

YESHE MELONG
"Mirror or Wisdom"
NEWSLETTER

Losar 2000

A Message for Everyone

In the beginning when we are rather new to the Dharma, we must first listen very carefully to the teachings many times over. Then we must very carefully think about the meaning. We should continue by memorizing our practice and the meaning of the words. Our discipline must be kept. Do not ignore this, especially as a beginner. This means older students who have established discipline in their practice must also keep maintaining it. If you continually change teachers and change practices, you will never attain liberation yourself, much less for others. The changing should be taking place in your practice by progression through Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana, and it should be getting more clear. You should have more understanding, more depth, more subtlety. We usually do the opposite, and that is shameful. Then we end up blaming the teachers, saying they told us to do this or that when we actually tricked them into endorsing our self-serving plan. We should develop the degree of discipline that is taught in the Hinayana. If you have taken these things into your approach to Dharma, then you are able to move on to learning the Four Thoughts that Turn the Mind and the Four Noble Truths. This is not to say that you should just be able to recite them from your mouth, but you should put them into your mind and digest the meaning. Then the meaning of the words will ripen in your heart. This is not like focusing on your boyfriend or girlfriend. You must deeply understand the meaning, and this means understanding samsara's nature. You must understand karma—cause and effect—again not just by knowing how to say the words but by putting them into your mind. You must really know the consequences of your actions. It is not like the way a monkey hides his face when it's already too late to escape.

Increase the positivity in your life, watch yourself carefully and understand the results of negative actions. See that it is time to give them up and slowly but surely give them up. We don't want to repeat these things again and again. We know it is harmful. Therefore, if we are truly smart human beings, we will see this. Don't be someone that you are not; it will only create more negativity. Negativity is not so simple as one word. There are the five poisons and the ten nonvirtues. The five poisons are the trunk, the ten nonvirtues are the branches, and from these branches extend countless negativities. Don't just say, "Oh, well, I have always had this habit" and accept this or that kind of little habit that you've always had. Please, don't engage in harmful things. You seem to want to hug the enemy. Positivity benefits us, positivity means the activity of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Don't be self-centered; don't only think of your own relatives and loved ones, forgetting others. We need to cultivate the Four Immeasurables and the Six Perfections and be conscientious. Please be conscientious. If you teach Dharma but continue to act in negative ways, this is not conscientious. This is without value, without respect and not careful. These things are very important especially in the beginning.

We also very much need to save merit by making offerings to the Three Jewels and being generous to those in need. There are many kinds of generosity, not like having abortions, possessing weapons or creating toxic poisons; it is more like being a doctor and helping others. Don't be samsaric about your generosity by mixing it with the eight worldly dharmas or being arrogant and boasting about your good deeds. Don't use it to hook others for your own purposes or give with the expectation of being paid back for it. If you don't do this, the practice of generosity will support your practice and purify the many stains and obscurations that you need to cleanse. For this we have the practices of Vajrasattva or Bodhicitta, or any of the practices can be used to cleanse obscurations and negative karma. If you aren't successful and seem to have low merit, cleansing in this way will help you. Go the opposite way of the eight worldly dharmas, practice stage by stage and be conscientious. This will bring a fruit, a result; this

will be your pay back. However much we cleanse, we will obtain a corresponding result. If you need big results, then you need to work hard. If you only work a tiny bit and expect big results, then you are only fooling yourself. If you want to practice Buddhism, then forget your fancy ideas. According to the teachings all Buddhas of the past learned by listening, contemplating and meditating. They achieved the results, then taught others what they were able to realize through their efforts. They did not just mouth words and mimic the books like a copycat.

Furthermore, don't point at someone else's faults. If we see the faults of others, that means we have more of a problem than they do; therefore, we are able to see it. If we can't see someone's positive qualities, then that means we don't have positive qualities ourselves. Observe those around you. There are many who are very comfortable without much wealth, and they are able to practice with body, speech and mind. This is because they understand the meaning of samsara. On the other hand, there are those who feel they never have enough. You guys are spoiled and are never comfortable. That means you are attached to the eight worldly dharmas and have never understood the Four Thoughts, being still glued to samsara. That's a shameful quality; don't copy that. We have many examples to follow, not only Shakyamuni and Guru Rinpoche. There are many others who attained liberation in India, China and Tibet. How did they learn, meditate and practice? How did they obtain the result? Why did they need to practice? Why do we need liberation? Read their life stories.

