

THE PATH

DEDICATED TO THE REALIZATION OF WISDOM AND COMPASSION

Bodhi Path
Buddhist Centers
Summer 2011

MEDITATION ON LOVE AND COMPASSION

by Shamar Rinpoche

In general when we practice the Dharma and we commit ourselves to accomplishing positive actions, we encounter obstacles and difficulties. This is due to the fact that our minds are laden with emotions. Of these negative emotions, the main one is pride, which leads us to feel contempt for others (due to an over-estimation of oneself; I am the best, the strongest, etc). The existence of pride automatically gives rise to jealousy, hatred, or anger. With pride as its underlying cause, the emotion of anger creates the most powerful effects. This is because it leads us to carry out all kinds of seriously negative actions that will bring about future rebirths in the lower realms.

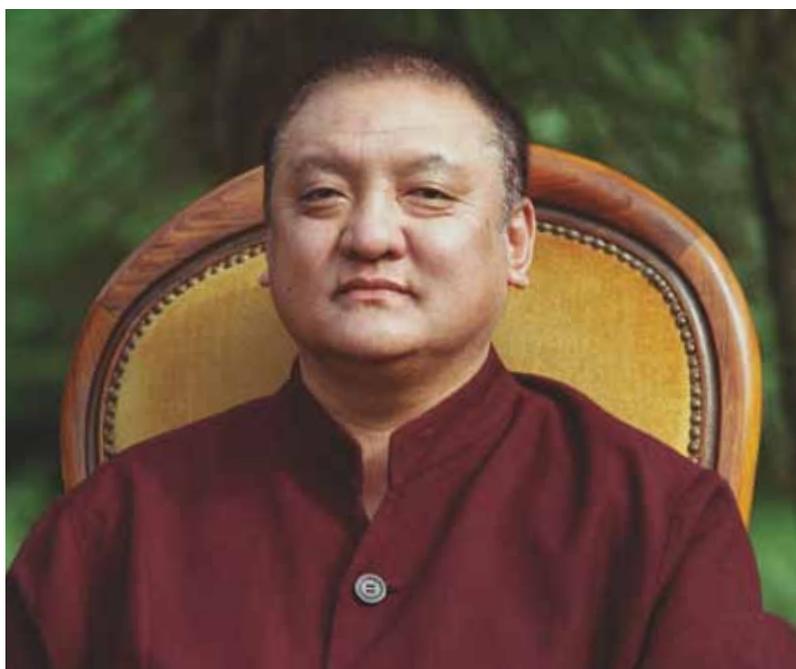
In Western societies, the distinction between pride and firmness of mind is often confused. A lack of pride is construed to be a weakness. Pride is a built-up and concentrated form of ego grasping. So in this respect, it is a weakness. A person can have great strength of character, and a strong resolve to achieve a goal, such as enlightenment, for example, without pride ever manifesting.

We need to dissociate pride — the affirmation of our own supremacy over others, which suggests a certain blindness — from firmness of mind that is a quality free of all the negative aspects of pride. In the same way we often have a distorted view, which equates humility with a weakness of character. What we really need is courage and strength of character, without developing pride.

Mental calm and stability

The meditation on love and compassion goes hand in hand with the cultivation of mental stability. Indeed, with respect to pride and anger, it is difficult for the beginner to give up these emotions straight away. Until we are able to do this, we need to practice mental calm in conjunction with the meditation on love and compassion. This is the very essence of Shi'nyay meditation.

For example, we can examine the mental image or concept of anger. Think of a person who appears unpleasant to you, someone whom you regard as your enemy. If you do not have an enemy, try to think of a person who can make you angry. Once you actually feel the anger, do not act it out, as you may end up hurting someone. Instead, try to relate to the anger as



Karine Lebjele

a type of thought and try to see what it looks like and where it comes from. Does it come from the person or from yourself? If you think it comes from the mind, where does it arise from, how does it remain, and where does it go when it disappears? In this way one takes the anger itself as the object of meditation and reflection.

From time to time, you can practice a method of exchanging roles. Once you feel really angry with someone, you can put yourself in that person's place.

For example, I am Shamar Rinpoche. I am angry with you. Then I imagine that I am you. In this way, I adopt a different viewpoint, your viewpoint. The same exchange can be applied to the emotions of jealousy and pride. This is a form of Shi'nyay (the pacification of the mind). By observing the strong emotional state of anger and then a peaceful state of mind, you will come to observe the nature of mind itself. This is the superior form of insight, which we call Lhaktong. If you can apply this method to all of the disturbing emotions, then it will be extremely beneficial for you.

If there are many thoughts in the mind and you manage to pacify them with this method, this is excellent. However, when the emotions are so strong

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Karine LePajole

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that we cannot control them, we need to stabilize the mind by focusing on our breathing. Concentrating on the in-and-out breaths in this case is more effective.

Many people often take this meditation to be a breathing exercise. In fact, the important point here is not the breathing but in composing the mind, through being constantly aware of the in-and-out breaths without being distracted. The main point is really this con-

Love and compassion are qualities that will accompany us throughout our entire spiritual progression: from the moment we first give rise to the enlightened attitude right up until we achieve Buddhahood itself.

centration itself, this mental stability. Some people think the physical aspect of the practice is significant, but this is not the case. What is essential is our familiarity with the practice. The success of meditations such as Shi'nyan and Lhaktong does not depend on the conceptualization of these meditative states. Rather, the essence of these practices is in our becoming accustomed to the meditation process itself. We have to differentiate between Gompa, which means to conceive, and Sgompa, which means to meditate, to train oneself or to become familiar.

