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2013

'The Wisdom Age'

Newsletter of Drogmi Buddhist Institute

A Tibetan Buddhist Centre in the Sakya Tradition

End of Year Message from our Precious Teacher Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe

CONTENTS

- Page 1**
End of Year Message
- Page 2 & 3**
Annual Shamatha
Retreat October 2013
- Page 4**
Rongton Buddhist Centre
QLD
- Page 5**
Alice Springs N T &
Upcoming Uluru Retreat
June 2014
- Page 6**
Committee Corner
News, Community Lunch
and Green Tara Puja
- Page 7**
Samadhi Buddhist
Centre Bermagui NSW
- Page 8**
Dharmachakra Gompa
Gympie QLD
- Page 9 & 10**
End of Year Celebrations
and Long Life Puja

E: info@drogmi.org

T: +61(02)8005 1757

www.drogmi.org

Dear friends, Tashi Delek!

As 2013 draws to a close, and as another group of us prepare to head off on pilgrimage to India and Nepal, I wanted to thank you for all the kind support you have given me and Drogmi Buddhist Institute over the past year. My thanks go to everyone who has supported my teachings throughout Australia, Singapore, Malaysia and New Zealand. We have reached many hundreds of people in a truly special way and helped set them on the path to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings.



As you know, it is just on four years ago that we established Drogmi Buddhist Institute in Sydney. My focus in our initial years has been to build a solid foundation for spreading the precious Buddhadharma. We have made a very good start and I believe we are now ready to bring great teachers to Australia. ***I am therefore very pleased to let you know that both His Eminence Luding Khen Rinpoche and Her Eminence Jetsun Kusho-la have kindly accepted our invitations to visit Australia in 2014 and 2015 respectively. This is a source of great joy for everyone connected with DBI as we prepare ourselves to host two of the greatest Sakya masters alive today.***

As a Dharma practitioner, one should be cautious about rushing off to take empowerments from a wide range of teachers. Because of our impurity mind and our lack of genuine faith, there is a real risk of losing samaya and breaking our vows when we take empowerments from many different teachers. For the visits by His Eminence and Her Eminence we can, of course, be completely

confident in their authenticity and great compassion. For their visits, I will be requesting our precious teachers to focus on giving empowerments rather than teachings. It is important for students to know that the effect of these empowerments will depend on how much we have developed our understanding of the Dharma. In light of that, I would strongly urge all students to make a special effort to deepen their study of Buddhist philosophy over the next twelve months. Over the coming year, I would also like for Drogmi



so we have an added opportunity to bring our family, friends and colleagues into the Dharma. Dharma is not the property of a selected few and so I want to extend this precious opportunity to those who share a karmic link both with the teachings and with our great Sakya lineage. Spreading the Dharma can help develop a greater sense of peace in the world. As individuals we can do many things to help sentient beings as well as the environment but there is nothing better than the Dharma.



Thank you to all the centres in Australia, Singapore, Malaysia and New Zealand who have been so hospitable to me this past year. Thank you for all your hard work to promote the Buddhadharma and benefit so many people in your local communities.

Buddhist Institute to establish a permanent centre as this will provide us with a solid base for many years to come. We would very much welcome any financial contributions members and friends can make to this important venture and I would ask you to seek out people whom you think might have an interest in supporting our project.

During our pilgrimage in November and December, I will be thinking of all DBI students and benefactors as well as your families and friends. I will keep you all in mind when I pray at the many holy sites we will visit. I very much hope these prayers will lead to more peace and happiness in your life. While I am away, we will be continuing with our normal Shamatha sessions on Sundays and we will also be offering introductory classes to Buddhism

Finally, I want to offer my heart-felt thanks to Lama Kalsang, the hard-working members of the committee, our benefactors and all the other members and friends who make me feel so comfortable at Drogmi Buddhist Institute be it through cooking, driving, or lending a hand in so many other ways. So thank you again for the kind support you have provided to DBI and me in 2013. I very much hope you will continue on the journey with us in 2014. Have a great holiday and a restful break. Travel safely wherever you might be going and I look forward to sharing more of the precious Buddhadharma with you over the coming year.

May the Buddhadharma arise in all lands, at all times, now, and forever.

Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe

The 2013 Shamatha Retreat at Upper Colo was life-changing.

All the participants I have spoken to agree. After eight days learning from Khenpo, we have returned to our busy streets, families and workplaces with a different attitude. We learnt about the empty essence of phenomena and the mind, and how, with compassion, we can transform every situation, every moment into something positive. I feel I have understood Buddhism for the first time.

I work as a primary school teacher, trying to explain things to children with variously limited experiences. I am deeply impressed with Khenpo's teaching methods. He explains things so clearly, sequentially, logically; with the utmost precision and care. He repeatedly cycles back over ideas, refreshing students' memories. He provides opportunity for his students to discuss their understandings. He creates such an open and gentle atmosphere that everyone feels comfortable enough to ask him any question that they want clarified.

