
Tibetan Buddhist Society

NEWSLETTER
JANUARY 2004

A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

MARG SHEEHY

It is hard to believe that the year 2004 has arrived. It seems such a short time ago that the world was involved in millennium mania and anxiety. How could four years disappear so quickly?

Or, how could thirty years since I did my first lam.rim course in Nepal have slipped by so quickly, quietly, unnoticed? (and with no realisations like enlightenment to show for it)

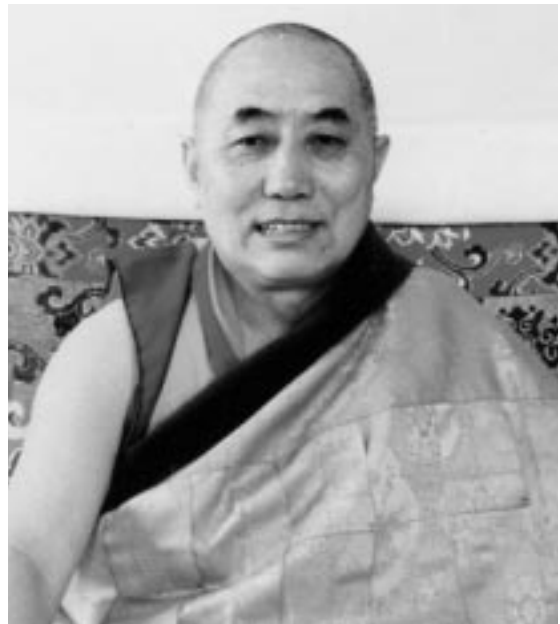
Sometimes I feel it must almost be a trick of numbers – that there really hasn't been 30 years experienced between 1974 and now, this new year that everyone is calling 2004.

I have to bring reason and logic to my mind to convince myself that in fact it is true – our daughters are now adults, in fact they are of the age when Les and I first encountered Dharma teachings.

When I look in the mirror I usually see the same person that was looking back at me in the 1980's. It is not until I see photos of myself, or realise that celebrating 25 years of marriage, I get some glimpse of the truth that most of my life has finished. Just as the dharma teachings said it would – so quickly, even if I am not aware of it happening.

So thirty years of my dharma life has passed – will I be fortunate enough to have another thirty years? And if I am, what will the quality of those years be? There is a big physical difference between someone of 23 years of age, and someone of 53 years.

I don't remember being concerned with physical matters in 1974 even though the conditions were absolutely appalling. Sleeping on a mud floor on a cotton blanket in winter meant absolutely nothing, whereas now I am concerned about the thickness and softness of the mattress.



*Spiritual Head of the Tibetan Buddhist Society
Geshe Acharya Thubten Loden*



Will the remaining years become even more dedicated to keeping at bay the discomforts and aches of a degenerating body? And will the mind still be capable of applying the antidotes and methods required to achieve bodhichitta?

And so my new year resolutions go something like this – just as the past 30 years have passed so quickly, so too will the next decades. As effects from dharma practice – both internal and external – are the most worthwhile result to achieve with this life, I resolve to try even harder to develop my love, compassion and wisdom in the year 2004. (and perhaps fitness, health, diet etc will follow).



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2003 IN REVIEW

The past year has been very busy with our teaching programme and developing the centre. Les continued to teach lam.rim and highest yoga tantra each week, as well as a Heart Sutra retreat over Easter.

Our annual tantric retreat was cancelled this year due to our house building.

With the release of Geshe Loden's new book, *The Path to the Union of Clear Light and Illusory Body*, a commentary on Vajrayogini practice, and the three week Vajrayogini retreat scheduled in Melbourne for later in the year, Les taught one day workshops once a month on the practice of Vajrayogini.

Les and older students also taught four introductory courses on Buddhism on Sunday mornings. Louise began writing herself a list of questions to aid her own study of Geshe.la's text and

eventually came up with over a hundred questions from the first chapter alone – these were offered to the students to complete as homework – most achieving near perfect scores.