The correct conception and understanding arises from meditation and familiarization with the practice. Therefore, the meditation itself must be established on very precise foundations. In order to obtain the state of a Buddha, we

have to turn away radically from becoming; in other words, from all the forms of worldly happiness associated with the different realms. One might, for example, aim to achieve a relative happiness in a higher state of existence, or to be free from the sufferings of the lower realms. One might aspire to acquire the peaceful state of the Shravakas where there is no possibility of benefiting others. However, it is only in the ultimate state of enlightenment that the real power and capacity to act for the benefit of others can be found.

Love and compassion-Relative level

The remedy for an attachment to the happiness of becoming is to reflect on impermanence and the "four fundamental thoughts which turn the mind away from the cycle of existences." As our attachments start to weaken, we may experience a certain peace in our mind. Grasping, or clinging to this mental state of calm may then arise. The remedy for grasping onto this peaceful state is to meditate on altruistic love and compassion. We should develop love and compassion within us until they have become completely natural attitudes for us. Love and compassion are qualities that will accompany us throughout our entire spiritual progression: from the moment we first give rise to the enlightened attitude right up until we achieve Buddhahood itself. This enlightenment will then be endowed with the body, speech, mind and qualities of a Buddha.

Through the power of love and compassion, all unfavourable conditions, the disturbing emotions, samsara and its causes will be destroyed and completely annihi-

lated. Without love and compassion, we simply do not have enough energy. Even while we remain trapped in this prison of samsara, subjected to the influences of the emotions and karma, the qualities of love and compassion allow us to be guided in the right direction.

This love and compassion has an object, which is all beings. By beings, we do not simply mean those who are around us — humans. Anything that possesses a mind is a being. And where there is a being, there is suffering. Just as we have a mind and through this we experience suffering, the same goes for all other types of beings. Here, we must distinguish between that which is living and that which has a mind. A living thing does not necessarily have a mind. But where there is mind, there is consciousness, and there is life. There are all kinds of beings, some which are very small like the insects. A common misconception is to attribute consciousness only to beings of a certain size. We often associate the existence of consciousness first with a certain degree of intelligence and then to a certain size. In this way, scientists and certain schools of philosophical thought are reluctant to acknowledge that smaller animals, insects, or tiny marine life possess a consciousness similar to ours, even though they recognize that some larger sea dwellers, such as dolphins, do have consciousness.

In fact, even the tiniest and most minuscule of insects seeks pleasure and fears suffering. If we try to touch the fin of a small fish, its initial reaction is to move away. If it is tamed, then it may recognize the hand that feeds it to be a

source of satisfaction. It will then approach the hand, quite simply because, in the same way as humans, it seeks a state of well-being and flees suffering.

Beings have various sizes, but the mind is not proportional to the physical appearance. The degree of suffering or happiness depends on individual karma. The same mind can reincarnate in a tiny feeble body, or in the body of a whale, or as a king endowed with a higher faculty of mind than that of an animal. However, size does not have any bearing on the quality or power of the mind.

Therefore, all beings, without any exception, should be the object of our love and compassion.

Cultivate the same attitude for all beings as you would feel for your

father, mother, or those whom you love the most. In traditional cultures, particularly in the East, family ties are extremely strong. The father and the mother are the people whom one reveres the most, and the idea of any harm coming to them is unbearable. For this reason, when we meditate on the enlightened attitude, we take this example considering all beings as our parents.

In the West, esteem for parents does not have the same intensity. But this difference does not matter for the meditation. Simply use someone whom you love most and consider all beings as that person.

Of course, it is not possible for us to develop this love and compassion for each being individually. But we can regard all beings collectively as one entity and meditate on the fact that they too wish to have happiness with the same fervor as we do. We develop this intense wish for their happiness by putting ourselves in their place. However, be careful not to make the wish into a fixation or attachment. Rather, concentrate on what beings have to go through. We must then continue to maintain the mind in this aspiration for their happiness while applying the same contemplation of its essence as was previously mentioned for the emotions such as anger, pride and jealousy.

Love and compassion— Ultimate level

This love for all beings is, in the beginning, an artificial and fabricated attitude. We do not really

feel it automatically. By training ourselves, it will develop gradually, and sooner or later this impartial love towards all beings will become a natural feeling. Right now, when we feel love for one or several beings, very often, this love is partial because it is selective, and it comes from our attachment. When we talk of spiritual love, this is not a partial and exclusive attitude, but it is founded in the nature of mind, which is emptiness. It is from emptiness that everything manifests.

We meditate on love; its nature is emptiness, non-existence. The object of this love (i.e., beings) is also empty in nature from the ultimate point of view. However, its relative nature does exist; it arises without contradicting its

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essence. If it were different and the existence of an intrinsic ultimate reality were enough in itself, it would not enable relative phenomena to manifest. If a dream were real, it could not take place in the space of the mind. If the dream's essence does not have an empty mirror-like quality, images cannot be reflected in it. Thus, the nature of beings' confusion is emptiness. Otherwise, how could it appear if it were solid and material?

Although this contemplation of Bodhicitta's ultimate nature is something that one must realize, this comes later on. In the beginning, it is advisable to cultivate mainly the relative aspect of love and compassion, in order to progress afterwards into a recognition of emptiness or ultimate Bodhicitta. Parallel to this meditation on ultimate Bodhicitta, a profound understanding will develop. If one meditates on love by means of emptiness, it becomes

a superior love. Not only that, but at the same time, while meditating on the nature of love, we will achieve a stable pacification of mind (Shi'nyay), and simultaneously the force of our positivity will increase. By constantly recollecting the enlightened attitude, we will be able to create a source of considerable benefit for others. Through the samadhi (complete absorption) of love, we will penetrate the ultimate and authentic benefit. Our mind will be united with the unchanging ultimate reality so that our consciousness will no longer be inhabited by anything other than love for all beings. It will never be separated from this.

