



Geshe Tsultrim from Chenrezig Institute

talks about the

Tibetan Uprising Day - March 10th



How we are so connected and the need for gratitude

Lysse Velez, the former manager at Tara Institute, sent this very moving story to the editors

Yesterday was 10th March, Tibetan Uprising Day. At the start of our Basic Program teaching in the morning, Geshela gave a moving account of the hardships experienced by the Tibetan people and explained we should generate gratitude for this because it has actually enabled us to have the conditions now to study, reflect and meditate on the Buddhadharma. Geshe la's moving words were quickly transcribed into English and we thought you'd enjoy reading them.

Geshe Tsultrim: Today is March 10th, a significant event in the history of Tibetan people, over six million Tibetans in Tibet. For those of us who see ourselves as followers of the Buddhadharma, this particular date is one in which one could feel sorrow in our hearts.

We speak a lot in the buddhadharma about remembering the kindness. Remember the kindness, or maybe we can say in another sense, being grateful. You remember the kindness and you feel grateful. If you know how to consider the kindness of others, you can certainly put that into your

practice of the Buddhadharma. Without being able to think long-term it's difficult to feel the right sense of gratitude for others' kindness. This is something that runs deep in this tradition.

In this centre we have the conditions that make it possible for us to study, reflect and meditate on the teachings of the Buddha. We can study the great philosophical systems that have become quite widespread in communities outside of Tibet. We can do that – but we are not only able to study and reflect upon the buddhadharma in general, we can also use the buddhadharma in our life, in this life, in this society, to deal with various mental problems and difficulties that we experience sometimes on a daily basis. We can feel grateful first of all for the teachings of the Buddha

But also, we need to think about how our situation is strongly related to events that took place in recent Tibetan history. Today is March 10th, the day on which Tibetans commemorate the Uprising Day. In 1959 after the Tibetan uprising that preceded the deep oppression by the Chinese forces in Tibet, His Holiness the Dalai Lama together with Lamas from other major traditions in Tibet, His Holiness the Karmapa and Sakya Trizin, and people from the Nyingma tradition, Pema Norbu and Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche and so forth, many made their way into exile, fleeing the Chinese oppression in Tibet.

They took their place in India, establishing monasteries there. They established them again just like before - institutions for study in which they continued their study, reflection and meditation just like before. And following that, there started a movement of some of those lamas, spiritual teachers, Geshe and so forth to the west, also to places like Australia. People like Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche and Lama Yeshe came to the west and established a centre, and that was part of that historical movement of people that fled Tibet due to the occupation.

Following His Holiness the Dalai Lama, there were more than 150,000 Tibetan refugees who fled Tibet. You could say that, if that had not happened, we would probably not have the ability to study, reflect and meditate on the teachings of the Buddha, this opportunity that we have now. So this is one

thing that we can think of particularly on this day of the Tibetan Uprising Day - March 10th.

Under the leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama more than 150,000 refugees made their way to India, and it's not that their initial years were happy and easy years. They didn't have it very easy, actually conditions were quite difficult. Amongst the people that fled Tibet there was a big sangha community belonging to all the spiritual traditions in Tibet, the four major traditions, together with the Jonang Tradition. So altogether five major spiritual traditions made their way to India.

The monastic community at the beginning mainly gathered at a refugee centre called Buxar. This place was quite notorious



for being a difficult place to live, it was hot, it was humid, it was crowded and so forth and of course the environment was vastly different to the environment that they had enjoyed previously in Tibet. Buxar was a penal colony established by colonial British and Tibetans were sent there because it was basically an empty space. The sangha community, the monastics, took residence there and they didn't start to fend each one for themselves, going out to find food etc. They stuck together continuing their study and reflection together in those difficult conditions.

Also at that time, Buddhist texts were quite scarce. They had had to leave Tibet urgently, and couldn't take all the necessities that sangha needed, including all the texts. So finding a text such as for example Shantideva's Guide to a Bodhisattva's Way of Life was quite difficult so you would

share the text. So you would pass on pages, a few pages to one individual or a couple of individuals. They had to study those and memorise them and then pass them on to another person. In this way the conditions for study, reflection and meditation were not easy but still they continued to do that.

And under the leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama who was having some meetings with Indian officials, in the end some places for Tibetan settlers were allocated in different states in India, in south India in west India and so forth. All across India Tibetan settlements were established including the big monasteries from the Tibetan Buddhist traditions. Not only from the Gelug tradition, but also monasteries and institutions belonging to other traditions - for example Namdroling which belongs to the Nyingma tradition and other traditions as well. Those institutions for study and practice were established all across India, where mainly monastics continued with activities of study, reflection and meditation. This is also something that we need to remember on this day.

