



LOTUS ARROW

Newsletter of the Kurukulla Center for Tibetan Buddhist Studies

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DALAI LAMA TO VISIT KURUKULLA CENTER

WE RECENTLY RECEIVED the wonderful news that His Holiness the Dalai Lama will visit Kurukulla Center in mid-September, and we have our beloved teacher, Venerable Geshe Tsulga, to thank for his efforts in making this dream a reality.

In India last year, Geshe-la personally invited His Holiness the Dalai Lama to bless the statues in the Kurukulla Center gumpa, and His Holiness immediately indicated that it might be possible.

In mid-April, His Holiness's represen-

tation in Boston in September for the Mind and Life Conference and a public talk at the Fleet Center.

It is a rare and sublime honor to have His Holiness accept to visit Kurukulla Center and it is all due to the kindness of Geshe-la and our benefactors, and to the collective karma of the students of Kurukulla Center. Although most people will not be able to get "up close" on the day, as security dictates that only a few people will be able to be in the gumpa when His Holiness blesses the statues, we

The Path to Inner Peace

Last year we were blessed with a visit from Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche, the spiritual head of Kurukulla Center and of our parent organization, the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition. Here is an excerpt from Rinpoche's teachings at the Center.

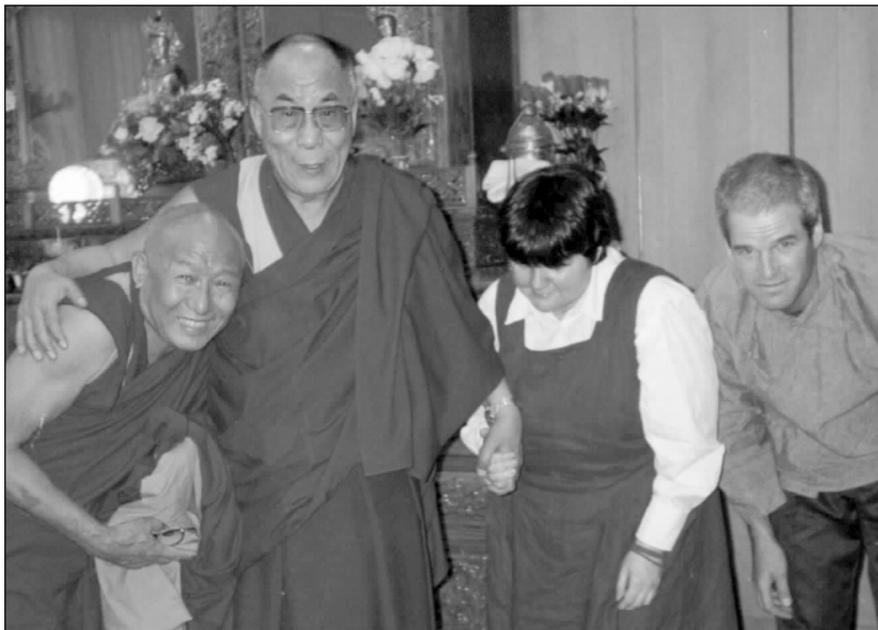
EXPERIENCE SHOWS that when you work for the happiness of others with a sincere heart, when you choose the other person's happiness over your own, it fulfills two purposes. It makes the other person happy and it makes you happy as well. Your own happiness comes by the way.

Say, for example, you want a hotdog for lunch while your friend wants pizza. You argue for hours and finally you win; your ego overpowers your friend's and you get the hotdog. You're not really happy. You don't really feel peace in your heart. Even though you get to enjoy the food you wanted, you don't feel any pleasure in your heart.

Inner peace is completely different. It's very satisfying and enjoyable. It arises from seeing others happy, from making others happy. Getting your own way over others can never bring inner peace and satisfaction.