By the force of our meditation, our love for beings will be like the mother hen's love for her chicks. This process will develop itself by its own nature, until it embraces all beings in the state of enlightenment. Gradually, we will gain the capacity to be beneficial towards an increasing number of beings. This has nothing to do with telepathy or any particular intention, as if we were sending energy waves to help those who are inferior to us. But spontaneously, beneficial and positive activities will arise through the force of virtue. The power of this meditation is so strong that it has the ability to spread to others. This love extends outwards and radiates, and is born in the minds of other beings, particularly in small animals such as birds.

An Illusion Song

by Khenpo Tsering

Illusion is what we need to understand

Illusion is what we need to know

Illusion is what we need to realize

Wisdom of illusion is the highest wisdom

Realization of illusion is the highest realization

Beyond illusion there is no reality

Beyond reality there is no illusion

Beyond illusion there is no truth

Beyond truth there is no illusion

The highest truth is that truth is an illusion

The highest truth is that illusion is an illusion

What is truth and what is illusion

After all everything is an illusion and illusion only

Ea Ma Ho, what a world and what a life!

DHARMA IN PARADISE

by Pamela Gayle White

After years of talking about it, I've finally made it to Brazil. My dear friend Gelek Tarchin and I have found a time and schedule which fit, and I'm here for five weeks of teaching and a few days of R&R. Gelek, who has worked closely with Gyalwa Karmapa and Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche to see how to best make our Dharma tradition available in this vast and varied land, is German-born, but he 'feels' Brazilian. After two retreats at Kundreul Ling in France, he lived in the monastery and studied Tibetan before coming to Brazil for first contact (along with Lama Lhundrup), and then settled here at the request of his teachers. Gelek travels all over Brazil and beyond, teaching the Dharma in Portuguese and helping organize the visits of other dharma teachers.

This is a huge country, with daunting distances between cities, and landscapes that range from Atlantic Forest to savanna to the Amazon. Our Karma Kagyu Centers here focus on lojong



(mind training), basic Buddhist philosophy and developing loving-kindness and compassion through the meditation of Chenrezik. Until now, relatively few Dharma books have been translated into Portuguese, but that's changing. Gelek encourages group members to participate in translation; Shamar Rinpoche's *The Path to Awakening* is on the list, as is the 35 Buddhas practice which Gyalwa Karmapa suggests be taught in Brazil.

My own trip begins in Rio de Janeiro, followed by ten days in the Bahia resort town Arraial d'Ajuda. Then I fly to Saõ Paulo, drive to Santos on the sea, and wind up in Brasilia. I'm teaching about lojong and the four seals that define the Buddhist view (on the nature of impermanence, that all stained emotions are painful, that all phenomena are empty, and that nirvana is beyond extremes), and giving some instructions on Chenrezik practice for new members. This is my first time in the southern hemisphere, and I'm wowed by the foreign-ness of it all. Not only the language, though that's a big challenge, but also by the unfamiliar flora, birds, and food. Fresh-pressed, affordable fruit juices are available everywhere, though half of the fruits offered are unfamiliar.

Like the scenery and everyday goings-on, Dharma here has a unique flavor, colored by a multi-religious culture strongly marked by the Spiritist movement, a Christian doctrine that accepts rebirth and the presence of spirits. Brazilians are generally very comfortable with the concept of rein-

arnation, although they may take issue with the idea that one can 'devolve' into lower forms of existence. Dharma probably first came to Brazil a century ago with Japanese immigrants. The Tibetan wave moved in and took root with Chagdud Tulku and Tarthang Tulku; many masters visit the main Nyingma centers on a regular basis. Sogyal Rinpoche was touring during my stay here. Kalu Rinpoche is also represented; a French lama who did a Shangpa Kagyu retreat in Burgundy has settled here and is now overseeing the continent's first three-year retreat in which around ten people are participating. Thanks to the beginnings with Lama Lhundrup, the tireless activity of 'Professor Geleki' and the regular visits of dharma teachers, there are small groups all over Brazil. Members are praying that Gyalwa Karmapa or Shamar Rinpoche will pay them a first visit and firmly plant the Karma Kagyu flag in Brazilian soil very soon.

One of the oldest groups meets in Arraial d'Ajuda, a popular resort city in the Bahia state. Arraial is terribly crowded between Christmas and Carnival, and pleasantly quiet the other nine months of the year. It's something like a tropical Martha's Vineyard, with a ten minute ferry ride across the river delta from Porto Seguro (where the first Portuguese explorer reportedly set foot in 1500), past fishermen, coconut water vendors, DVD hawkers and guys holding up strung together blue crabs - live - for sale. Unlike the other groups I visit, Arraial is an international crowd, with mem-

BODHI PATH GROWING ABROAD

In addition to a growing number of Bodhi Path centers in the U.S., centers are thriving around the globe.

In Europe, fifteen Bodhi Path centers or Bodhi Path Dharma groups have been established during the past 6 years. Shamar Rinpoche's European seat and the main Bodhi Path center in Europe is Renchen-Ulm, Germany. There are also centers in Switzerland, Austria, France, Denmark, Greece, Italy, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Serbia. Some have resident teachers, while others host travelling teachers when possible.

In Asia, three Bodhi Path centers have been developed in Taiwan and one in Malaysia, in addition to the long established center in Hong Kong.

Centers have also recently opened in Sydney, Australia, and in Mexico City, Mexico. And, as featured elsewhere in this newsletter, a number of groups are forming in Brazil.