For example, Sera Monastery was established in South India sometime during the 1960's in Karnataka Estate. At that time, the area that was allocated for Tibetan settlers was a jungle, a forest. They lived for a long while in tents, sleeping in tents at the night and clearing the forest in order to make room for Tibetan settlers during the day. Some of the land that they cleared was turned into fields for growing food and everything was done by hand.

There was no machinery, no chainsaws to cut trees. Everything was done by hand including all the field work, and the trees that were cut were later used to build houses for the refugees that took residence there and for building the monastery halls and so forth. The first couple of decades were involved with a lot of hard work. The people did not leave to find their own livelihood, they still stuck together to make sure that they did build their communities in order to make sure that their study, reflection and meditation could continue into the future. So wherever help was needed people gave that help to make sure that the communities still survived and thrived. Our ability to enjoy the Buddhadharm today is attributed also to that.

(To be continued in the June newsletter)

The second volume of *Meditation for Modern Minds* has arrived!

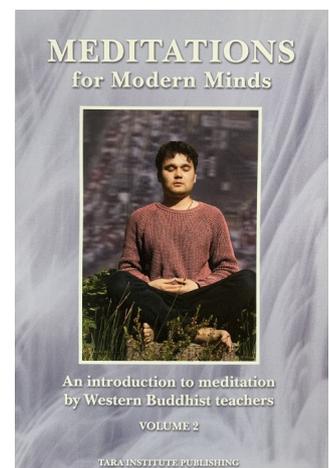
Perfect reading to reconnect you with Monday nights at TI. The Monday night teachers in this book are Ven Fedor Stracke, Ven Tenzin Tsapel, Alan Molloy, Mark Fernandes, Catherine Wilde, and Hal Young. Topics discussed include: resolving conflict, strategies to be less angry, removing delusions from the mind, antidotes to depression, mindfulness and letting go, and of course packed with meditations for you to try out.

We have ripped open the boxes and they are on the shelves waiting for you to come in, and also ready to be posted out to you. \$18 per copy (members \$16.20), plus \$5.50 postage.

~ **Special offer** ~

Both volumes 1 and 2 for \$25! (members \$22.50)

Contact the TI Office for more info on how to get your copy!



37 Practices of Bodhisattvas

with

Geshe Lobsang Dorje



8pm Wednesdays

**Livestreaming from the
Tara Institute
Facebook Page**

Gyelsay Togmay Sangpo wrote the Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas in the 14th century. His succinct and simple verses of advice summarise the quintessence of the Mahayana path to perfection. Geshe Lobsang will continue to lead us through the essence of this text. The Livestream event is open to everyone, and you are most welcome to attend with no prior knowledge of Buddhism.

There will be an opportunity to ask questions during the Live Streaming on Facebook, or if you prefer send them via email to the Tara Institute office (admin@tarainstitute.org.au). Geshe Lobsang will answer them on the night or in a future class.

Supporting Healthy Family Relationships at Tara Institute

Tara Institute is currently running a pilot project in collaboration with the Buddhist Council of Victoria and the Victorian State Government to provide faith leaders and communities with the skills and resources to prevent and respond to family violence in their communities. The pilot has been running since the end of 2020 but has only



started to gain momentum over the last three months, now that covid-19 restrictions are easing. In January, members of Tara Institute's Executive Committee and management team undertook training in gender equality and family violence with the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health. In addition, on Thursday 25 March, Tara Institute hosted a meet and greet with local organisations that provide services to women and children seeking refuge from violence. The evening showcased the meaningful work of organisations such as the Orange Door, which is an intake service and hub that refers victims and perpetrators of family violence to appropriate support in the Bayside area (<https://orangedoor.vic.gov.au/>).

We are planning to continue the good work and have recently formed a women's reference group that will continue to meet and design a strategy to mainstream gender equality throughout our operations. This will include through policy for the Executive Committee, as well as think through appropriate ways to respond to the possible victims we encounter during teachings and events. In other news, Geshe Lobsang and Venerable Jampa will feature in a short video the Buddhist Council of Victoria is filming to showcase its advocacy in preventing and responding to family violence. Stay tuned on their Facebook page!

If you are interested in lending support, or if you or anyone you know needs help with family violence they can contact me, Kate Gomersall (MB: 0414 369 580 or email: kgomersall@hotmail.com) Tara Institute's outreach worker on the project, or they can contact the Orange Door on [1800 319 353](tel:1800319353). In due course, we will provide written resources at the centre that will provide full details of the support available in our area.

AGM announcement

Tara Institute's next ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING will be held at 12 noon on Saturday May 15th, 2021.

At this year's AGM, we are seeking candidates for all elected positions on the committee: President, Vice President, Treasurer, Ordinary Member (with responsibility for Culture & Ethics) and Secretary.

We would encourage you to think about nominating talented and dedicated candidates for a role on the Committee. Encouraging younger members to join the Committee would be fantastic, however any Member is invited to be nominated to join the Committee. This is your chance to be heard and to make a difference. Please consider nominating.