The life of the ego trip, following your self-cherishing thought and always putting yourself first, inevitably leads to disharmony and makes other people upset. When you see others upset with you, you become unhappy, too. In this way, you disturb your own peace of mind. Instead of achieving the peace, happiness, and satisfaction you want, instead of really enjoying life with a heart open to

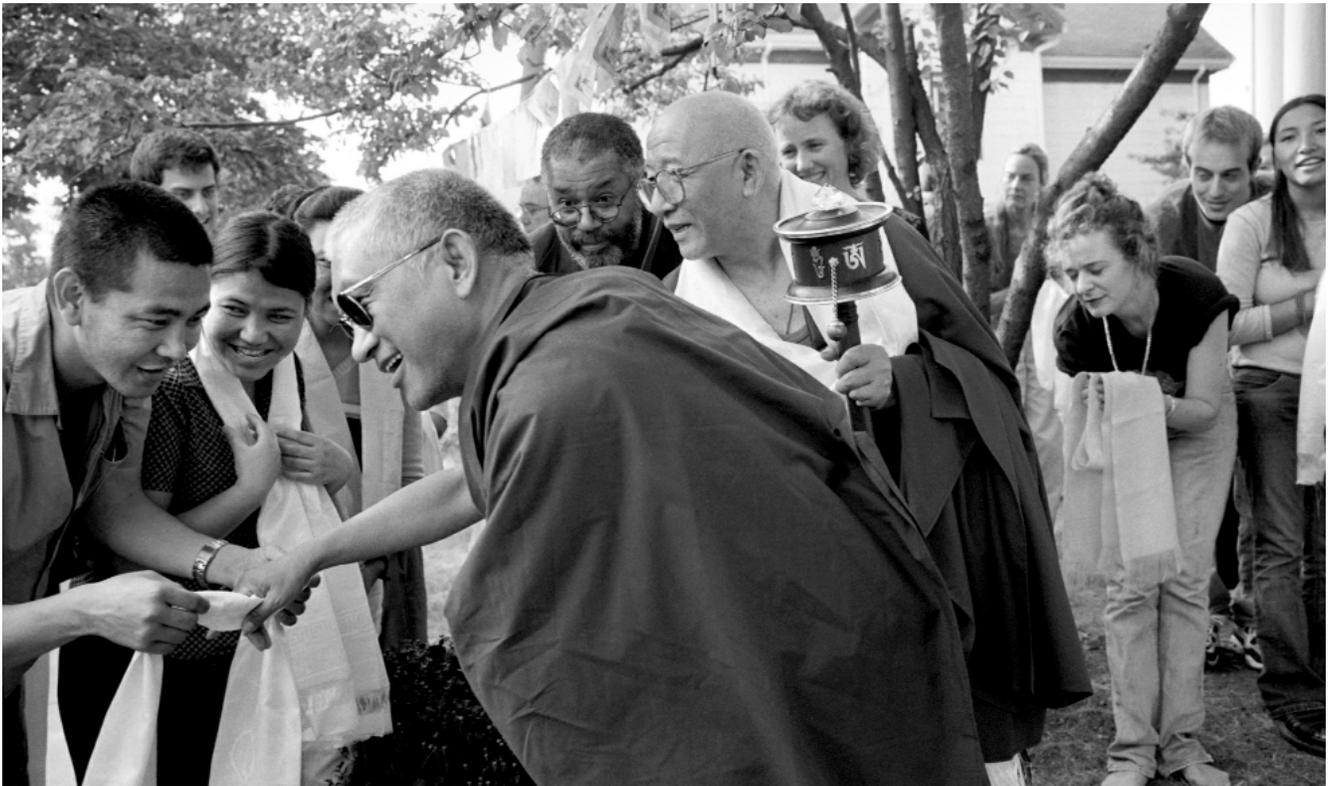
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Geshe Tsulga, Sue Macy, and Ed Softky make the request at Drepung Monastery in South India.

tative in New York, Dr. Ngawang Rabgyal, confirmed that a visit to Kurukulla Center was now part of His Holiness's official schedule when he comes to

can all be a part of making this auspicious event a huge success. See the Director's column on ways to participate.



Kyabje Zopa's arrival at Kurukulla Center last September. (Photo by Kris Snibbe.)

everybody, you get depressed, unhappy, angry, or even suicidal.

The best way to achieve inner happiness is to let go of your I. Ordinary happiness comes from attachment and self-cherishing and is not true happiness at all. Actual inner peace and happiness come from compassion, loving kindness and a heart open to all. If you can generate this, there's always sunshine in your life; your life is light, not dark.