So, please be conscientious, be honest. Tashi Delek! Happy New Millennium! I will pray for your success in the positive, and I will pray that your negativity has no success. Ha, ha, ha! See you soon.

The Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche

Dear Sangha Family. . .

Happy New Year to everyone and best wishes for good health and continued spiritual happiness in the year to come. This year I would like to take just a moment to reflect on the past year and share some of my learning experiences with all of you. The year began at Tashi Chöling with the most profound cycle of teachings that the Dharma has to offer, the precious teaching on the Secret Essence Tantra. It was my great delight to have the opportunity to help bring these teachings into the English language right here in the U.S. so they would be available to the vajra family of practitioners. Following this rich time and shortly after returning to the desert, where I am presently working and studying, my dear father of this lifetime fell very ill and passed away ten days later. It was a very sad and difficult time, but I managed to do a forty-nine day practice in his honor and realized many times over how very kind all fatherly and motherly parent sentient beings really are. I also realized that my own contemplation upon impermanence had been quite superficial up until then. Thank you, Dad and dear Ron, for being my teachers even in your passing. It was indeed a spring filled with teachings on death and impermanence.

Emerging from all this came the next blessing in my life. Through my dear friend and colleague Jules Levinson, I met David Lunsford who offered to help us establish a nonprofit organization for translators and their work. As a result of this timely connection, by the kindness of David and The Bodhi Foundation, in June we established a new translation group named "Light of Berotsana" by Thinley Norbu Rinpoche. The translators inaugurating the group are Lama Chönam, Jules Levinson and myself. Our main purpose is to undertake the important task of attempting to translate into English many of the classic root texts and commentaries from the Sutra and Mantra traditions of India and Tibet. Primarily this will include the most important and pertinent texts taught and studied in the colleges, training and retreat centers of the Nyingma and Kagyu traditions.

The texts to be translated will be taken from the curriculum of colleges such as the Ngagyur Nyingma Institute for Advanced Learning in South India under the direction of H.H Penor Rinpoche. Many of the commentaries that are taught were written by Jamgon Mipham Rinpoche, Dodrup Tenpai Nyima and Dza Patrul Rinpoche to name only a few of the more contemporary illustrious masters whose treatises form the core of the curriculum. We have already begun the challenging task of translating Mipham Rinpoche's root commentary on the general meaning called "Essence of Luminosity" which is the text used by Khenpo Namdrol Rinpoche in his commentary last winter at Tashi Chöling. Since many of you were present for the teachings, you will appreciate how wonderful it will be to have the root text available for such a teaching in the future. We are also continuing to translate the "Treasury of Space" revelations of Dudjom Lingpa and expect to make several important commentaries available very soon. Other texts to be translated will be drawn from colleges such as the monastic university established by H.H. the Sixteenth Gyalwang Karmapa at Rumtek in Sikkim. This will enable students to benefit from the learning of great scholars like Karmapa Mikyo Dorje and Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye. In selecting texts from the course of studies followed at such eminent schools for Buddhist learning, it is important to emphasize relevance and practicality for contemporary practitioners. We are presently engaged in the translation of several other profoundly interesting works and hope to include more translators and teachers as funds allow.

At this point in the propagation of Buddhism in western countries, the time has come to emphasize the need for English-speaking students to study and learn traditional Buddhism. As plans for such learning centers for higher Buddhist education get underway in the United States and elsewhere, the need for the textbooks that will comprise the curriculum has become even more apparent than before. At Tashi Chöling we are also inaugurating such an institute for learning and practice. In order to prepare for these most crucial future events, I have no choice but to spend my time preparing for these teaching cycles and important opportunities for the propagation of traditional Buddhism in our land. It is the greatest joy to be able to serve the doctrine and beings in this way. As many of you know, I feel very strongly motivated to insure that pure traditional Dharma is firmly taking root in the West.

Last summer I also met with my Gesar of Ling translation group in Portland, Oregon. This year we are trying to bring this project to completion. With about one hundred and fifty pages to go and tons of editing left in order to finish the third book of the epic, we must meet again for several months this summer in order to complete the first trilogy. After spending most of last summer at Tashi Chöling and translating for Rinpoche, when the fall came Rinpoche, Mimi and I went to Bozeman Montana to receive the great blessings and teachings bestowed by H.H. Penor Rinpoche. It was a joy to share such a special time with the Sangha in Bozeman. Following that, I returned to the desert to practice, translate and learn as much as I can. I joined our beloved Rinpoche in the Bay Area to share Losar with the Sangha and friends and make our wishing prayers for the year that is yet to come. May it bring about the fruition of our highest aspirations!