Les also gave an assignment on death – and those who completed an essay all said how much they benefited.

The construction of our own house was completed in August. Four residents then moved into the existing house and do a wonderful job on maintaining the house and garden.

It is a wonderful community feeling here – there is always someone outside doing some small job to keep the property beautiful, or being on alert in the early hours of the morning drinking cups of tea together, at the ready to save the gomba and protect the property from a threatening nearby bushfire is very bonding.

VAJRAYOGINI RETREAT IN MELBOURNE

Once again we were extremely lucky that our kind Guru, Geshe Acharya Thubten Loden, offered to give highest yoga tantra initiations into Yamantaka and Vajrayogini, and to lead a three week retreat on Vajrayogini.

Sixteen students from Perth travelled to Melbourne for the initiations, and six of us stayed on for the retreat. The big difference in age was made clear to me by the fact that Tanya's boyfriend hoped she wouldn't come back different, while Les hoped like anything that I would!!

Geshe.la lead most of the sessions of the retreat, giving teachings each day on aspects of Vajrayogini practice specifically, and generally on renunciation, bodhichitta and wisdom. His wit and wisdom always kept us engaged. The retreat concluded with a fire puja.

The easy, regular routine of retreat was slightly interrupted when Rosie's sudden absence from the sessions was explained by her giving birth to a baby daughter overnight. Rosie was one of our Perth students, who moved to Melbourne about eight years ago.

A BIG THANK YOU

Our centre continues to develop and although there are too many people to personally name, a big thanks to all those who help in numerous ways – those students who teach Sunday introduction classes as well as the support crew who set up the meditation room, make the tea and clean up, the flower roster people who keep our altar laden with fresh flowers, the people who set up the meditation room each night before classes, those who come and clean the meditation room, the keen gardeners who keep asking if there is any more gardening they can do – you can't believe what excitement is generated by a truckload of manure – the brilliant cooks who make sure we are always well-fed at every event, the jam

makers, xmas cake makers, the sewers, (I will re-word that – the people who sew) and those who help sell all our produce, Ray who seems to be fulltime on the reticulation and the swimming pool or encouraging the old mower to keep going a little bit longer, Cathy Moose who does so much desk-top publishing for us I don't know how she has time for her real job, to Erica and husband John who held a couple of stalls this year and raised over a thousand dollars, and to Siew Leng and John who help them on the stall – to those who regularly attended our working bees – and have done such a good job we now longer need to have general working bees – to you all, a big thank you.



TEACHING PROGRAMME

TEACHINGS WILL COMMENCE ON TUESDAY 2ND FEBRUARY

Path to Enlightenment Teachings

Tuesdays 8.00 pm – 9.30 pm (ongoing)

Based on Geshe Acharya Thubten Loden's book *Essence of the Path to Enlightenment*, these classes introduce the fundamentals of Buddhist meditation and thought. Buddhist psychology recognises that the source of all unhappiness is negative mental states, including agitation, worry, stress, discontentment and anger. The Buddhist method, as applied through the practice of meditation, provides the antidotes to all negative mental states. Through meditation one develops a clear, still and focused mind that can be directed to the development of the various positive minds, including calm abiding, love, compassion, patience, joy and wisdom.



As the year is made up of three 10 week terms and one seven week term the subjects of the lam.rim will be broken down into term blocks. Les will also teach a tantric practice complementing the subjects of the lam.rim.

The subjects of this term will be calm abiding and the development of meditation practice, the development of appreciation for this unique life, the opportunity it offers and its transitory nature. The mantra practice will be the Heart Sutra mantra combined with the visualisation of Shakyamuni Buddha.

The teachings on calm abiding will be the foundation teachings for the Easter retreat.

Introduction Courses

*Commencing Sunday February 15th
10am–1.00pm*

These five week courses will be held every term and are an excellent opportunity for students without any prior experience of dharma or meditation to gain some understanding of the Buddhist path. Subjects include the nature of the mind and its potential for enlightenment, the four Noble truths, karma, dissatisfaction of life and how to bring about change, compassion and ultimate truth.

