only think about impermanence and death happening to others. We should think that about ourselves, that one day death will come to us as well. And by thinking in this way, it should cause us to prepare for our death by practicing Dharma now.

The other thing these events can help us understand is how negative karma brings a negative result, a suffering result. The people who hijacked the planes and crashed them into the towers must have

continued on next page

been making this plan for a long time, for a couple of years. And throughout all this time until they did it, they have been engaged in this vicious intention to harm others. Eventually they did it, even giving up their own lives in the process. In so doing, they have caused so many people to die, so many people to suffer, and so many people to be angry, and on and on. And they themselves have now created the karma to be born in the hells, for eons and eons.

Where does this mind come from that wants to hurt or harm others or harm oneself? It comes from our own minds. It comes because we don't subdue our minds but rather let them follow after delusion. And because of that, there arises all these vicious thoughts, harmful intentions. Therefore we should train ourselves not to be under the control of our minds, and train our minds not to be under the control of the delusions. Doing that is what is called mind training.

This is why Buddha said that whatever kind of action you create, that kind of result you will experience. If we create a positive action we will get a positive result, and by creating a negative action, we will get a negative, or suffering, result. So in creating such a severely negative karma, causing so much harm to others, these people will have to experience enormous suffering. And if we don't subdue our own minds, don't tame our minds, we don't know how much worse than this we

will have to experience. Since we have achieved this perfect human rebirth with all the favorable conditions to practice the Dharma, we should use it in a good way so that it will not be harmful to others or to ourselves. Buddha gave all his teachings in two statements: Benefit others; and if you cannot benefit, at least do not harm them. This is the real practice of the Buddhadharma.

So with a good motivation then, let's engage in practice: making prostrations, making offerings, reciting mantras, doing meditation, or helping others. Whatever virtuous act we can engage in, we should do so for the benefit of others.

## GESHE-LA IN INDIA UNTIL JANUARY

*By Sue Macy*

On October 31, Ven. Geshe Tsulga will return to India for two and a half months. Geshe-la's students at Sera Monastery formally requested that he return during this time for two reasons. First, on November 7, his nephew Thubten Dargay will receive his geshe degree. This will be conferred at a big ceremony, which includes a long-life puja for the new geshe. Secondly, since Geshe Pema Tsering left to teach at Buddha House in Australia, there are no geshes in

residence at House #2, and his students have asked that Geshe-la return to teach them for two months.

Geshe-la also hopes to have a one- or two-week Buddha Mitrugpa retreat, and he will attend His Holiness the Dalai Lama's teachings at Ganden Monastery on Je Tsongkhapa's *Great Stages of the Tantric Path (Ngagrim Chenmo)* from December 24–January 4. Geshe-la will return to Boston on January 16.

## PRACTICING ACTIVE COMPASSION

*By Louise Anne Kroutil*

As I am very new to Tibetan Buddhism, I have only recently begun to study the Lamrim. But in a short time, I have found it invaluable to my life's work and commitment to social justice.

Several years ago, I began my legal studies at Northeastern University School of Law with a tremendous strength of purpose and commitment. I wanted to use my experience—a struggle with post-traumatic stress disorder—to advocate for others with similar life circumstances. However, my own troubles made it very difficult to hear my clients' stories, and I feared that they would interpret my difficulty as a lack of interest or caring. Traditional psychotherapy helped me manage my own symptoms, but its vocabulary describes witnessing another's pain as being stressful to the listener.

Through study of the Lamrim, I learned about exchanging self with others. What a wonderful tool for stress-hardiness. In the past, I pushed away from the feelings when the suffering of others resonated strongly—when I am advocating for a domestic violence client, for example. The practice of breathing in others' woes and breathing out white light to alleviate their suffering is really amazing.

Rather than fear a transference reaction, I can be a healer of others, all the while rejoicing in this "stress" as a gift. I am grateful for having found this way to practice active compassion.



Geshe Tsulga gives ordination vows to Gary Keiser, Ven. Losang Tenzin, in June.

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

The events of September 11th were extraordinary in many ways. One is the way that, seemingly without exception, those tragedies wrenched people out of habitual thought patterns and gave them pause to reflect. We became a nation of philosophers like never before, as people's core values came to the surface in sharp relief. For the vast majority of Americans, those values are intimately tied up with national identity and with God, at least according to billboards and bumper stickers. And indeed, Americans have much to be proud of and protective of as a nation.



President Bush is correct when he says that we need to eliminate terrorism at its root. And while we may or may not agree with his military solution, we should admire this aspiration to attack not just the symptoms but the cause of the problem. From a Buddhist perspective, however, the roots of terrorism can be seen to reside much deeper than in the caves of

Afganistan. So even if the current military offensive is successful in destroying the al Qaeda network and bringing bin Laden to justice, will the people of America and of the world enjoy greater security? What would true security look like?

A solid understanding of the mind is essential in facing the current problem. If we are not certain that the solution to violence is to decrease the violence and delusion in our own minds, then we will fall into an easy complacency in the face of the killing that is escalating by the day. As Shantideva says, "Let me be burned, let me perish and be beheaded, but in no way shall I submit to my enemies, the mental afflictions." (*Bodhicharyavatara* IV:44). The bodhisattva aspiration to save all beings, regardless of their nationality or of the threat they pose to us personally, compels us to find ways of eliminating the threat of terrorism without giving in to hate or devolving into an attitude of us vs. them. This is by no means simple, especially given the enormity of the current dilemma. But if we can do this, then we will have found genuine security.

