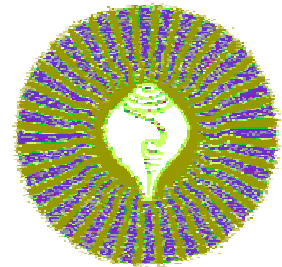


# Windhorse

NEWSLETTER FOR

BUDDHIST  
INTERNATIONAL  
ALLIANCE



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Volume 3 Number 1 2000

Spiritual Director His Eminence Khejok Rinpoche

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## PILGRIMAGE

### *DheTsang 2000*

Journey to DheTsang  
Paradox in Paradise

### The Holy Sites of India

Journey of the Heart  
On Pilgrimage with  
Geshe-la

News from Thomas





*Adza Rinpoche paying respect to Khensur Rinpoche's brother at Khensur Rinpoche's Monastery*

## Windhorse

is the official newsletter of  
**BUDDHIST INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE**

BIA is directed by  
**HIS EMINENCE KHEJOK RINPOCHE**

The three arms-of BIA are:  
**INSTITUTE OF BUDDHIST LEARNING & PRACTICE**  
 education arm

**MONASTERY ARM-**  
 Dhe-Tsang Monastery and Zarthu,  
 Khejok House of Sermey Monastic University  
 and future monasteries and nunneries  
**DHE-TSANG MONASTERY FOUNDATION**  
 charity arm

# WE ARE ALL CONNECTED

## *News from Thomas*

The last months have been exciting for Rinpoche's network with lots of new developments.

**Long Life Prayers Marathon and pujas** This year support from centres and fellow disciples of Rinpoche has been great. Here are the tallies reported by the deadline :

- >
- > IBLP Sydney 250,000
- > IBLP Hong Kong 108,340
- > IBLP Taiwan 53,537
- > IBLP Calgary 52,000
- > IBLP Vancouver 39,300
- > IBLP Blue Mountains 27,393
- > Disciples in China 10,000
- > IBLP Perth 50,000
- > IBLP Brisbane 10,000
- > IBLP Noosa 5,000
- > Total = 600,570 times

>

> Contributions received from centres and individuals by the deadline as follows:

- >
- > IBLP Hong Kong HK\$13,000
- > IBLP Taiwan HK\$10,000
- > IBLP Calgary HK\$1,247
- > IBLP Blue Mountains AUS\$200 = HK\$1,000
- > IBLP Perth AUS\$100 = HK\$500
- > IBLP Vancouver HK\$950
- > IBLP Sydney HK\$393
- > IBLP Brisbane HK\$10
- > IBLP Noosa HK\$10
- > IBLP Singapore HK\$10
- > IBLP Darwin HK\$10
- > Total = HK\$27,130 ( approximately = AUS\$5,425 )

>

The pujas have been performed in Sermey Monastery on auspicious days.

Copies of the receipt from Sermey are obtainable from Mr. Jose Ngai at fax 852-23371974.

**Rinpoche's travel** Rinpoche was in Sermey for Sharpa Rinpoche's Geshe graduation with a group of disciples from Taiwan, Singapore, Calgary and Hong Kong. My wife who was in the group and was so happy to see Dhe-Tsang Monastery's young Palgyal Rinpoche again. The young tulku had recently arrived at Sermey, South India for his Geshe studies. Rinpoche has great hopes that Palgyal Rinpoche will attend to the spiritual education of monks at Dhe-Tsang Monastery in the future. After his stay at Sermey Rinpoche went on pilgrimage through India with Khensur Rinpoche ending up in Kathmandu where they stayed for a long time. Sermey Gyalrong House's star Geshe Michael Roach, the first American to graduate as a Geshe and student of Khensur Rinpoche, visited them there after his teachings in Hong Kong.

Khejok Rinpoche commissioned two 5 feet statues to be made in copper and gold for Dhe-Tsang and some larger ones for Sermey. There had been some problems getting the finished statues into China. After repeated prayers to Mahakala, Rinpoche received a visit from a lady who offered to help deliver the statues and organise all the government documents required for importing. She happened

to be a person of high status and power. Rinpoche said it was clearly Mahakala's help.

After spending Losar in Delhi, Rinpoche returned to Sydney via Singapore. In July Rinpoche officiated at the grand blessing ceremonies at Dhe-Tsang and stayed for 2 weeks there before leaving for Nepal via Singapore to check on the progress of the statues for Sermey.

### Rinpoche's teachings reach more people :

I have just published the 9th book by Rinpoche in Hong Kong and the 4th in Mainland China. Since the publishing of those books in mainland China, there have been many letters sent to Dhe-Tsang Monastery Foundation requesting Rinpoche to teach in Chinese cities. Unfortunately Rinpoche has to turn down these requests due to political concerns and religious laws in China. It is clear that people in China are craving for pure Dharma teachings. By the end of the year 2000 I hope to have Rinpoche's commentaries on the famous Lam Rim Chenmo published in Taiwan, Hong Kong and mainland China, based on the 3-week intensive oral teachings Rinpoche gave in a nunnery at Wutaisan, China some time ago. It will be a 1000-page hard cover book and the biggest book I have ever edited, translated and published.

Rinpoche's first book to be published in Taiwan in the Chinese language was launched in September 2000 by a leading Taiwan publisher. It is expected that 7 more will follow within 10 months of the launching of the first. This now means that Rinpoche's teachings are professionally published and available in mainstream bookshops in Taiwan, Hong Kong and mainland China.

A website not connected to BIA or its member organizations, <http://lotus.my163.com> is hosting the content of all of Rinpoche's Chinese-translated books, making them available through the internet to Chinese readers all over the world.