Highest Tantra

*Vajrayogini and Yamantaka practice -
Commencing with Yamantaka on
Wednesday 3rd February*

Les gives a detailed explanation of the Generation and Completion stage practices, based on Geshe Loden's two books, *Path to the Union of Clear Light and Illusory Body*, and *Ocean of Indivisible Method and Wisdom*. Initiation is required to attend these teachings.

Vajrayogini Retreat and Fire Puja

Commencing evening of Friday 2nd July

Concluding with a fire puja on Saturday 24th July. Only those with highest yoga tantric initiations may attend. Please indicate early your interest in attending so cooking arrangements, accommodation etc can be organised.

Annual Easter Retreat

Commencing evening of Thursday 8th April

This year's retreat will be on the development of meditation practice, focussing on single pointed concentration. The presentation will be based on the development of calm abiding teachings found in Geshe Loden's *Path to Enlightenment*. This retreat is ideal for new students as well as older students who would like to improve not only their meditation practice but their understanding as well.

Facility charge is \$150. Early registration is necessary.

Continued next page



Annual General Meeting

Our AGM will be held on
Sunday 15 February at 2.30 pm.



TEACHING PROGRAMME

CONTINUED

Meditation Seminar

Sunday 8th February 10am–4.00pm

Many of the benefits of meditation on health – both mental and physical – are now being measured by scientists at increasingly more subtle levels.

Ten years ago the dogma in science claimed that the brain contained all of its neurons at birth and was unchanged by life’s experiences. But since the late 1990’s through molecular biology at a cellular level, research has shown the notion of neuro-plasticity – the notion that the brain continually changes as a result of our experiences – either through fresh connections between neurons or through the generation of completely new neurons.

In 1999 Richard Davidson, who holds professorships both in the medical school and in the psychology department at the University of Wisconsin, and is director of the Laboratory for Affective Neuroscience and the WM Keck Laboratory for Functional Brain Imaging and Behaviour (one of the few labs in the world that focus on studies of emotion and the brain), received a US federal grant of \$11million to study meditation and the impact on the brain, immune and endocrine function.

Cognitive behavioural therapy is the main current

paradigm that is recommended by psychologists for many difficulties. It is about changing the way people look at things and label them. Isn’t that what we are learning to do with meditation practice!

Our classical Buddhist texts have taught us the benefits of love and compassion, and meditation, but it is interesting to see that it is now becoming measurable by the scientific community (and even receiving US federal grants to do so).

Although as Buddhists our ultimate goal is enlightenment, there is clearly also a secular benefit that can help the community at large, and many of the problems besetting our society

Les has been teaching meditation seminars for over fifteen years, explaining the meditation techniques and attitudinal antidotes that can be used by people of any walk of life to overcome problems of daily life such as depression, anxiety, stress etc.

In keeping with our commitment to bringing the benefits of meditation to our broader community, these courses will be presented throughout the year at regular intervals.

Prior registration is necessary. The facility charge for the day is \$85. Lunch and refreshments are provided.

THOUGHTS ON MY PRACTICE

TANYA SHEEHY

I have known Geshe Loden since I was a toddler of two years old. He used to discipline me when I would fight with my sister, a fact he reminded me of recently.

As a child I was never able to completely appreciate or understand the magnificence of this man, he was more of a spiritual grandfather to me, with his disciplinary techniques, and generosity (I was always allowed to spend half of the money he gave me on lollies, as long as I banked and saved the other half).

It’s not until, as a teenager, and being exposed to elements of life that really test one’s morality and self respect, that I began to realize the very subtle but extremely strong positive influence Geshe.la had on my mind. I have often described it as though Geshe.la has always been like my conscience.

Where I may be unsure of the right decisions to

make, or being close to a line I would not cross but being tempted to, the instant thought of Geshe.la quickly brings me back into a line that clearly leads to much bigger and better things.