Best wishes and love to everyone,

Sangye Khandro

Spring Cleaning

**Hooked on the bait
of the ordinary world,
nibbling the edges
of pain and pleasure
I am dying
to get to the point
and let go, Control Bimbo
let loose into the reaches
of purity, a simple
string of beads.**

**This life is a new model vacuum,
attachments for every occasion:
sucking up to desire,
trying to please her
NOW, I'm running everywhere
tight on the line
like a chain on a dog run,
behind the fence. I am
supposed to be
the master.**

**Conditions being what they are
it is best to plant
when the manure has been spread.
At least this is ready.
I shall put on my hip boots
and wade through the Valley
of the Shadow of Death
with the prayer I can cross
in the time I have left
to hose off on the other side.**

Julie Rogers

Letter from Tashi Chöling

Another year has slipped by as we dream the dream of American Buddhists. It was an exceptionally beautiful year at Tashi Chöling, and it's highlight was the presence of Gyatrul Rinpoche from May through July. This sad and lovely world is made meaningful when graced by the teacher and the Dharma. We look forward to seeing him again here this year. Meanwhile, with the wonder of technology we receive teachings by phone.

The building projects come along slowly but steadily. To our great satisfaction, the Amitabha building is now mostly finished, and the three statues are installed. The prayer wheel building is also practically finished with just the installation of the altar and a few details to complete. The paintings by Sonam Tsering are stunning. With the matching grant for the East Wing, we will make good headway on that project too. The outside is looking quite finished and the inside awaits our attention. This year

we will be focusing upon the septic system, a retaining wall, earth removal and bringing in the utilities. Volunteers are always welcome.

The big news must be that the Tashi Chöling Sangha is now a separate nonprofit entity. A new Board of Directors with many old faces is even now restructuring the organizational profile. It is hoped that this will allow Tashi Chöling to spread its wings a bit and increase the offering of Dharma we can provide.

So far, it has been a very mild winter with the promise of good conditions for the Tröma and Dor Sem Lama Chodpa retreats in March and June. We look forward to seeing you.

*Mat Small, President/Tashi Chöling
541-482-2399, P.O. Box 64, Ashland, OR 97520*

BUDDHAMIND in Progress. . .a column by Julie Rogers
(formerly WOMANMIND)

Bringing Adversity to the Path

“ . . .From now on whatever kind of adversity or suffering arises, I will not fear it; I will not befriend it; I will just allow it to be. . .”

Jigme Tenpe Nyima from *Ancient Wisdom* by Gyatrul Rinpoche

Here we are, endowed with the opportunity to examine adversity and bring it to the path. Through our good fortune, we have encountered a sublime teacher, Gyatrul Rinpoche, who has given us the means to do so. The words presented here are only reflections on this teaching, perhaps something to chew on.

In this time of history, or any time in samsara, the preceding quote could be our motto. Difficulties come as dependably as thoughts. Even during periods when life is a smooth sail, thoughts arise that unsettle the delicate balance we depend on to stay afloat. Buddhist teachings indicate that it starts with the thoughts. I have noticed how easy it is to grasp onto familiar old tapes, whether comfortable or not. Then the habit to identify with them plays out. Because of this, I feel attraction or aversion toward situations, people and ideas that support or threaten who I think I am; it's endless.

Adversity feels like anything that makes me uncomfortable. It could be a flat tire, lack of money, problems in my family, illness, difficulties with people or how I may sweat bullets due to rampant mental gymnastics. And it could be “worse.” I've recently been talking to a Dharma friend about the idea of adversity (not getting my way) and of attachment and fear. My friend said we simply need to accept it all. This idea has generally rubbed me the wrong way, except that I can't think of anything else to do. Resistance and fighting hasn't worked. Going along feels like compromising myself (or maybe the ego). What's a beginner to do?

Then there is fear. Let's not talk about that. Maybe just a bit until the squirming starts. There is the fear of wasting this precious human rebirth, fears of pain, emotions, loneliness, fear of change and also surrender. Sometimes without being aware that it's going on, I hold onto fear as if I can't get along without it. Accept it? Just allow it to be? That all-encompassing, elusive fiend, the ego, doesn't want to go along or lose control. It wants to be THE JUDGE. Judge, jury, perpetrator or victim, I play all the parts and end up spending every moment in court.