Many have asked Dhe-Tsang Monastery Foundation to publish Rinpoche's teachings in English. This is something I really would like to see happening soon but I regret that in IBLP Hong Kong and Dhe-Tsang Monastery Foundation there isn't anyone qualified to edit the books and the Foundation has not sufficient funds. If there are any qualified individuals out there motivated to take on this noble task of great urgency, please contact your local centre or me.

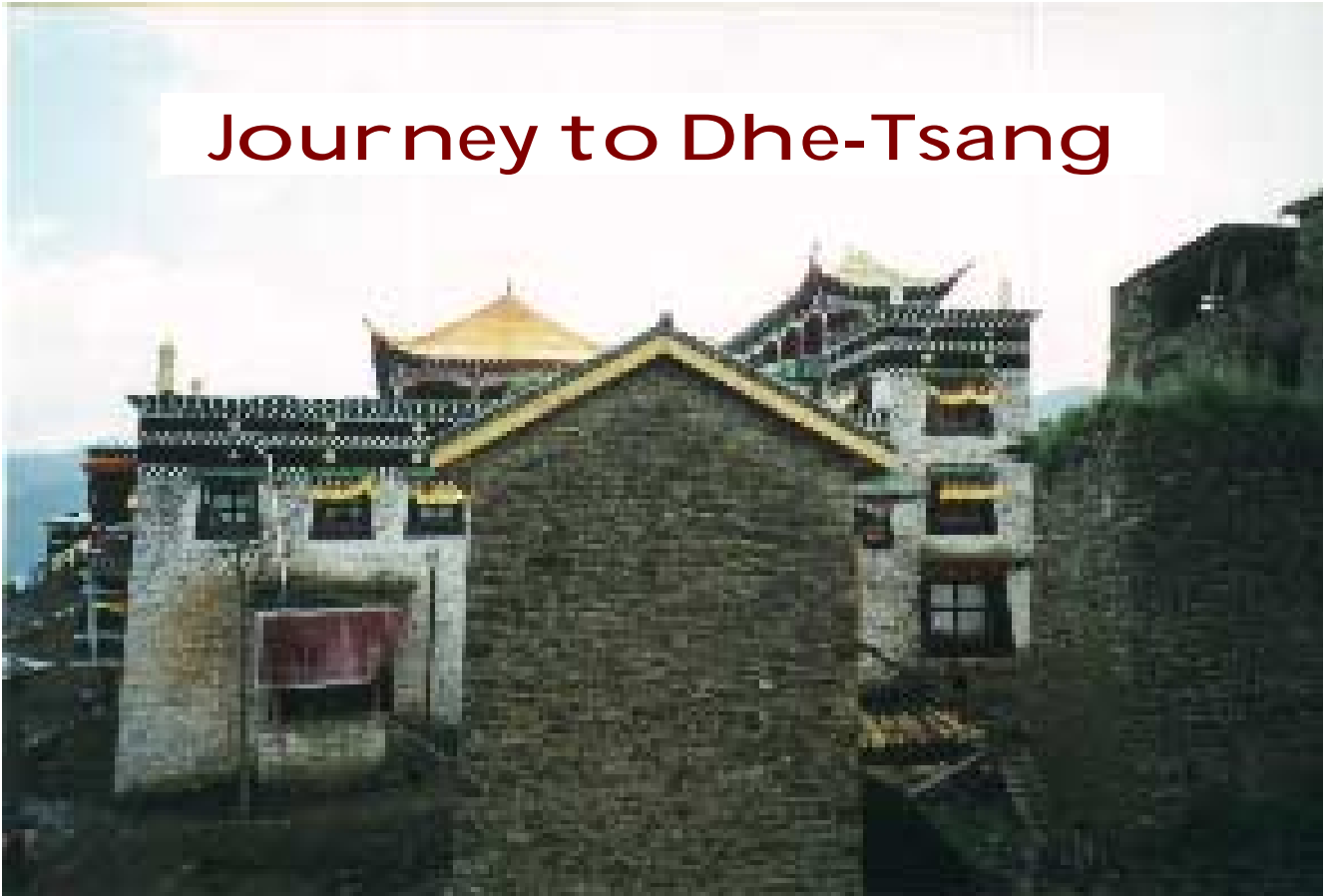
**Dhe-Tsang Monastery** During my visit to Dhe-Tsang at the beginning of the year, the snow was bad and the monastery was barely accessible by car. I had to walk the last few miles in a temperature of 10 degrees. Despite the hardship the view was magical. The main hall's gold roof, the wall surrounding the monastic complex and the 1,080 mani wheels mounted were in the process of construction despite the hostile weather conditions. The living quarters designed to house 300 monks were almost complete. I also met with the very young novice monks who had recently joined the monastery.

By July 2000, the monastery has become a functioning monastic complex. About 30 young people received monk ordination at Dhe-Tsang by Adza Rinpoche on behalf of Khejok Rinpoche, whose visa did not permit him staying on to officiate at the ordination rites.

These monks joined Dhe-Tsang and Zarthu and formal Dharma edu-

*(Continued on page 10)*

## Journey to Dhe-Tsang



One afternoon in 1998 at the Sydney centre whilst talking to Khejok Rinpoche with a group of students from the Blue Mountains, His Eminence uttered words which later proved to be prophetic. We were asking Rinpoche what His plans were in the year 2000, and He said "I will be going to Dhe-Tsang Monastery", and pointing to me added, "with you!". "Well there is no way that's going to happen" I thought, being only too keenly aware of my precarious financial situation and the unlikelihood of all the necessary conditions coming into play.

After recently having returned from this year's Dhe-Tsang Tour with David Cretney, an enthusiastic member of the Blue Mountains centre, I look back on that afternoon with wry amusement. Again Rinpoche had been proved to be correct. My circumstances changed in an unexpected manner and I was able to go to Tibet.