Having recently completed my second vajrayana retreat, I have realized how thankful I am that I never crossed those lines. I am grateful that I don’t have 23 years of random crazy mind or drug abuse to undo, and I realize clearly now, the benefits of controlling my mind of delusions and living a virtuous life.

It is the seeds Geshe.la planted in my mind as a toddler, that I think have made the biggest difference, and I am reminded every day that I carry Geshe Loden in my heart, that I appreciate the benefits of this path and the impeccable guidance we have from our kind root guru.

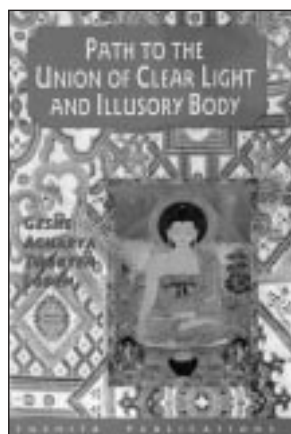


TUSHITA PUBLICATIONS

Path to the Union of Clear Light and Illusory Body

This is the sixth book written by Geshe Acharya Thubten Loden and his second focused on Vajrayana.

Geshe Loden's books are used world-wide as authoritative guides to spiritual practice. Orders for the new title have already been received from Europe, the Americas and South East Asia as well as Australia.



Path to the Union of Clear Light and Illusory Body explains in great clarity the eleven generation stages and special completion stage techniques of Vajrayogini as an aid to practice. In particular, Vajrayogini's unique and most subtle body mandala is set out in extensive detail. These practices are explained in the context of a comprehensive overview of various tantric methods. This book also presents the techniques of Vajrayogini transference of consciousness.

This book is only made available to those with highest yoga tantra empowerments and is available directly from the Melbourne Centre.

Path to Enlightenment in Tibetan Buddhism

'The book will go a long way towards making the essential instructions of Tibetan Buddhism accessible to a wider readership...' – His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Path to Enlightenment in Tibetan Buddhism provides an extensive explanation and presents detailed explanations of the Tibetan lam.rim, from elementary topics through to the most subtle teachings. This is the text taught by Les in the weekly Tuesday class.

Meditations on the Path to Enlightenment has a special emphasis on the theory and practice of meditation. It presents the full range of path to enlightenment subjects with detailed instructions in each chapter for meditation on the stages of the path.

This is an essential manual for those wishing to build a regular meditation practice.

Essence of the Path to Enlightenment

Essence of the Path to Enlightenment provides a clear and concise introduction to the path to enlightenment teachings. It explains in a series of practical steps the methods that can be used by anyone, whatever their situation, to follow the path to enlightenment. This is an excellent introductory book.

The Fundamental Potential for Enlightenment

The Buddhist teaching that all beings have the potential for enlightenment is a central and inspiring tenet of Mahayana Buddhism. This title presents this topic drawing from the great Indian classic texts by Maitreya, the *Sublime Continuum of the Mahayana*, the *Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras* and the *Ornament for Clear Realisation*. *Fundamental Potential* contains the inspiring message that the basic nature of beings is clear, radiant, wise and compassionate and shows us how to awaken to this reality.

Ocean of Indivisible Method and Wisdom

Ocean of Indivisible Method and Wisdom provides a comprehensive explanation of Yamantaka generation and completion stages. Part One contains a general overview of tantra and highest yoga tantra in particular. Part Two takes the practitioner through the sadhana and explains in detail the visualisations and methods of generation stage. Part Three is a comprehensive guide to the Yamantaka completion stage practices and these are explained in relation to the various Guhyasamaja systems of completion stage yogas.

This book is only made available to those with highest yoga tantra empowerments and is available directly from the Melbourne Centre.

ITEMS FOR SALE AT THE CENTRE

Books by Geshe Loden and HH Dalai Lama and various others

Guided meditation tapes and CDs – \$15

Meditation cushions – \$45

Wooden meditation stools – \$45

Assortment of homemade jams and chutneys.



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