You can learn more about these centers and their activities on the Bodhi Path website at

<http://www.bodhipath.org>

The website is also a great place to read about the Bodhi Path network: our curriculum, teachers, Dharma teachings, projects, news, programs, store, and other pertinent links.

PROGRAMS

BODHI PATH STUDIES PROGRAM

The North American Bodhi Path Buddhist centers are pleased to announce a new Buddhist Studies program being offered in the U.S. With this program, the centers wish to provide a profound opportunity for those interested in learning more deeply the meaning of the Buddha Dharma, in order to benefit themselves and others. This particular program, taught by Khenpo Tsering, is similar to courses held at the institute known

as KIBI, located in New Delhi, India; and was designed with the intention of helping students broaden their wisdom of Dharma while gaining perspective on how profound and vast the Buddha Dharma actually is. This program, consisting of annual two-week sessions over four years (totaling eight weeks over four years) will provide teachings on four major philosophy treatises. Each annual program will cover content from one major book of each treatise. Additionally, each year the program will offer teachings on important supplementary philosophy texts.

The first two-week session will take place this year at the Bodhi Path Center in Natural Bridge, Virginia, August 28 - September 10, 2011. The program is scheduled for the same time each year, to coincide with the U.S. Labor Day holiday.

For more information about the four treatises, the additional texts, and details about this program as they become available, please visit www.bodhipath.org. Among other details, the website will include more in-depth information about the rich content that will be covered. If you have questions, please email studies@bodhipath.org.

PARADISE continued

bers from Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Germany, Czech Republic and even Washington state. We explore the lojong teachings together over several evenings and three, 3pm-9pm sessions. The first two days our course, held in a house in town, is punctuated by the clip-clop of horses; there's an equestrian rally, and all the streets here are cobblestone.

Dharma teacher Gelek has already gone over Shamar Rinpoche's book with this group. They have thought about it, discussed it together and have a lot of challenging questions. As Shamar Rinpoche emphasizes developing ultimate bodhicitta through meditation and view, many of their questions focus on emptiness, but emotions are also a popular topic. I'm finding that emotions are very real for most people here; they cry openly, exchange feelings and are quite open about how they experience the teachings and where their challenges are. There are a lot of hugging and kissing, temper flare-ups and quick calm-downs.

I tell the group that in the Bodhi Path centers we often end our time together with a pot luck meal, and so it is here. Dinner features appetizers, mushroom risotto, salads, desserts, and bottles of Argentinian and Chilean wine. Two members treat us to a snippet of flamenco dancing. The moon is nearly full, and the ocean is a few meters away. After the party I walk back to my host's house along the beach with some of my new Dharma friends. Shamar Rinpoche often tells us that we are creating our illusion. This one is paradise – with mosquitoes, to keep it real.

SHAMAR RINPOCHE'S ANNUAL TEACHING

Editor's note: Shamar Rinpoche teaches each year in Natural Bridge, Virginia, the last weekend in June. The poster below is for the 2011 program, which will have already occurred before this newsletter is available. However, he continues to teach on the same topic, Mind Training. If you are interested in this program in the future, please visit bodhipath.org next spring for updated information, or sign up for Bodhi Path's email list.

Two Summer Programs
at Bodhi Path Natural Bridge

THE PATH TO AWAKENING

Shamar Rinpoche's Annual Teaching
on the Profound Practice of Mind Training,
June 24 to 26, 2011
Annual Bodhi Path Members Meeting,
June 27, 2011.

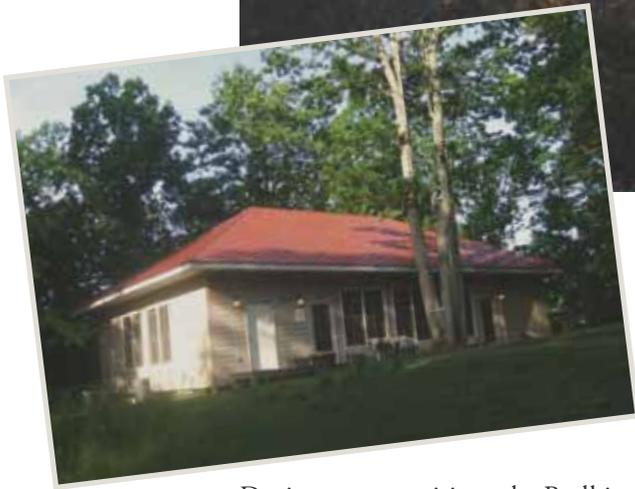
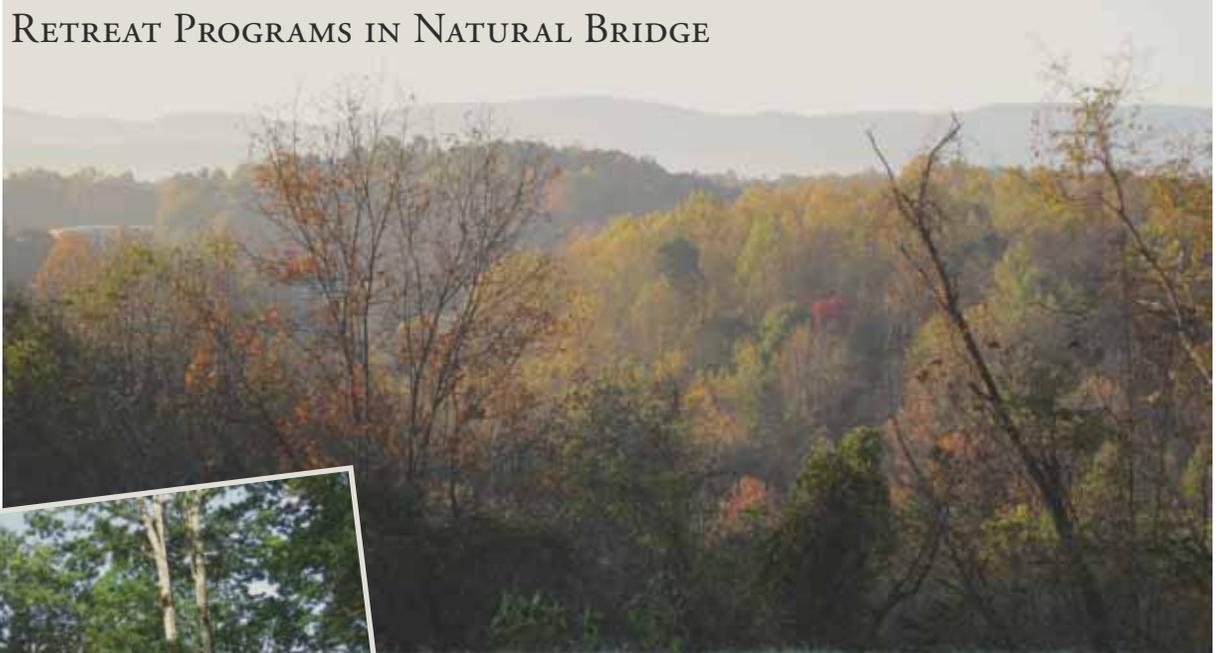
New this year!
Dharma Movie Night and
Dharma Teacher's Panel Discussion
Details TBA.