The name "Dhe-Tsang" had long been familiar to most of us in the centres. Everyone had either read about Rinpoche's monastery, seen photos or film of the monastery or had participated in fundraising for the rebuilding. Now I have seen it for myself and it has become real. To sum up the range of experiences on that journey is a daunting task, especially in a few words. The prayer halls, the wonderful statues, the Tibetan people, ordained and non-ordained, the stories and the history all make up the whole. But one experience stands out for me that I will certainly never forget.

As we approached the Dhe-Tsang area on the long valley road from Markhang we came across hundreds of local Tibetan people who had set up camp by the side of the road to wait for Khejok Rinpoche's arrival. In some small way they may have been waiting for the "Yellow Jackets" (tour participants) as well, but the main reason was to wait

for Rinpoche who they had not seen for three years. With katas, windhorse prayer flags and offerings they must have waited for hours, possibly days, for a blessing from Rinpoche, to offer prostrations, or even just a single glimpse of the lama, perhaps not to be experienced again for many years.

Upon seeing their devotion, patiently waiting in line at Rinpoche's car for a blessing, I at once felt a mixture of joy (for them) and a strange kind of guilt. I felt guilt I think because of the access to Rinpoche and His teachings that I enjoy, thoroughly undeservedly at that. I couldn't help feeling as though I had taken something from these people which was theirs and not mine. Of course on close examination this doesn't make any sense at all. More than that I probably could never hope to gain what many of these Tibetan people have, real heartfelt devotion and innate understanding.

I can only hope that all students of Khejok Tulku Rinpoche get an opportunity to visit Dhe-Tsang Monastery at least once. Those of us who have been so fortunate to visit Dhe-Tsang have an obligation to share our experience as best we can with our centre communities.

The Blue Mountains Tibetan Healing and Meditation Centre is embarking on an exciting new era. We are expanding into the other half of our suite of rooms and will make a combined library and lounge room that will also be available for retreat accommodation for up to three people. Please contact the Centre if you would like to do retreat in the beautiful Blue Mountains!

With Dharma wishes,  
Joe Hamilton  
Director, Blue Mountains Tibetan Healing and Meditation Centre  
(IBLP Blue Mountains)

In December last year the Tibetan Sangha of Darwin ( All three of us ) took to the air heading India. For Geshe la Thupten Tenzin this was his first visit since coming to Australia and for Cushla (Venerable Thubten Gyatso ) and Anila (Venerable Ngawang Khandro) this was our first visit. Geshe la had been in Darwin for two years and has provided ongoing teachings during his time here he has made

short visits to Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne. Traveling on Royal Brunei was interesting and as we moved into the plane I overheard the pilot muttering about having the Dalai Lama on board.

They have an interesting information screen that tells you kilometer by kilometer how far you have come this alternates every two minutes with a screen that gives the location of Mecca for those who want to get in a quick prayer on the way. Geshe-la was impressed that they transmitted a prayer over the television as we were taking off.

We stopped over briefly in Singapore and after a quick tussle over the validity of Geshe-la's Identity Certificate we were met by members of IBLP who took us back to stay at the centre. Though we were only there for a short time Geshe la gave a teaching on the Ganden Lha Gya Ma practice and Margaret and the center members showed us all wonderful hospitality.

Going from the organized clean and affluent environment of Singapore to land in the smoky damp and cold that is Calcutta in the middle of winter was dramatic. The smog caused by the huge number of fires and the fog had most locals covering their faces with scarves and with the guards with machine guns in the immigration hall and the throng of calling beggars waiting in rows in the doorway the whole situation felt quite unreal.

Our relief was huge when a long arm and familiar face waved out of the throng, Gary who had sponsored Geshe-la's ticket had arrived a couple of days before us and had turned up with a car. Before we left Australia I had booked us in to an old fashioned hotel in the centre of the city and we were all very surprised to find a wonderful signed picture of His Holiness in Geshe la's room and the nick nacks scattered throughout the hotel were dotted with things from Tibet, Nepal and Bhutan.

Our next stop after a very cold train ride was Bodhigaya and there we spent three weeks listening to teachings from his HH and circumnambulating the Stupa and making offerings. On the 25<sup>th</sup> the number of candles round the Stupa was amazing and the beauty of watching so many people walking around the different circuits saying mantras lighting can-

dles and generally working to generate merit for themselves and others was incredibly moving. In the centre more energetic practitioners engaged in prostrations, many camping and sleeping by their boards. The air was so cold you could see your breath and the below the rustle of clothes as people bustled round you could hear the steady click of man-

## Pilgrimage with Geshe-la

tra beads being counted off.

The richness of the sites and relics and the holiness of the places in the Bihar contrasts dramatically with the poverty and illness seen on the streets every where. We drove out to view Nalanda traveling through some lovely farming country still under a pall of winter smoke on the worst road I have ever been on. The ruins are massive and some of the remaining statues still very beautiful. Walking in and out of cells where some of the first great monks and teachers lived and practiced was very special and looking at the size and layout of the whole complex was amazing.

We continued on to Varanasi for new year and made several trips to Saranath to make circles with Geshe la round the Stupas and place where the first teaching was given. We had an interesting time haggling for brocade. Geshe la was much better than us and got very good prices. The Indian system of driving seems to be based on a knowledge of karma rather than any governmental road rules and is much noisier than driving in Australia if friendlier.

We caught a train to get to Mysore as we arrived we discovered Sue, another Darwin member, was on the same train. Three days later we arrived in Mysore to catch a car to Sermey. The air had got cleaner and the countryside more affluent as we had traveled South. Driving up into the countryside around the monastery through the hills and villages was delightful. Without the smog the colours seemed richer. Cushla who had a virus since Varanasi regained his sense of smell back but had mixed feelings about the merits of doing so, for a few days. Geshe-la just got happier and happier.