If you don't practice the good heart, loving kindness, compassion, or bodhichitta, you finish up living with only delusions, attachment, anger, and so forth in a world of hallucination. It's as if you're asleep from birth to death, never seeing the reality of life. Then, all of a sudden, death comes. The day when you see yourself dying, your life has gone. There's no longer any time to meditate, to develop the mind in the path. At that moment you see your life as incredibly short; you see the reality of life, its impermanent nature, but no matter how much fear you have, there's no time to practice anything.

I've heard people say that at the time of death your life flashes before your eyes. All the negative things you've done come into your mind: the harm you've given to

others, the ten non-virtuous actions you committed, and so forth. Then you feel great regret and fear.

Even people who don't accept reincarnation, either intellectually or as a result of the teachings of another religion, feel afraid at the time of death. Your heart tells you that something horrible is going to happen and you have terrifying visions. Instead of going to the next life with incredible joy, peace and happiness, you go with great fear and terror. Instead of being reborn in a pure land, where even the word "suffering" does not exist, you get reborn in the three lower realms, where there's barely a single happiness. This is what happens if you don't practice Dharma during your life.

Without meditation, there's no way to develop the good heart, loving kindness, compassion, bodhichitta, patience, wisdom, or other positive minds. To develop these qualities, to actualize the path, you need to meditate, and to meditate correctly, you need to learn the correct teachings, such as the Buddha's teachings on bodhichitta and the rest of the path to liberation.

To learn these things, you need fully qualified masters who themselves have

studied the complete path to liberation and enlightenment and who live in the practice. Otherwise you're blind. You can't help others. You can't even help yourself.

Here at Kurukulla Center we are very lucky to have a fully qualified teacher such as Geshe Tsulga, and the students here have the incredible opportunity to learn Buddhadharma in both a vast and profound way. You can study not only the *lamrim* but also the philosophical subjects that make the *lamrim* very clear. Without these additional studies, your understanding remains very limited, and you can't explain much to others. When you study Buddhist philosophy, your understanding becomes deep and clear. Then, when you practice meditation, you make fewer mistakes, progress in the right direction, and have much to teach others. The more Dharma you learn, the more you can teach others, eliminate their ignorance, and bring them true happiness.

This precious opportunity exists right now. Please take as much advantage of it as possible.

Teaching given by Lama Zopa Rinpoche at Kurukulla Center in September 2002. Edited by Nicholas Ribush.

FROM THE DIRECTOR



SINCE OCTOBER last year I have been attending the Medford Interfaith Clergy Association. At a recent meeting I shared a point of difference between Kurukulla and most churches. I explained that our “congregation” came from all over—many travel more than an hour to attend

Kurukulla—while for most churches the congregation lives close by. This led to some other questions about Kurukulla Center, and I explained that we rely on the kindness of our community to support the center financially and do all the work, and that there are many repairs that need doing on the building. “The roof on our temple is leaking!” I told them. Rev. Brian Dixon from the First Baptist Church said, “Oh, you’re no different; it sounds exactly like us.”

However, on September 12 we will be honored to have His Holiness the Dalai Lama visit, and this is *entirely* unique. Moreover, it is not only an unbelievable blessing for Kurukulla Center but also for the city of Medford—His Holiness will drive through Medford Square on his way to the center. Many people will see His Holiness drive by—



Kurukulla’s Buddha statue needs to be filled with rolled mantras.

some by accident, others because they are waiting in anticipation to welcome His Holiness to this lesser-known part of greater Boston.

Although very few people will be allowed to be in the gomba while His Holiness is there, everyone can participate in making this visit a huge success in various ways. One thing we need help with is the rolling of mantras. We need to fill the big statues before His Holiness’s visit, and this means rolling many, many mantras! Frequent sessions will get this job done. There is work in the garden to be done, and parts of both inside and outside need painting. Closer to the day we will need to scrub everything clean and decorate the Center, to make it as fresh and as beautiful as possible. Please contact me if you can help: wendy@lamayeshe.com or 781.899.9587.



Amy Kittelstrom and Jen Barlow await new family members.