Followed by Program 2:
CONSCIOUS BREATHING
A 5-day Silent Meditation Retreat
led by Dharma Teacher Tsogy,
June 28 (evening intro) to July 3, 2011

You are cordially invited to
attend either or both programs.
For more information,
please visit our website
at bodhipath.org.

NATURAL BRIDGE
BODHI PATH
BUDDHIST CENTERS

RETREAT PROGRAMS IN NATURAL BRIDGE



During a recent visit to the Bodhi Path center on Martha's Vineyard, Dharma Teacher Tsony answered questions about his ideas and vision for the retreat program at the Bodhi Path center in Natural Bridge, VA, where he is the resident teacher. The discussion centered on fleshing out a vision for the future, while recognizing that the center in Natural Bridge already houses well-attended, serious meditation retreats. This article is based on Tsony's interview.

The Natural Bridge center has already hosted several retreats with 25 or so meditators at a time. Many participants are local, while others stay on site, or nearby at a local B&B that gives reduced rates for participants. As not everyone stays together, these retreats are presently of the 9am-5pm variety, silent while all together, with optional silence after hours.

Sitting meditation is the main focus of these retreats, although there are also combined teaching/sitting retreats during the year. For instance, during the past two Februaries, Professor Lara Braitstein of McGill University has taught the views of the Madyamaka and Yogacara schools of Tibetan Buddhism during morning sessions, which provided a very rich sitting environment for the afternoons and the complementary four day-long sittings.

Tsony also leads a 5-day retreat beginning after Shamar Rin-

poche's June teaching, which is yet again a wonderful and profound opportunity to absorb the previous days' teachings through sitting meditation.

All are invited to sign up for these retreats. Newcomers are urged to start by attending one-day group retreats in order to become familiar with the program, the sitting periods, silence, walking meditation, and so on.

Every June, students have the opportunity to come to the annual program with Rinpoche and receive the direct transmission. Tsony leads a retreat that follows the program. We have the opportunity to directly receive, from Rinpoche, the essence of these instructions and benefit from his influence, his experience, his blessing; and to use that inspiration to do our own work, with our personal efforts and dedication.

There is also the possibility for individual retreats at the Natural Bridge center. Currently, there are two cabins available where, if the student and teacher agree, a retreat of an individually chosen length can be facilitated.

During the group retreats, everything is based on Rinpoche's teachings on Mind Training. According to his experience of over 40 years of teaching westerners, and of course his tremendous experience of Dharma, Rinpoche has selected the Seven points of

Mind Training – or Lojong – from the treasure trove of 84,000 teachings by Buddha as most suitable for our context. He has emphasized the benefits of calm abiding (Shamata in Sanskrit, or Shi'nyay in Tibetan) and insight meditation (Vipassana in Sanskrit, or Lhaktong in Tibetan) as a platform for mind training. With this direction, work focuses on both the relative level of everyday chal-

lenges, and also on a more absolute level of the nature of mind and phenomena. We cultivate the Enlightened Mind Attitude, Bodhicitta, on both the relative and absolute levels. That is really what Rinpoche is inviting us to explore and that is what we try to do. This retreat program aims to implement Rinpoche's vision by helping practitioners jump-start their practice and inviting them,

once back home, to continue this practice.

Rinpoche's book, *The Path to Awakening*, is the backbone of these retreats. Using the traditional structure of the mind training literature, Tsony noted that Rinpoche has reorganized these teachings in a very concise form.

Students in Natural Bridge have been studying this small, concise book for almost a year. Every Thursday, they meet for 2 hours and really try to study in-depth,

BODHI PATH OUTREACH

looking at each word to see how it connects with all the other teachings of the Buddha.

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The Natural Bridge center has a beautiful meditation hall and the capacity to accommodate a few retreatants on-site. Programs typically offer catered lunches. While there are already plans in place along with wishes for a dining hall kitchen facility, Tsony would also love to see a dormitory on the property, perhaps with space for 20 people in single or double rooms with at least one private room that is handicap accessible.