For the first time in two years the environment was familiar and although he had said he had little Hindi he could communicate very well with the people we met. We had been invited to stay in Geshe-la's house and were welcomed warmly by Geshe Konchog Palden and Geshe-la's students. Every day offerings of fruit, soft drink and biscuits were piled high on the tables.

It was wonderful to meet the people we had been sponsoring and to see Geshe-la's friends and monastery. Geshe-la made offerings to his house, to Gyalrong house and to Sermey

itself. It was a huge honour to be involved in the ceremonies and to see the temples and debating halls. Work on the new temple is going well.

One of the activities the Darwin group has been involved in is raising money to build new accommodation for the students in Geshe-la's house.

House 7 is one of the oldest houses and though

well looked after it is small and inadequate for the number of students. Many of the students have moved away because of the lack of space. The plan is to construct a building that will give each monk a room, more sanitary toilet and washing facilities and a more adequate kitchen. We saw the site for the new house which is by the temple and sports a new pump.

We had brought with us an offering from IBLP Darwin for the house and this was presented at a Puja that went almost a whole day. I had arranged to get a battery installed to give power to the lights when the mains power failed which was a nightly occurrence. This had run into technical problems and on the day of the Puja an entourage of 5 Indian men turned up to try to resolve the wiring issue. The whole scene became like an old fashioned English situation comedy with a changing array of monks, Indian workers and Lamas wandering in and out of the rooms and collecting in the corners of the house. The tray of offering money kept getting relocated to keep it separate from the construction work and Sonam who is in charge of catering and the supplies was being sorely tested by the time it had all settled down.

His Eminence Khensur Rinpoche arrived back three days before we left and it was lovely to say hello to him and Namgyal again. Debating was in full swing so we got the opportunity to watch the monks. Near the end of our stay Geshe la made his offering to all of Sermey. We were invited to have tea and then taken up to watch as His Holiness's picture was brought out with a procession of trumpets and followed it down to the temple where it was placed on his throne. We watched from upstairs as the monks performed the prayers and listened to the recitation of the offering and the requests for prayers for the people from our center and others who had been named because they had died or needed help. Geshe la was obviously very touched by the whole event but even with our limited understanding of what was happening it was very powerful and moving and like the whole of our trip the obvious respect and affection in which Geshe la is held was an important lesson to remember.

We returned through Calcutta to Singapore

(Continued on page 10)

## PARADOX IN PARADISE: A journey to Tibet



**Jacob De Hoog accompanied Father Doug Conlan as one of Rinpoche's special guests.**

Like so many westerners of my age, my childhood reading of "The Third Eye", the vivid account of Tibet in its fateful days of Chinese invasion, fired my imagination. I determined then that one day I would see this fabled and forbidden land. Somewhere in the recesses of my mind the desire lingered. I took an interest in Tibetan Buddhism without ever becoming one. I read the accounts of travelers and I saw the movies. And then one day this year I was invited out of the blue to join an international group of Buddhists on a pilgrimage with their teacher, Khejok Rinpoche, to visit their home monastery in a remote part of Eastern Tibet as well as the city of Lhasa. This is an account of both my inner journey and the outer experience.

The road north-west from Chengdu, main city of South West China is like a broad river flowing across a plain dotted by bamboo surrounded villages, rice fields and ripening corn. It is high summer, foggy, already hot. Our microphone loving guide protests that the thick layer of mist is "Fog no Smog. It has always been there! In Sichuan dogs bark when the sun comes out! Old saying! Well maybe some smog..."

Soon, the road, like the river running beside it, narrows, bends and zigzags its way past the tower that marks the ancient borders of Tibet, now obscured behind a Chinese cement factory.

Our ever upwards journey is a series of miracles, helter-skelter, swerving, horn blaring; time gains that evaporate at road blocks, works, accidents and breakdowns. Flat topped stone and mud Tibetan houses appear, reminiscent of Navaho pueblos. We travel through deep verdant valleys of orchards - apples, apricots, corn, barley, towering pine covered mountains, each more spectacular as our journey progresses deeper into the heartland of Eastern Tibet.

At last we are at the top of a 15000 foot pass. We stop and stumble out of the bus, a stupa covered by prayer flags in decaying layers tangled together on the cliffs edge that falls away into an infinity of shadows and the distant glistening of winter snow remnant on even higher mountains. Ecstasy struggles for attention with the head-pounding, dizzy, tight chested nausea of altitude sickness. Pictures and words can be but pale reflections of this golden hued afternoon light. To my surprise I find myself prostrating.

Sitting in front of me on the bus is the man around whom this entire journey revolves, Khejok Rinpoche, a rotund, jolly man around sixty five is dressed in monk's robes. He is the miracle around which this journey revolves.

In the 1970's, an unknown refugee in Australia, he began to teach a few Westerners, setting up centres in Sydney and Brisbane as well as in Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Canada. Over the years he and his foreign disciples have raised money to rebuild his thrice devastated home monastery that we were now to visit. To the local population it is a miracle of unsurpassing proportions.

After a night in the dusty town of Markhang we enter Rinpoche's home territory. We stop at Gompas (temples) and are ceremoniously seated in the dark red interiors, recesses lined by the Buddhas and the pantheon of gods, saints and demon figures that make up the Tibetan pantheon. Silk scarves are exchanged, speeches made. It is only the second time Rinpoche has been back and we, as his entourage, are the

*(Continued on page 7)*

(Continued from page 6)

honored guest. Monks chant, some energetically, others looking around curiously, smiling. A few seem nearly asleep.