A place like Kurukulla Center becomes invaluable in such a time of crisis. The hatred in the minds of beings is increasing moment by moment, and the specter of increasing violence looms large. What can we hope to control? Which is easier, asks Shantideva, to cover the world with leather or to put on a pair of shoes? We cannot eliminate all external terrorists, all external threats. However, the Buddha says we can control our minds, and by taming our minds we will eliminate violence at its root. Kurukulla Center is a workshop where we can make this happen, and is therefore a precious resource, a rare oasis. It is a place where we can fight our own holy war against the fiercest of enemies, and with the Buddha's help, stand a chance at ultimate success.

## BUILDING NEWS

by Priscilla Sawa

Our new home at 68 Magoun Avenue has become a very busy place in the last two months as the process of transforming the Magoun Manor nursing home into sacred space picks up speed.

At the beginning of September, Bill Kane, a feng shui consultant and long-time student of Lama Zopa, visited 68 Magoun to give us his advice on how to use the space. From the moment he stepped on the sidewalk, he was enthusiastic about the property. "68 is a very auspicious number! And the south-west orientation of the house is perfect!" As we went on from room to room, a clear vision of our new center began to take shape before our eyes.

On September 23, a beautiful autumn day, Geshe-la and Damchoe performed a special puja at 68 Magoun to encourage any spirits who might be living there to find alternate housing. We carried burning incense to every corner of the house and hoisted prayer flags in the backyard.

Repairs at 68 Magoun started the next day. The beautiful wrap-around front porch, which is badly in need of new supports, is the main focus of the work. The kitchen porch and side stairs will also get some attention, and we'll get a new roof on the front porch.

On October 6, twenty volunteers assembled to continue the work of preparing the residential space. Fortified by Debra's delicious lasagna, the volunteers worked through the day, painting primer, taking down an interior wall in the gompa space, and throwing out the accumulated trash. The rooms in the residential area are now ready for the final coat of paint. Many, many thanks to all the volunteers. And a special thanks to Jane, who organized the activities and supplies, and to Jeorg, who lent us his skills in preparing the walls for painting.

The following Monday, a flooring company began installing hardwood floors in the residential areas of our new center. By the end of that week a delightful smell of oak and a new, clean light began to fill the second floor as work progressed. Two days later, our architects arrived to measure the buildings for the "existing conditions" drawings. These drawings are a requirement for our Certificate of Occupancy and will be used as a basis for designing future renovations.

There still are many decisions to make and much work to be done before we can move in. The major issues are to get a parking plan approved by the town of Medford, to decide whether to repair or replace the heating system, and to prepare a gompa, a yoga room, and a library. In parallel, we are continuing our search for architects to create the long-term plan for renovations.

Our current target date for moving in is January 1, 2002, with opening celebrations planned for when Geshe-la returns from India in mid-January. Again, we are grateful to all of you who have contributed your special skills, volunteer time, money, and prayers to making this dream of shared sacred space a reality.



**Kurukulla Center**  
**PO Box 381202**  
**Cambridge MA 02238**

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-Profit Org.  
 US Postage  
**PAID**  
 Permit No. 55843  
 Boston MA 02115

## PEOPLE NEWS

**Ed Softky** left for Nepal on October 15th. He will be attending the November Course at Kopan Monastery and attending His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Kalachakra initiation in Bodhgaya. He will return to Boston in April.

**Kris and Kim Snibbe** and **Helen Taylor** are attending Lama Zopa Rinpoche's two-week Medicine Buddha retreat in California at the end of October.

**Lila Moreau** just returned from India, where she had a private audience with the sixteen-year-old Karmapa, head of the Karma Kagyu sect of Tibetan Buddhism.

**Brian Roiter**, a student at Tufts University, is starting a Buddhist group there.

**Diane Gregorio** and **David Zuniga** are contributors to the new book, *Blue Jean Buddha: Voices of Young Buddhists*.

**Helen Taylor** completed module 4 of the Lamrim Chenmo class in the Basic Studies Program.

## FROM THE DALAI LAMA

*Comments delivered by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in San Jose, May 2001.*

One of our primary objectives as individuals is to achieve happiness. Since material facilities alone cannot fulfill this, we need means other than material by which we can fulfill our aspirations. I believe that such means can be developed independent of particular faith traditions. If we look carefully at humanity, although there may be many people who claim to follow this or that religion, the fact remains that, in day-to-day life, the number of people who derive their moral guidance from religious teachings is a minority. The majority of people are those for whom religious beliefs do not play a significant role. However, it is important to find and present to such people a way of life that enables them to cultivate positive qualities, and to show them how, through cultivation of these qualities, they can fulfill their basic desire

to be happy and overcome suffering. What is required is the recognition of the immense potential we have as human beings, which we can develop by using our faculties of intelligence and also by drawing strengths from our current scientific knowledge. In modern science, there is a growing recognition of the relationship between the body and the mind and an emerging understanding of how our mental attitudes have an impact on our physical health and well-being.

KURUKULLA CENTER is affiliated with the Foundation for the Preservation of the



Mahayana Tradition (FPMT), a worldwide 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.