And finally, I would like to mention that we are eagerly awaiting some new members of Kurukulla Center to arrive. David and Amy Kittelstrom are expecting their first baby any day (if this newsletter is late you know the baby came before David could finish designing it!). Jen and Bucky Barlow are expecting their second child later in May, and Haim and Tamar Kirshenberg are expecting their second in July. It’s a Kurukulla baby boom. We’ll let you know when these precious human beings arrive.

Thank you so much for everything and much love,

Wendy

Treasurer's Report



As a result of the generosity of so many of you, the blessings of multitudes of bud-dhas, and a little luck, we are holding our own in our new building. Although our income still

does not keep pace with our expenses, we are fortunate to have some reserves that have kept us going during the lean months. Of course, these reserves won't last long, and we are consistently facing the challenge of needing to improve, repair, and maintain our building with the funds at hand.

In the last newsletter, I reported that our average monthly costs for the daily operations of the Center (including expenses such as building insurance, utilities, newsletters, program costs, etc.) were about \$6,000 per month—and many months it's more like \$7,000! Along with our income that averages between \$4600–\$5,000 per month, we are always relying upon our reserves and fortuitous one-time donations to keep us going. Your donations at teachings and membership contributions are what keep us afloat.

Kurukulla Center maintains a separate Building Fund, which is used for capital projects (such as expanding the gompa), major repairs (such as the bathrooms on the first floor), and occasional mortgage payment help. Here is an accounting of the unallocated funds in the Building Fund near the beginning of the year:

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Balance: | \$8,300 |
| Spent for the repairs of the bathrooms and other small improvements: | \$3,700 |
| Balance remaining | \$4,600 |

We do have about \$12,000 in pledges made for 2003, but these generally do not come in before the end of the year. There are a number of projects planned for which we do not have the funds. We'll be mailing you about these soon. Thank you again for your generous support of Kurukulla Center. —Jennifer Barlow

Facility Report

Nearly two years have passed since we purchased 68 Magoun Avenue. Each time I sit in the quiet peace of our gompa, I try to remember and rejoice in the generous gifts of money, time, and energy that transformed this former nursing home—a place of obvious suffering—into the vibrant Center that it is today.



Extraordinary results accrue from our teachers' positive qualities and their perfect wish to benefit others. At this time last year I confess I was daunted by the list of urgent repairs and renovations. How could we possibly raise the \$30,000 required to replace our ancient heating system, enlarge the gompa, and paint the exterior of the building? Frankly, I thought that we had tapped out most of our resources in purchasing the property.

Despite my lack of faith, we were completing the last item on our list of

urgent tasks by the end of October. We were not able to make all of the necessary renovations to the heating system—you all have probably noticed how cold the gompa was this winter. However, the residential quarters at least were warm and cozy, contributing greatly to Geshe-la's return to good health this spring.

At our latest workday, we began construction of a kids' area and a dormitory/guest room in the basement. There is still much to be done to make the space truly livable, but it looks very promising!

High Priority Facility Projects

- Improve heating on nonresidential side of the house and in basement (\$10,000)
- Replace stairs by the driveway (\$2000)
- Improve lighting in gompa and hallway (\$1500)
- Replace washer and dryer (\$800 or used)
- Replace or repair some windows (\$500)
- Furnish the kids area and dormitory
- Start landscaping the yard

This spring, as I contemplate the list of urgent tasks, it is with considerably more confidence. The list is long and the estimated expenses are not small, yet I am sure that this work will be done.

—Priscilla Sawa



Recent Medicine Buddha Puja, sponsored by Herbert Kong on his 30th birthday.

DATELINE:

Sera Monastery, House No. 2

ED SOFTY, Center member, also known as Ed-la at Sera Monastery in South India, has been living at Geshe-la's house at Sera for the past six months, focusing on his Tibetan language studies. He is teaching English to Geshe-la's students and helping tremendously with the monk sponsorship program correspondence. He also has taken all the skills we helped him acquire during his volunteer days at the Center and put them to good use. He helped set up the brand-new kitchen that was built as part of the expansion of Geshe-la's house, and has introduced the monks to new spices and recipes and to Tupperware. He is cultivating apple trees from the seeds that Jane sent to Geshe-la—knowing Ed, there will be an orchard soon! He is taking a class with some of Geshe-la's students on a short text on Tibetan grammar. He says, "I would not have believed when I arrived that it would ever be possible to be in a class together with Geshe-la's monk students. They're amazingly supportive!" Rumor has it that Ed is returning in August, just in time to use the skills he has learned at Sera to help us prepare for His Holiness' visit in September.