Chanting takes up hours of every day and the repeating the sutras and mantras can be a boring business. Monks generally enter into the monasteries at six years old at the behest of their families and for many it is a given way of life rather than a vocation. Often monks spend their life time as workers, water carriers and odd job men. I soon came to realize that my image of monks as sincere ascetics in search of enlightenment only pertains to a minority.

I also realized that although monasteries everywhere are being reestablished, they are not necessarily in good shape. Everywhere we went I was told that the ranks of the senior monks are thin due to former conditions and that monastic discipline is now often lax. Hence the lack of focus. Moreover the mountains are no barrier to radio waves and the older monks worry that young monks with radios have half their attention fixed on the pantheon of Nike, Coca Cola and MacDonalds.

And yet slowly the monkhood and monasteries are reforming and re-creating. Everywhere there is rebuilding. Gradually order is being reestablished. Tibetan Buddhism and the culture it sustains is pulling itself back from the brink. In the Jokhang, in Lhasa the centre of pilgrimage for the whole country, the atmosphere is electric with a vibrancy that must effect even the most hardened sight seer.

In the remote east too, Tibetans are apparently being drawn back to their faith in a cultural revival that is blossoming as the authorities slowly and haphazardly loosen the screws. Paradoxically western Buddhists are a powerful drawcard in this war for hearts and minds. Tibetans worshipping anything western find a powerful confirmation of their faith in realizing that there are "white" Buddhists. It slowly dawned on me that in my very presence I was a walking advertisement for Tibetan Buddhism even though I was myself struggling to come to terms with this bewildering mass of beliefs, practices and mythologies.

While this struck me as sad to encounter this loss of faith of Tibetans in themselves, in a way it seems to be a fitting irony. Just as many Tibetan project their dreams on westerners, Tibet has been the subject of extraordinary mythologising in the popular imagination of the West. To a whole generation it has been portrayed as an exotic paradise lost, a Shangri-La inhabited by a colourful, non materialistic, happy spiritual people, lacking in the difficulties and shielded from the complexity and unhappiness of our lifestyle.

These deeply embedded stereotypes make it difficult to see Tibetan life clearly. In the rosy glow it is easy to think everything Tibetan is wonderful and whatever fails that test is the fault of the Chinese. Many westerners fail to notice the toll of arthritis that comes with the back breaking work of surviving in this harsh climate and terrain, the filth of the houses, the eye disease, grinding poverty. However even the most reverent Tibetophiles find it difficult to avoid noticing the pungent lack of plumbing.

In truth it is difficult not to be overcome with awe and joy as we travel triumphantly towards the monastery in a scene reminiscent of palm Sunday. Our most exotic dreams of ancient lands are realized as villagers in Sunday best traditional dress line the roads hoping for a blessing. windhorses, small pieces of paper containing prayers are thrown from hilltops and flutter in the breeze. The welcoming juniper smoke fires burn by the roadside and from the hilltops. White nomads tents with arcane designs are set up in welcome by families who have moved with their yaks from the mountains to be present for this momentous occasion.

And then as we round a bend a hundred horsemen line the road, high mounted saddles on bright cloth, riders' hands high in the air in salute, whooping their high pitched greetings and surrounding our buses. We come to a halt and enter into the melee of exhalation. I am now laughing and crying with bliss and overwhelm, transported by a kind of tribal joy. It is as though we are entering a world of dreams, a long vanished tribal memory. Only the buses remind me that this in the meeting of two worlds, each as real as the other. We mingle, horses,

saddles, the Tibetans touch our hairy arms. Our mutual wonder transcends language.

As we arrive at the monastery, for all the world like a medieval walled town, we are greeted by yellow hatted Gelugpa monks, the great Tibetan trumpets, gongs and trombones. The Rinpoche, transformed from a jolly monk into a striking and silent God figure, silent, somehow bigger slowly enters. I wonder what is in his mind. Whatever it is he shows no sign of it. Here he is the figure of silent and impersonal reverence, a papal figure who plays his role to perfection.

Over the next few days we attend the opening of two new gompas housing the enormous statues of the Maitreya, the future Buddha and Je Tsongkapa, the founder of the Gelugpa or Yellow Hat school. These enormous statues dominating the temples have been recently created from painted over clay. There is also the unveiling of a the metre high Thanka, of Je Tsong Khapa embroidered on cloth that is lowered by pulleys from the temple roof. It is overwhelmingly glorious and in the courtyard Tibetans and pilgrims alike prostrate themselves. Whereas other forms of Buddhism such as Zen find expression in understatement, Tibetan Buddhism thrives on extravagance.

Walking around the monastery the level of destruction becomes evident. The old medical school and institute of astrology have been razed to the ground, though plans for rebuilding are underfoot. Many buildings are gutted, others half torn down like the remains of ruined Scottish castles. Junk, salvage and rocks are everywhere. The monk population is just one hundred, compared to the thousand or more in its days of glory. Half demolished buildings are populated by lay workers and monks who dedicate their lives to rebuilding.

Around the walls of the monastery prayer wheels are being installed; around five hundred. And the work is only partly done. Devout Tibetans in magnificent costumes circumambulate muttering Om Mani Padme Hum. When they see us they stop, laugh, smile wordlessly. As a backdrop behind it all are those glorious mountains. I love the picturesqueness of the scene and can only imagine the simple devotion from the Tibetan heart.

At the same time this apparently mechanical merit gaining is remote from my ideas about spirituality. In fact I find myself going to magnificent rock outcrops overlooking vast valleys to find a place of peace and meditation. Here I feel myself closer to the core of Tibetan Buddhism, *shunyata*, the void, the spaciousness that is filled with potential, the place from which everything arises and into which everything falls. I listen for that which is never born and never dies. Birds call across the valley and a horseman passes me silently on the track, its sure footed hooves searching the rocky ground. For a moment my being rests and falls into harmony.