This vision for the future includes the wish that members from the worldwide Bodhi Path community, as well as other practitioners, can take advantage of this wonderful offering: a contained silent meditation retreat hosted in a spacious beautiful environment situated on a hilltop between the Allegheny and the Blue Ridge mountains.

INFINITE COMPASSION FOUNDATION

Infinite Compassion Foundation (ICF) is an International Charitable Organization founded by Shamar Rinpoche. The mission of ICF is to offer infinite love and compassion to worldly issues in the areas of education, animal protection, and medical aid for the less fortunate.

Special areas of interest are:

1. Establishing basic human rights, especially focusing on minorities and young girls in the Himalayan region.
2. Setting up schools in underprivileged regions, such as the Arunachal Pradesh Chakma School.
3. Providing medical care in disadvantaged regions.
4. Creating humane conditions that can help end the unnecessary suffering of animals, as well as activism and legislation for Animal Rights.

In the Himalayan region, a good education is the way out of poverty, providing a path into a humane and dignified life. Endemic in this region is the unfortunate situation of parents selling their daughters for money. The girls are inevitably forced into prostitution. ICF is

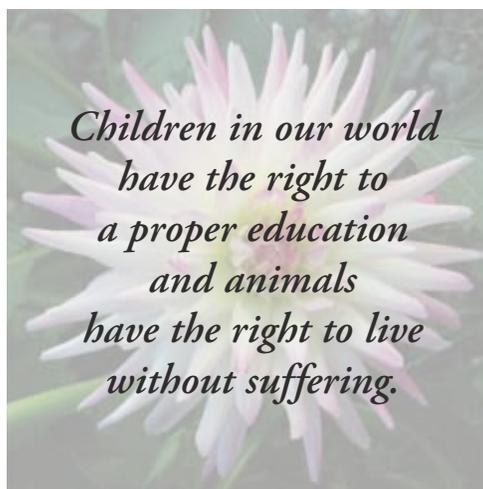
committed to undermining this practice by providing more positive alternatives.

Shamar Rinpoche states, "Children in our world have the right to a proper education and animals have the right to live without suffering. There are many children who are at a disadvantage because they don't have the opportunity to learn to read or write, or study simple math. This makes it far too easy to suppress and exploit

them. Many parents still feel the only way to survive is to sell their daughters. Every day many thousands of children are struggling to survive, unable to follow their natural impulse to

learn and get an education. We intend to help.

I am deeply saddened by the fact that in some parts of this world the rights of animals are persistently denied and violated. We must raise the awareness of mankind to stop all these cruelties toward animals. A human society



that does not properly acknowledge and protect the natural rights of animals is imperfect and contradicts the underlying framework of this planet.

We can all support Animal Rights immediately. When shopping for animal products, please be aware of whether the conditions that the animals were raised in were humane, and whether the animals were treated in the highest standard possible appropriate to their species."

To see more about the wonderful projects of compassion being developed by ICF, follow this link: <http://www.shamarpa.org/index.php?id=27>

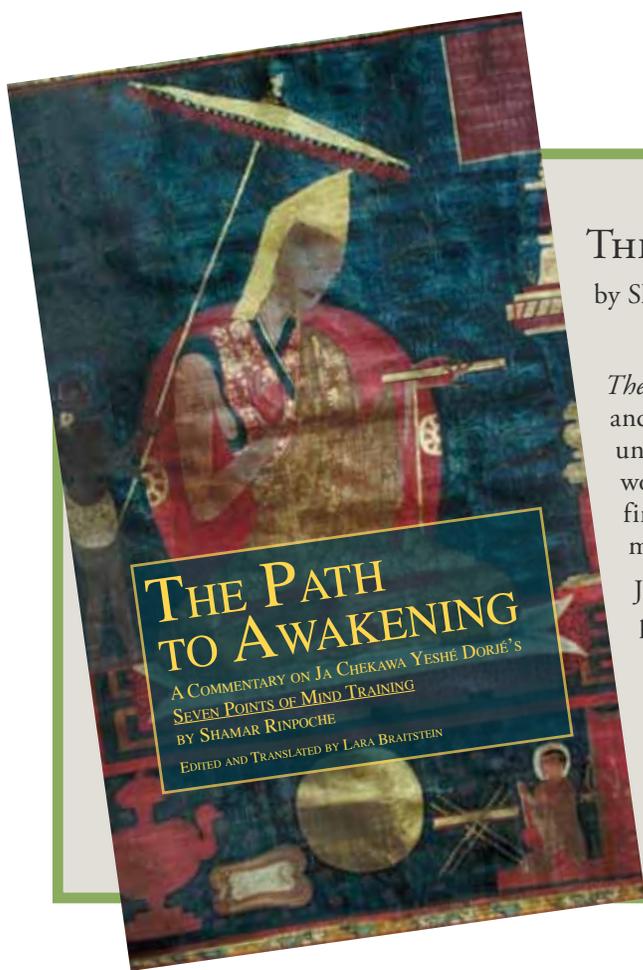
THE PATH TO AWAKENING

by Shamar Rinpoche

The Path to Awakening is thorough and yet accessible. It is presented with uncommon clarity. Anyone who works with this text over time will find deeper and deeper levels of meaning.

Ja Chekawa Yeshe Dorje's classic presentation of the path of mind training remains vital one thousand years later. It is suitable for all Mahayana practitioners.

To order a copy go to bodhipathstore.org



PRACTICING DHARMA IN PRISON

by Clarissa Schaeffer

*“May all beings
find happiness and the
cause of happiness”*

— From The Four
Immeasurables prayer

“I am grateful to the Buddhist meditation group for allowing me the time to look inside of myself; I have discovered an inner peace that is ever expanding”.