—Ven. Tsunma

REJOICE!

Rejoicing (the fourth of the seven limbs) in the positive deeds of oneself and others is one easy way to collect positive energy. It can even be done while driving in the car or relaxing on the couch!

Rejoice that Geshela's guru, Khensur Rinpoche, has been requested to compose a traditional long-life prayer for Geshela—we'll keep you posted.

Rejoice that Geshela's enjoyed a restful retreat and that his health is much improved.

Rejoice that Palden Gyatso and nuns from Drapchi prison stayed twice since the beginning of the year while on their travels promoting awareness of the situation in Tibet.

Rejoice that we had three great visits from Ven. Sarah Thresher, who inspired us with her talks at Kurukulla Center and out in the community, her water bowl offerings, and her being.

Rejoice that members of the Tibetan community often come to use the center—sometimes one or two to make light offerings, other times fifty or sixty to perform prayers or pujas together.

Rejoice that we had a successful workday painting the basement, building bunk beds (Bill and Donald get a huge thank you) and a variety of other jobs (with still plenty to do, so you haven't missed out!)

Rejoice that Cliff and Damchoe have built cupboards in the gumpa for cushions and puja tables.

Rejoice in the efforts of people, too many to name here, who have given hours of time and energy, not to mention financial support, to keep Kurukulla Center thriving.

Long-Forgotten Ties of Affection

LOBSTERS INSPIRE PEOPLE'S GENEROSITY. This was my conclusion after seeing the results of our appeal for donations to buy lobsters. Nearly \$900 was pledged. Although we rejoiced in everyone's virtue, those of us gathered to do this lobster lib soon faced the reality of the situation. That is a lot of lobsters! How are we ever going to stay in the ocean long enough to properly release them when it is March and the water temperature is only 34 degrees?

I was especially nervous. When I rashly volunteered to be one of the liberators to wade waist-deep into the cold Atlantic Ocean, I assumed that someone would soon step in to replace me. Someone who was younger, hardier, more experienced in winter ocean wading. But there was no one else other than Jane, the other half of the liberating team, and a very pregnant Amy who was strongly advised by Geshe-la to stay out of the water. Resigned to fulfill my duty, we began the drive to the North Shore.

We met at Bob's lobster pound on Plum Island. After selling us all of his lobsters, he discreetly left and allowed us to do our circumambulation around a makeshift altar in his basement. While another group went off in search of more lobsters to purchase, we recited prayers and mantras following Lama Zopa Rinpoche's advice, so that not only would we free these animals from a certain horrid death but also push them toward a better rebirth.

Once on the shore, everyone worked quickly. The blessed lobsters were prepared for release by clipping the bands binding their pincers, others circumambulated the next batch of lobsters around our portable altar, and a couple of people placed lobsters on trays so they could be transported out to deeper water for release.

Dressed in wetsuits, the cold of the water did not penetrate my body at all, although my feet quickly became numb. Jane and I sloshed through the water to sufficient depth and individually dropped each one in tail first. When all the lobsters were in the water and did not appear to be washing back to shore, we made our way back to our cars.

Although my feet were frighteningly numb and seemed to gain no warmth after several minutes back on shore, my heart was soaring. It's not that lobsters particularly excite me. With their beady eyes, hard exoskeleton and threatening claws, it's not easy to connect with them. But they are sentient beings—capable of feeling pain and seeking happiness in their own way. I remember Rinpoche's words recited during the circumambulation—"We are all one family." Rinpoche challenges us to expand our limits of compassion and connection. In the magic of this moment, I sense we are related to all creatures through an unfathomable matrix of relationship and long-forgotten ties of affection. Thank you lobsters. May we all be liberated!

—Debra Thornburg





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Scenes from Geshe-la's birthday party, April 28th.

KURUKULLA
 CENTER is a
 member of 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. Founded by Lama Yeshe in 1975 and currently under the spiritual direction of his main disciple, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, the FPMT provides teachings, retreats, literature, hospice care, and social services in thirty countries.

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.