The inevitable flip side is attachment or is it the other way around? Attachment is the glue that hardens and seals the mind, so that it remains inflexible, stuck. We all know this. So why is it so hard to

realize? I unwittingly continue to build the framework upon which is hung the ornament of self, with this limited view of existence. Becoming attached is so familiar! Whether it be people, objects or experiences, repulsive or ordinary, fabulous or questionable, confusion isn't picky when in search of a hand to hold.

Allowing adversity to be. Do I allow myself to do that? It seems that discomfort shows me the areas that need work. And allowing it does create a quality of spaciousness. Perhaps it is time to look more deeply into the benefits of difficult situations and how they can help me to practice. Lip service is easy, walking the path is a long road. It's like taking a dare to believe the truth of the empty nature of phenomena and how it's all just passing by. Do I need a special occasion to apply this teaching? This is the occasion of the precious human rebirth. What could be more important?

Orgyen Dorje Den
Bay Area Yeshe Nyingpo

Once again, during 1999, the Bay Area was extremely fortunate to receive many wonderful teachings and empowerments. All of which is thanks to the blessing and guidance of Gyatrul Rinpoche. Thank you Rinpoche.

In March, Khenpo Namdrol gave an insightful and detailed teaching on the practice of Vajrakilaya. In June, Gyatrul Rinpoche taught at Tashi Chöling on "advice on conduct and discipline in the spiritual community" from a text by H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche, and we listened in via the phone broadcast. Rinpoche also taught at ODD in November and gave "advice on motivation and practice" with Sangye Khandro translating. During the year, the center was home to teachings by the other fine Nyingma teachers Tulku Sang Ngag Rinpoche and Khenpo Tsewang Gyatso. In October H.H. Penor Rinpoche visited Gyatrul Rinpoche at his home in Half Moon Bay. Rinpoche and Mimi invited the local Sangha to visit for an intimate teaching with Holiness. It was a unique opportunity to literally sit at the feet of a great master.

We were really lucky this Losar. Lingtrul Rinpoche did his annual Rigdzin Dupa puja, and Gyatrul Rinpoche gave two days of teaching on meditation practice and the "Thirty-seven Precepts of the Bodhisattva." On Losar day Gyatrul Rinpoche gave the long-life empowerment to over 120 people. The center was filled to overflowing. A very auspicious day.

We continue to do the Dudjom Tersar *tsok* practices on the 10th and 25th day of each month. Also, we do the *Dorsema Lama Chodpa* Vajrasattva practice every Thursday at 7 p.m. All are welcome to join these events. If you would like more information, please email orgyendorjeden@onebox.com or check the center message machine @ 510-839-3136.

Please join our eNewsletter where you will receive info about events at ODD and Gyatrul Rinpoche's schedule. To join, just tell us in an email sent to orgyendorjeden@onebox.com. or go directly to <http://www.egroups.com/group/orgyendorjeden/info.html>.

ODD Staff
orgyendorjeden@onebox.com - email
(415) 430-2168 x5542 - voicemail/fax

Gyatrul Rinpoche in Southern California

Between September 22 and October 5 of last year, Gyatrul Rinpoche was invited by Ken and Natalie Gaines to stay at their home in the Santa Barbara mountains while they were on vacation in Europe. Everyone here was overjoyed at this opportunity.

B. Alan Wallace, who teaches Dharma in Santa Barbara and would be translating, discussed with Rinpoche what teachings would be valuable to the Buddhist and Santa Barbara community. They decided on “Transforming Felicity and Adversity into the Spiritual Path.”

We were told that “Rinpoche likes the idea of things being ‘flexible’ and somewhat small, informal groups on a more spontaneous basis if he feels up for it. . . afternoons preferable.” With that in mind, we set out to find a place that could fulfill Rinpoche’s request. Once we found a venue to hold these informal, spontaneous talks we realized that, unfortunately for Rinpoche, we had to nail down a place and time in order to let people know where and when to come. And so, as usual, in his great generosity and sincere intent to benefit others, he agreed to give a series of predetermined teachings on six specific evenings. Once all this was decided, there wasn’t time to do a big mailing. Since Alan’s weekly talks, where announcements of this portent are generally made, had not yet begun for the fall season, Thomas Tarleton kindly sent out an email notice to those fortunate ones who had email.

The only requirement that met with Rinpoche’s initial request was that the group was small. However, we were an attentive and sincere group of about 30 to 40 students who committed to attending the teachings. Rinpoche was in good health, and Alan’s translations were very clear. The talks took on a rare form that was intimate, rich in wisdom and, of course, spiced with Rinpoche’s unique sense of humor. It was a true blessing for those of us who were lucky enough to be in his presence for those two short weeks. We thank Rinpoche, and ask that he return to Santa Barbara again and again.