— James (CMCW inmate)

“The daily routine of a prisoner is typically characterized by chronic stress in interpersonal contacts....Knowing how to maintain a personal meditation regimen is the only way to find my way through these nightmarish conditions with any peace of mind. Buddhist principles can be the most soul-preserving activity possible and can certainly do no harm....and is the best development in my 7½ years of incarceration.”

— Drew (CMCW inmate)

“I was asked to assist the Buddhists like [the former clerk] had been and I agreed...The meditation I find very helpful. The peace is delightful...I hope to continue to participate with intentions to grow Islamically.”

— Karom (Muslim inmate clerk, CMCW)

“I have been going to the meditation services for a few months. I’ve learned a lot already. Everything seems to make a lot of sense. I am really trying to better myself...Every day seems to open up new awareness...I try to keep an open mind, kind heart and compassion for others.”

— Michael (CMCW inmate)



When I take the 20-minute drive to the state prison, it is practice. I feel privileged to share the Dharma with men who could not otherwise meet. What can I write about smiles, some relaxed conversation, occasional laughter and meditation in a prison setting? I see postures straighten, eyes brighten, voices sound clearer. They enter cautiously at first, sometimes meditating with arms crossed. But for those who return, change happens, slowly, but sometimes even more rapidly than at our local meditation center.

Two weeks ago Erik, who has been practicing for about two years, talked to the group about his first year, when he meditated only at our meetings. Then, he said, he began to practice for 5 minutes, then 10 minutes. Now he usually meditates for a half hour each day, getting up to do yoga stretches and sitting practice in the day room before others in the ninety-person unit are up.

The Buddhist Fellowship at the California Men’s Colony-West (CMCW) began about five years ago under the direction of Del Collette, an inmate whose teachers were from the Gelugpa lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. He had read an article in the local newspaper that there was a Tibetan Buddhist group in town, and wrote to us requesting support.

Although Buddhism is recognized in California as a religion, it is unfunded at CMCW. There is no staff or clergy officially assigned to support a Buddhist group, and in order to meet there must be a volunteer present. I began the process to become a certified volunteer clergy in 2008. It took six months to get my volunteer card, which has to be renewed every year by attending a daylong class, and included filling out volumes of paperwork and being tested for TB. I continue to use this experience and the institution with its ever-changing interpretations of rules and regulations as my practice. My continued presence at the prison depends on my ability to respond to the requirements and needs of both the prison staff and the inmates.

The Buddhist prison fellowship has a rolling cabinet containing compartments for an altar, a library, cushions, tea, files, videos, and anything else the group might have. When we meet, some men sit on the floor on cushions; most sit on folding chairs. We have had as many as sixty participants show

up, though our usual number is around twenty-five.

CMCW is both a level one and two prison, which means many of the inmates have less than two year sentences, and all should be gone within six years. They live in barracks built during World War II; ninety men crowded in bunk beds with a locker between each bed. It is a California ‘model prison’, which means the barracks are not locked, but there are armed guards in the towers above.

In the two years that I have been involved, turnover, due to parole and transfer, has affected over 75% of the initial community. Del Collette left in early 2010. Since then I have been responsible for curriculum, and function as teacher. Out of deep respect for this role, I make wishing prayers, “May I help and not harm; may I clarify more than confuse; may my words be true and helpful.”

We have started to use the “Four Noble Truths” as a curricular basis. This powerful teaching contains motivation and inspiration from Buddha’s search for a way out of suffering. We explore the causes of suffering: the disturbed emotions/kleshas and karma. We discuss working with the emotions, what they are, and what helps here and now. We explore the path: Shi’nyay meditation, the eight-fold path, and the Paramitas (perfections) — especially generosity, ethics and patience— plus the meaning of refuge, as well as the householder vows. A typical session begins with a half hour of meditation. Dharma instruction follows in talks, readings, video teachings and discussion.

We meet in the Interfaith Chapel which is used primarily by the African American Muslim group. The Muslim clerk who started by checking up on us went from working at his desk to becoming a central part of our group. Recently he was transferred out-of-state, and said he hoped to start a meditation group in his new prison.

Our group includes a number of Muslims, Jews and Catholics.

Of all the practitioners in the prison fellowship, I feel I have gained the most. From the first question an inmate earnestly asked, I have had to integrate everything I know from my own meditation, study and reflection. The growth has been beyond what I imagined possible for me. I am grateful for this opportunity and hope to inspire others to take on similar projects.

A TRICYCLE RETREAT

by Khedrub Zangmo

Last June, in a small coffee shop in Lexington, VA, Pamela Gayle White and I skyped with two *Tricycle* magazine editors, James Shaheen and Phillip Ryan. During this brief conversation they approved the first video retreat to be given jointly by two teachers.

James had been asking Pamela to do a video retreat, as she contributes articles to *Tricycle* regularly. Pamela asked me to join her; one reason was, as she put it, “All the other retreat leaders are famous Dharma teachers!” That was a bit intimidating.

In February, Pamela and I met to plan. We had five days to formulate the 5 half-hour segments, rehearse and try to appear relaxed and professional. Yikes! Our theme for the retreat was “Letting Go”... great advice we found an extremely personal need to follow!

We filmed the segments at the Bodhi Path Santa Barbara. Mike, the cameraman, was easygoing and helped us relax as we filmed. After a few days, we ended up re-filming the first two parts because the first go was pretty stiff.

A *Tricycle* “retreat” is actually a group of Dharma talks on a particular theme. A talk is aired each Monday, and during the month one can listen to any that have already been aired. Those who sign in can chat with the teachers, make comments, or ask questions. *Tricycle* members can watch all retreats in the archives at any time, but the possibility to chat is limited to the current retreat. Communicating with those who were following the retreat, and reading their interactions with each other, was touching and inspiring. There was so much love, appreciation, and wisdom coming from the participants.