Auspicious days are calculated according to the lunar calendar. On these days, the benefits of actions are greatly multiplied, so are especially good for spiritual practice.

Thursday 6	Tibetan 25	Tsog Day	Guru Puja
Tuesday 11	Tibetan 30	New Moon	Precepts
Thursday 20	Tibetan 8	Tara Day	Tara Puja
Friday 21	Tibetan 10	Tsog Day	Guru Puja
Wednesday 26	Tibetan 15	Full Moon	Precepts

Lord Buddha's birth, enlightenment and parinirvana

Long-time students

Bill and Shirley Scholtz

who now live in *Byron Bay*

share their **COVID YEAR**



In the early days of Covid we were in northern Victoria cycling around Wangaratta, Beechworth and Bright with our Byron Bay cycling friends. Covid was an unknown and our group members responded differently.

Some wanted to get back over the border to NSW ASAP (no disrespect intended) to be with their grandchildren, but we elected to stay in Bright. The people we met in those early days also reacted differently. One person in the Wangaratta supermarket told me that he didn't believe in Jehovah but there's something mysterious going on! At the Bright Supermarket I asked a policeman at the checkout if he could escort us to the car as we had 12 toilet rolls.

Having just read 'You're Not Listening' by Kate Murphy you noticed there was something about people's behaviour

that changed and it was rewarding to be a part of the change. People seem to treasure relationships a little more than before. As Murphy says 'Listening heightens your awareness. It makes you feel. As you become more attuned to the thoughts and emotions of others, you become more alive to the world and it becomes more alive to you'. **Added to this is an affirmation worth practicing** 'I give everywhere I go, even if only a smile, a compliment and my full attention. Listening is the best gift to those around me'.

Kerrie, Shirley's walking friend had a life-threatening accident during Covid and had to be helicoptered from Byron to the Gold Coast. Initially it was said that it was because of Covid that she couldn't be operated on for 2 weeks and then after some pressure it was because they waited for the swelling to go down. Nine months later Kerrie and Shirley are doing short walks and she is getting stronger by the day. Kerrie showed true resilience as Dudley, her dog and beloved friend died during this saga.

As time progressed, we realised how lucky we were. Life was fairly close to normal. The thing that was surprising was the inability of the State governments to work together, but that might be expecting too much as during the Spanish Flu early last century there was mistrust between NSW and Victoria.

To finish, I would like to give another affirmation which comes in handy in these times as many of the plans we made have gone into the bin – 'I make plans and remain flexible and open for which life has in-store for me. Try to say yes as often as possible'.

Kathi Edward shares what has inspired her during the last year

Obviously the world situation has been pretty ghastly and the repercussions for some have been devastating. Closer to home, it also seems to have been full of personal struggles and major traumatic shifts in people's lives, as if covid wasn't already hard enough. Despite all this, it seemed, overall, dharma friends coped exceedingly well, and have also looked out for those that perhaps weren't.

During lockdown, because of the nature of my job, I had the good fortune to be literally forced, and paid, by the government, to stay home and do what I love! Apart from a bad habit of 'surrogating', a form of anxiety re others suffering, which totally doesn't help anyone (try tonglen instead!), I enjoyed it immensely.

One of my iso highlights, a thought provoking on-line group discussion mainly focusing on one of my all-time favs H.H's *Gelug/Kagyu Tradition of Mahamudra*, gave me a taste of why our lamas stayed up all night debating in the monasteries.

I've never been big on sutra recitations (except the *Sutra of the Wise and Foolish* – I love karma stories) but receiving the oral transmissions of sutras, etc from Lama Zopa is so transportive; somehow Rinpoche seems to take us with him



to the purelands, his natural abode. So although I haven't clocked up many for Geshe-la's long life (in fact only one so far!!!), it's probably the only way I will.

Although on-line teachings have come thick and strong from H.H, Lama Zopa and others, and so many inspiring utubes out there, I loved Geshe-la's reminder that we have his past 35 years of teachings to utilise. Having received all that knowledge, we can fully go for it, we don't need any more! And it was inspiring to see so many enjoying retreats instead of stressing about whatever difficulties covid threw up. Given what some were having to deal with, it was really impressive they chose to let go of worries and focus inwardly instead. I think the operative words here being "let go"!

Recently I remembered again, (I keep on forgetting which is awful because it's the only daily commitment I recall Geshe-la ever giving us) the tonglen meditation, vs 95 of the Guru Puja. He also recommended memorizing the bucket in the well scenario and Nagarjuna's praise of dependent arising – all three together cover renunciation, emptiness and bodhicitta! Along with Geshe-la's awe inspiring Vajrayogini commentary we have it all.

You are welcome to contact the Tara Institute newsletter editors Allys Andrews and Sandra Kinread at allys.andrews@gmail.com for issues relating to the newsletter