(To be informed of possible future teachings by Gyatrul Rinpoche in the Santa Barbara area, contact Sondra Bennett at 805-646-3305 or transact@ojai.net .)

Tashi Chöling Open House

On July 25, 1999 Tashi Chöling sponsored a very successful open house to the larger public community in southern Oregon and northern California. Though expecting a few hundred interested people, over a thousand visitors came to pay their respects and see the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha in action at Tashi Chöling. Gyatrul Rinpoche gave an extemporaneous and inspiring talk, a video was shown on the history of Tashi Chöling, many Dharma books and wares were sold in the bazaar, and we fed typical Tibetan food to a lot more people than planned on.

We wish to thank Kathleen and Dan McLeary for their sweat and blood (and probably tears, too!), Mimi Hohenberg, Teri Thomas, all the Reitz’s, Ed Gierke, all the drivers and parking helpers, Carl Krack and Mark Abelle, Bruce Newman and the ordained Sangha, with a special thanks to Sonam Tsering Lama for writing hundreds of names in Tibetan as part of our fund-raising efforts. We thank our neighbors for their patience and flexibility, and we especially thank all our guests who were so enjoyable and drove so carefully.

Happy Losar to everyone, from the Archives!

Some of you may not have heard: We have a new name. Pacific Region Yeshe Nyingpo Media and Archives, formerly known as Yeshe Melong, is now to be known as Mirror of Wisdom.

Thanks to all of you who have supported our efforts this past year through your purchases and donations and especially to those of you who have contributed to our publishing, recording, transcribing, translating and editing work.

We have many new items from our video, audio, and publishing departments. Look for our new catalogue this summer.

For information, to order from our catalogue, contact us:

Mirror of Wisdom ~ 66 Via Holon #3 ~ Greenbrae, CA 94904 415-925-1730

PEMA JUNGNEY NORBULING

(Tashi Chöling's Children Program)

In 1999 we saw new interest in and a revitalization of the Children's Program. We started out with readings and discussion of the Jataka Tales and related activities for the younger children (ages 8 and under). This group meets monthly during the spring and summer months. Trish DeMers is looking for parents who have energy and ideas to contribute to this program. With this assistance, we would be able to meet with this age group more often.

We have a small but committed group of teenagers studying with Bruce Newman. He is teaching from *The Lotus Born—The Life Story of Padmasambhava*. This group meets monthly thanks to the sponsorship of Lisbeth LaCoste.

Matthew Small is meeting with the children who are ready to begin their ngöndro. He is teaching and practicing the "Concise Dudjom Tersar Ngöndro."

Thanks to all those who contribute their time and energy and make these important programs possible. If you are new to the area and/or newly interested in our children's program, please contact Trish DeMers at 530-842-4138.

"Thanks" to Ani

If someone asked you "Where is Thubten Yeshe Lhamo?" you might not even know who they were talking about. But if someone asked, "Do you know where Ani Baba is?" you would not only know who the person was talking about, but approximately where to find her.

Ani Baba, known affectionately by the nickname Gyatrul Rinpoche gave her years ago, was ordained by His Holiness Penor Rinpoche in 1988. Since that time, she has been a hard-working presence at Tashi Chöling. When you are looking for Ani Baba, you can find her in the temple practicing, painting the east wing, painting down at the statue garden or helping to put up prayer flags, copying practices in the office or painting sheets of mantras with saffron water and hanging them up to dry like holy laundry, cleaning the altar or heating up her noonday meal in the torma room, opening the altar or closing the altar, rolling sheets of mantras to put inside statues, watering the lawn outside the temple. . . There are rare moments when you see her well-weathered gray nunmobile making its way to or from town on a grocery and errand run, and there are even times when Ani Baba leaves to visit her parents in Ohio for a week. But on the whole, you can find her busy morning to night every day with whatever tasks present themselves at Tashi Chöling.

I feel fortunate to know Ani Baba. I find her dedication inspiring and her goofy humor endearing. When I told Ani Baba that I was going to interview her for the newsletter, she gave me a characteristic reply. "What? There's so many other people you should interview," she said, reeling off a list of several names. Finally, she told me that the only thing she wanted to say was this: "Hi to everybody. I hope everybody's doing well and I hope everybody is happy. We're all in this movie together."

Gaea Yudron