The *Tricycle* team was very supportive throughout. I cannot thank Pamela enough for inviting me to participate with her. And I especially wish to express my gratitude to Shamar Rinpoche and Bodhi Path members for years of support and the opportunity to practice and teach within Bodhi Path.

Editor’s Note: Tricycle has kindly set up a Bodhi Path account so members can watch these videos. The user name is Bodhipath and the password is buddha2. We thank Tricycle for their generosity.

CELEBRATING TEN YEARS

As Shamar Rinpoche left for India 12 years ago, he told a group of us he would establish a center in DC, news that was joyously received!

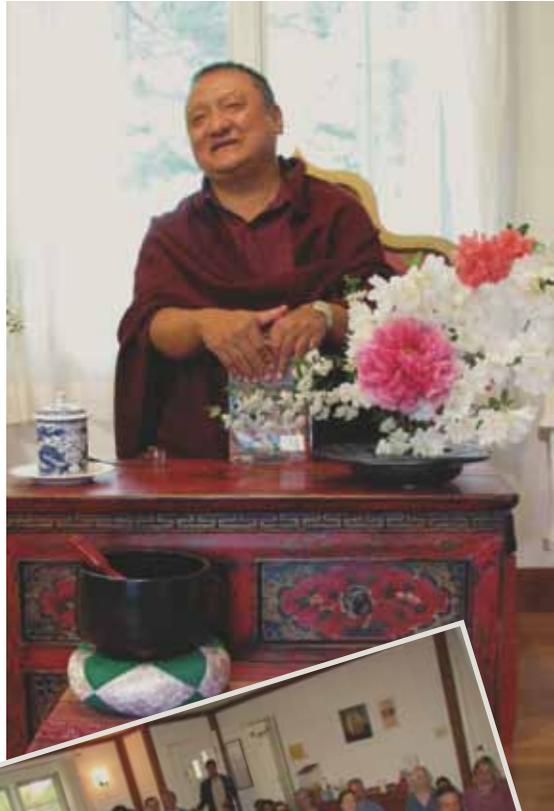
Rinpoche envisioned that the future Washington center would

be located on “River Potomac,” surrounded by trees. A search began and eventually property was located in Potomac Village near the Potomac River, about 15 miles from downtown DC. When Rinpoche saw it he immediately realized it matched his vision.

The center opened its doors on March 1, 2001, and gradually has been transformed into what is today, the Bodhi Path Buddhist Center of Washington, DC Metro Area. Based on Rinpoche’s spiritual guidance, many accomplished, inspiring Dharma teachers have taught here over the years.

As the tenth anniversary approached, Rinpoche happily agreed to join the celebration. On Saturday, April 30th, an open house was held, where Rinpoche talked with visitors and signed copies of his book, *The Path to Awakening*. More than 80 people attended, and as one well-wisher put it, many were moved by the details Rinpoche remembered of their lives. A dinner party followed, where good food, conversation and laughter filled the room.

On Sunday, a record number of people heard Rinpoche’s teaching on meditation. The shrine room was filled to capacity, a wonderful and fitting end to our celebration.



BREAKING NEW GROUND

In 2008, Bodhi Path Santa Barbara teacher Dawa Tarchin founded The Institute of Compassionate Awareness (TICA), a Public Benefit Initiative that among other things focuses on bringing non-denominational mindfulness training to middle school children in Santa Barbara County, California. TICA is also partnering with the Department of Psychology at University of California Santa Barbara, where Dawa Tarchin is a visiting researcher, to measure the effects of meditation in school age children. Results from testing are very promising.

Also, since 2009, Dawa has been meeting with psychologists and cognitive neuroscientists at UCSB for a quality exchange between science and Buddhism. The group meets about once every three weeks and includes UCSB professors, graduate students, and independent scholars and researchers. This exchange covers broad subjects such as the nature of perception, time, the origin of consciousness (“The Hard Problem”), as well as the lines between Whiteheadian philosophy, Panpsychism, Process Philosophy, dependent origination, and the Madhyamaka View according to Nagarjuna.



BODHI PATH

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Visit bodhipath.org for information about the organization, teachings and our centers around the world: 14 in North America, 15 in Europe, 5 in Asia and 1 in Australia.

WISHING PRAYERS

Bodhi Path Natural Bridge in Virginia has grown steadily over the last 16 years evolving into a retreat and teaching facility for all members. The already completed infrastructure and facilities are roads, water, sewer, landscaping, meditation hall for more than 100 practitioners, Rinpoche's house, and four guest cottages, all located on 50 forested acres. Shown below are two current projects. About to be completed is the Stupa of Compassion (left), and construction is underway for a timber framed forest shelter for a magnificent large bronze Buddha statue

(below) that was donated to the center. We hope all Bodhi Path members will be inspired to make wishes for all beings while circumambulating the stupa or meditating with the Buddha.

In an article on page 6, Tsony expresses Bodhi Path Natural Bridge's hopes to expand retreat facilities. Plans for construction of

dining and guest facilities are underway. Those interested in helping with these projects may donate funds by check to Bodhi Path Natural Bridge, 620 Galloping Path Natural Bridge, VA 24578, or by credit card through Pay Pal at bodhipath.org.

All the Bodhi Path centers rely on donations to provide their programs. To help, please contact your local Bodhi Path center or visit bodhipath.org. All Bodhi Path centers are religious not-for-profit organizations, and donations are tax deductible.

Thank you. Your generous support is greatly appreciated.