Soon we go on the next part of our journey. Lhasa. I know this will be very different. The pilgrimage to this extraordinary place has been a precious gift. I am deeply moved by the directness, presence, heartfulness and humour of the Tibetans I have met here. Most have had little western contact and are sheltered from the ubiquitous satellite by isolation. There are few points of reference in our world. There is a universe in which butterflies are divine messengers and omens are daily written into the clouds. A crow divined the site for this monastery and there is a true story about a monk who was divinely transported to Lhasa. In order to fully appreciate this world I have to let go of judgments and comparisons to experience it directly, without defenses, so that something of its innocence can seep directly into my soul. Sitting on this rock that knowledge transforms itself into a felt reality.

With a tingling rush I realise again the truth of a favourite saying of one of my spiritual teachers, "consciousness loves contrast." The strangeness of the tastes and smells, the sights and textures have disrupted my habits and mindsets, opened up a freshness of vision. My spirit is enlivened. My heart has been touched. I don't understand and I am relieved to let go of the burden of interpretation. I feel happy. And happiness, say the lamas, is what we are all looking for. The monastery of Dha Tsang has done its work.

## Stories From Dhe-Tsang The Arrival of Mahakala

By 1414, Ngawang Drakpa had constructed eight buildings, including the protector chamber, which is the only building that survives more or less in its original state today. At this time, Ngawang Drakpa needed the service of master sculptors to build statues for the monastery.

One day, three black men visited the monastery site and were invited to stay for a while. These black men claimed to be master sculptors from India. Delighted, Ngawang Drakpa eagerly invited them to help build the statues. Of the three men, only one agreed to stay and help. He built all the statues as requested except for the Mahakala statue, which was only half completed when it came to the time of the official opening.

During the celebration, ritual dances were customarily performed. Towards the end, the Indian announced that he would also like to dance for the entertainment of the viewers and proceeded to perform a swirling dance wearing a large protector mask. Towards the end of the dance, his body became smaller and smaller and at the end the mask dropped and there was no trace of the dancer.

The monks thought that perhaps the Indian was an emanation of a holy being and rushed to see the Mahakala statue. They found the formally partially completed statue now complete. They realised that the Indian sculptor was none other than Mahakala himself, come to help build the monastery and the statues.

The Mahakala statue became a very special statue as it was believed that the Indian merged into the half completed statue in order to empower it and make it complete. Later on, the monks found that the other two Indians who had left Dhe-Tsang had gone to two other monasteries and each had made a Mahakala statue and they too mysteriously dis-

appeared into the statues. These statues were the four-armed form of Mahakala and White Mahakala.

Thus these two statues and the Six-armed Mahakala at Dhe-Tsang became known collectively as the 'Three Mahakala Brothers' and were most famous in the region.

Throughout history, pilgrims came from as far as Amdo, Mongolia, Wutaisan and Central Tibet to pay homage to these three special statues.

While most other Tibetan monasteries also host statues of the same protector, he is regarded as a 'real' member of the sangha at Dhe-Tsang. During each offering ceremony, the chant leader will say aloud, 'Do not forget the black man's share!' and the same amount is offered to him before the Mahakala statue as is offered to each monk..

This uncommon tradition came about when the Indian sculptor, while building the statues, said that he demanded nothing special

only that he be given the same as each monk would receive. When counting the number of residents at Dhe-Tsang, the protector is always counted as a member. These traditions have been followed since 1414 and are uncommon to other Tibetan monasteries. In the famous history text 'Political and Religious History of the Amdo regions', this story has been cited.



# Journey to the Heart

On October 21 Maggie, Anthony and I leave Calgary for Singapore. On arrival we greet Rinpoche at the Singapore centre and spend a few days in Singapore eating... eating eating eating. The food is so good here.

At Singapore airport a few days later we gather together with students from Hong Kong – Loretta, Monica, Ho and Yee, two students from Taiwan, Chopel and Andrew from Singapore. There are many people at the airport to farewell Rinpoche. It is a late flight and we are tired.

We arrive at Bangalore airport very late, there is a drizzle of rain. I am immediately inundated with so many new sensations... the overwhelming amount of people, a chaotic swarm of Indians rushing about ...this is a new experience for me. So many Indians... so many people... We're hassled by immigration, hoping for a little 'tea money', I think – they go out of their way to make things difficult but eventually let us go.

Outside we are greeted with kata's by a group of monks from Sermey, the deputy Abbot, the secretary and Gelek. After hiring some cars we go on to a hotel which is by this time closed up for the night. Finally, after some yelling and noisy behavior on our part, we get some attention and finally, our room for the night.

We wake early the following morning and prepare for our trip to Sermey. Rinpoche travels in a jeep and we hire a small bus. Gelek elects to be our tour guide, Gelek speaks excellent Mandarin – much better than mine.

As we drive through the outskirts of Bangalore, in an area covered with garbage and cowshit, I see hovels made from pieces of tin, all huddled together. When I look inside there is nothing that I can recognize as homely, just barren shelters. Nothing but bare ground, no floor covering at all.

People sleep here, it's their only shelter. For me this is a big shock, I have never seen conditions like this in my life. The Indians are in filthy clothes and so poor... it is so bad I am in tears. I can't comprehend that humans are living in a place like this and that this is the relentless nature of their life. In the west a dog's life is so much better... than these people existing in a metal hovels.

I am experiencing a big culture shock, people pissing in the street, horns beeping unremittingly, every 5 seconds. It seems that they don't care what happens, they drive so haphazardly. I see four or five car accidents on the road.

Shortly after lunch Gelek announces that we only have 15 minutes before we arrive at the monastery. Then finally we see the sign over the gate – Sera Monastic University. We stop in a house at the entrance to Gyalrong Khamsten. Out of nowhere appear a group of monks who take our luggage. We proceed to Khensur and Khejok Rinpoche's house.

The Hong Kong students stay in Rinpoche's house and we are lodged in a building a little distance away. We take our presents and katas to offer Khensur Rinpoche. I haven't met Khensur Rinpoche before so I make my offerings toward the end. Khensur Rinpoche invites us to feel that we are at home. This is also the first time I meet Namgyal who is to become such a good friend over the following weeks.

During the next few days there is a lot of preparation for celebrations for Sharpa Rinpoche's Geshe degree.

In the kitchen ten people have been especially appointed to prepare our food. We get really spoiled. The food is good, the monks are much better cooks than me. For breakfast we have bread, tea, congee, dumplings and vegetarian dishes, for lunch rice, meat, vegetables and dumpling dishes. Because we are the guests we always eat before the monks which makes us feel a little uncomfortable.

These days at Sermey are very special. The monks are so kind and happy with so little and this makes me think about my life back in Canada and all the little luxuries that I think are indispensable. I am struck repeatedly by their sincerity, charm and freedom from the complications that clutter our lives. Sometimes we visit the homes of people, friends of Rinpoche's and supporters of the monastery. During this time we are so busy, there is always somewhere to go to.

Images stand out in my mind...the monks, a vibrant wave of maroon pouring out of the gumpa after prayers. The resonance of the chanting reverberating through my body and filling me with an inexpressible joy.

Rinpoche is always very serious when talking to the monks, with us he jokes and laughs. It is the same with Khensur Rinpoche. When I first meet him I am quite nervous, he is a little awesome. Sometimes we follow him to events and we walk behind him. When the monks see Khensur Rinpoche they quickly scatter. I ask a monk about this, "Oh yeah, Khensur is a high lama and he was a very strict abbot" was the reply.

It is fascinating to watch the monks doing debate. Though I don't understand what is going on, somehow the energy of their debating is very strong, vibrant and energizing. Just watching them my mind becomes a little clearer.

Usually after dinner we circumambulate the monastery. Gelek often takes us to the nearby town to shop. Every Tuesday there is an open market and this is when the monastery shopping is done. If the monks leave the monastery they must get permission – if they are caught out without permission they are in big trouble. Tuesday is the day off and this is when the monks have a break from the routine and go the village and attend to their personal affairs. Near the village is a place where you can buy Tibetan clothes. I don't do much shopping, Monica is the big shopper.

During this time I sponsor two dharma sons who I now support. They are also Dhe-Tsang monastery monks. Later I sponsor another dharma son – so I have three and I'm very happy. In the monastery in the main gumpa we get a chance to go into the Sermey protector gumpa. We offer kata and circumambulate the deity and make prostrations. On two or three occasions we make money offerings to the monks. We have a stack of money and hand it out to the monks during prayers. There are around 1,000 monks.

We are having a lot of fun - with the Hong Kong students and with the monks, we are busy and happy. Rinpoche is constantly receiving people. The Hong Kong students stay for 10 days, they leave in early November.

After the Hong Kong students leave the Gyalrong kitchen is closed and we move to Rinpoche's house. It is a little quieter now that the Hong Kong students have left. The Hong Kong students happiness is infectious...everyone is cheerful when they are around. Now we all notice how quiet things have become.

We stay a few more days, then fly from Bangalore to Delhi where we stay at Tashi Delek house which is run by Tibetans. Chopel and Andrew leave the monastery a little earlier than us and travel to Delhi by train. Khensur and Khejok Rinpoche, the deputy abbot, a Geshe, Namgyal, myself, Anthony and Maggie stay in Delhi for a few days.

In Delhi we are joined by a couple from the Phillipines and two ladies from Malaysia. We also meet a western nun traveling with another westerner who join us and together we hire an air conditioned van and make our way to Bodhgaya. Soon Anthony has to return to Canada - we have stayed longer at Sermey than intended. But before he

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*Ngawang Drakpa died here and his Stupa resides in the monastery an hour outside of Markang*

*(Continued from page 3)*

cation is now re-established after a period of almost 50 years discontinuation. For those who have not made any contributions to our Rinpoche's monastery reconstructions and wish to do so, now is the last chance for you to make some connection which will last as long as the monastery itself survives. I have reached an agreement with the local government for Dhe-Tsang Monastery Foundation to offer 60 scholarships to gifted Tibetan secondary students in financial difficulties. There are a number of plans to support the local Tibetan communities also under way.

### **Sales of the Dhe-Tsang Mahakala incense**

have got off to a good start. Just one month after the launch of this product, 2000 packets have been sold, bringing in profits that will support the education of Dhe-Tsang and Zarthu's newly ordained novices for 3 months. It is hoped that more will be sold as we develop sales channels. The aim of this project is to provide the

monastery a long-term steady form of income to support sangha education without relying totally on donations. Please help in trying to develop more sales channel for this monastic product in your local area.

Multi-media enhancements on the BIA official site -5 sets of screen savers with beautiful photos of Dhe-Tsang Monastery and its people are now hosted in the official site of Buddhist International Alliance, [www.b-i-a.net](http://www.b-i-a.net), for visitors to download freely. Over 300 photos have also been added to the site, featuring Rinpoche's photo album (the complete collection of Rinpoche's old photos), Dhe-Tsang antique collection, the new thangkas and many great photos taken in the 1997 / 2000 trips.

Visitors can hear Rinpoche chanting prayers and witness Rinpoche's 1993 historical return to Dhe-Tsang after 40 years of absence in the audio visual pages.

*(Continued from page 5)*

then back to Darwin. Our six weeks passed quickly but was very full and I am still filled with wonder that I had the good fortune to be able to take such a trip and to travel with Geshe la filled the experience with blessings from beginning to end. His endless patience, his constant joy in the small things of life and his desire to share the things he knew with us added a magic that was priceless.

Many of the people reading this will have traveled much more than I have but for those who have not - think about it - Pilgrimages can be of great benefit both in the merit gained from making the effort, the memories that are with one forever and the change in perception of ones usual circumstances that can occur. May everyone have the opportunity the sacred Dharma sites and make the same wonderful connections.

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returns Rinpoche wants Anthony to visit Bodhgaya as it is the heart of Buddhism.

We stay in a pleasant Tibetan hotel at Bodhgaya run in collaboration by two monasteries. As soon as we arrive we circumambulate the main temples. There are many dharma objects for sale - just like a market street. Finally we arrive at the beautiful main temple.

We remove our shoes and walk barefoot. This is the first time I learn that you must circumambulate from left to right. We follow Khensur Rinpoche and Khejok Rinpoche. Each night we make a few thousand light offerings. On the first night we offer food and do puja led by Khejok and Khensur Rinpoche.

On this first night some 300 monks appear and join in chanting the tsog offering with Khejok and Khensur Rinpoche. The place where we are performing tsog is under the tree where Buddha became enlightened. It is amazing to do tsog under this very tree. We students also make money offering under the tree. We make tsog offering two days in a row and on the second night 400 monks arrive to join in. We also light thousands of candles and encircle the stupa with them - a sea of light. We are so very fortunate.

On the third evening we offer 10,000 light offerings. So blessed we are to be spending three days of prayer and offerings in this holy place with Khejok and Khensur Rinpoche beneath the tree where Buddha was enlightened. It must be that in some past life we created the merit for this experience. I will treasure this experience until my dying breath.

There are many monks and lay people performing prostrations and mandala offerings. I become increasingly aware of how pure the monks and nuns are and the implication of their life, dedicated to these virtuous and holy activities. They are performing these activities in order to purify and remove obstacles, to create good conditions in the future and accumulate merit so that they may eventually be free of impure perceptions and become fully enlightened and so able to also lead others out of their suffering.

I think of the good conditions that have led them to take robes and yet they feel impelled to perform further purification.

I begin to question my life as a lay person - each day committing bad actions wittingly and unwittingly. I am aware of my greater need for purification and our need to do our practice whole heartedly.

So inspiring, the rhythm of the monks prostrating all day long. Within me a sense of rejoicing in their activity arises and I begin to understand how meaningful religious practice can be. Now my second tear falls, before it was out of compassion for the poor and now it is with rejoicing in the activity of the monks.

Following Rinpoche on his shopping rounds, emerging ourselves in all these new experiences in this holy place. If you have a chance to go to India - to Bodhgaya - please do so. It is the heart of all holy places.

Anthony leaves at this time. Namgyal is wonderful looking after us all with such good humour and joy.- Khensur Rinpoche, Khejok Rinpoche, all of us, always busy, always happy with whatever he is doing.

One day while still at Bodhgaya we drive for an hour to a remote area where there is a special Mahakala Cave temple. It is a difficult drive. We walk up the hill to the monastery, the road is very bumpy.

There were many beggars, some naked, small children naked and hungry. We buy biscuits to feed them, they stuff the biscuits in their mouths immediately. They are obviously very hungry.

At the Mahakala cave Rinpoche makes offerings. At one time Mahakala appeared on a tree top and there is naturally appearing holy writing growing out of the rock.

We travel to the deer park where Shakyamuni gave his first teaching on the Four Noble Truths. We make prayers and prostrations. By a great stroke of fortune we are there on one of only two days per year when the Shakyamuni relics are shown.

At Varanasi we hire a boat and release Mr Cheng's ashes into the Ganges. This is very moving Mr Cheng was such a devoted and virtuous student of Rinpoche's who worked so hard for Dhe-Tsang Monastery.

We travel to Kushinagar where Buddha passed away. Again we make lamp offerings around the stupa. Rinpoche makes many prayers and offerings in front of the reclining Buddha. We then travel to Lumbini where the Buddha was born. This place is also imbued with meaning.

We then cross the border and arrived in Katmandu. At this point we meet up with Melissa and I'll leave her to recount the time in Katmandu. (next Windhorse).

It's hard to describe with words how much I have benefited from this special time traveling with Khensur Rinpoche and my guru, Khejok Rinpoche. I feel totally blessed to have this experience. The trip has left such a deep imprint on me and in many ways I am a better person. Even though I have been back home for a few months the memory of these events is still strong in my mind.

My experience at Bodhgaya watching the monks performing purification and making mandala offerings has made me aware of how I as a lay person I am constantly performing bad actions of body speech and mind, many times not even being aware of doing so. If these monks need purification then what about me? I need purification much more. It is as if before the trip I was in a kind of sleep and now I realize how truly fortunate I am to have a functioning human body and I treasure this life so much more.

I have no idea when my life will end, when or how I will have to go. We should treasure what we have now and make sure that we don't waste our opportunities. We don't know where we will be reborn and what good or bad karma we have yet to experience. So we should really try to free ourselves from Samsara as soon as possible. It takes many lives to achieve this but if we can make a start now with our present body, then eventually we can achieve Buddhahood.

I have more patience than before. I used to lose my temper often. Now I can catch myself. I feel closer than ever to Khejok Rinpoche. After this trip seeing Khensur Rinpoche in different situations, I feel very close to him also, even though I found him very intimidating in the beginning.

Thank you Khejok Rinpoche for all your blessings, to Khensur Rinpoche for your countless profound blessings, also to Namgyal and Gelek for your generous help and friendship.

Monique Shui  
Director Calgary IBLP

# TURNING THE WHEEL



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## **Blue Mountains Tibetan Healing & Meditation Centre**

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