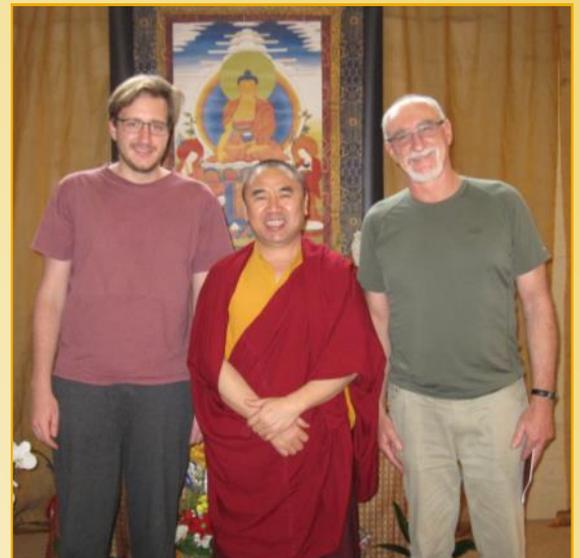
Such a wonder, for such an ordinary person as I am, to have been so generously given direct access to this profound wisdom lineage in a mud brick lodge at Upper Colo! (*No disrespect to Ararat Lodge for the venue is beautiful*). Then, so that we may deeply learn, Khenpo guided us through analytical meditation on the topic we are trying to understand, followed by single - pointed meditation which allows the understanding to permeate and become integrated into our schema. This is the perfect recipe for genuine learning. Khenpo-la's timing is impeccable, with little stretch breaks, tea and meal breaks: demonstrations of his understanding and compassion. The routines of the day provided an ideal framework of care for all of us.

The meals were food like I had never experienced it. Suzi, one of Khenpo's oldest students, with the help of Peter (a constant undercurrent of humour bubbling away), provided us with meals that were so creative and meditation in themselves. They were so enjoyable, sustaining body and mind completely satisfying and completely unobtrusive - leaving the body free for the most unhindered meditation, or whatever else you wanted to do. The beauty and scent of fresh flowers in the shrine room as well as the surrounding valley added to the perfection of our environment.

My deepest gratitude goes to Khenpo and his wonderful students, whose qualities are evidence of the efficacy of his teachings.

Thank you all for your marvellous generosity to such a newbie. I am already making plans to attend further retreats with Khenpo. It's a most valuable and effective way to spend my time, no doubt.

Raelene (Brisbane)



Continued on next page ...

It has been a great learning experience and blessing to have this opportunity to have attended the Seven Point Mind Training and Shamatha Meditation Retreat with Khenpo and all Dharma friends, at the beautiful and conducive place as Ararat Lodge. In addition to that, was the privilege of being so well taken care of by the organisers and volunteers. This certainly completes the 'right conditions' perfectly to learn and practice the Dharma.

The timing was right, as I and others gained tremendous benefits from the Teachings and meditation practices. The gentle and kind approach combined with great encouragement and patience from Khenpo certainly provided much value added opportunity for me and others to receive and understand the Teachings, within our own individual framework of Dharma knowledge and practice. Khenpo gave us Dharma techniques and methodologies to help ourselves and others; whatever levels of existence we are at and in. In these, not only did it provide great hope but also practical methods and understanding in the engagement of the ways thinking and behaviour, to help overcome one's difficulties and conditions in this current world and the state of the environment that we live in.

It dawns on me greatly, the preciousness of this precious human rebirth, how fortunate I am irrespective of wherever and whatever states I am in. This retreat experience has persistently reminded and is still reminding me of the importance of learning and practicing the Dharma with unfailing commitment and efforts. It has helped me to realise in a greater context the purpose of why I am here.

In conclusion, I sincerely wish from my heart that I will not disappoint the kindness of our Teacher, Khenpo.

Kitt (Sydney)



We feel extraordinarily privileged to have been able to attend the Shamatha and Seven Point Mind Training Retreat held with Khenpo-la recently at the beautiful Ararat Lodge near Sydney. We travelled across from Christchurch for the retreat and were immediately made welcome by the warm and inclusive Australian Sangha. We both came with 'expectations' and with clear ideas about what to achieve at the retreat, and these expectations were exceeded in every way. Khenpo-la's wonderful style ensured that the eight days of teaching and practice progressed in a seamless fashion, providing all of us with clear instruction and teaching. The days were structured in such a way that each session built on the previous one and gave ample time for questions and discussion. This process was supported by a marvellous group of Dharma brothers and sisters, a stunning location overseen by Jane and her family, complete with Polly the peahen and resident horses, great room mates (all be it they were not as keen on the nightly 'wildlife release' as the Kiwis)! And superb food by the tireless duo in the kitchen. It is not really possible to put into basic language the value of these teachings or to adequately express our gratitude. This retreat is guiding our practice and has enriched our understanding immeasurably. Thank you so much for this opportunity. We are eager to maintain close ties with you all and are already planning our Australian adventure for next year!

Jane (New Zealand)

Continued retreat writings on page 10



The weekend of the 27th of September saw the arrival of Khenpo-la in Brisbane for teachings at Rongton Buddhist Centre, (temporarily transported to a venue at Kelvin Grove). There were many old and new faces in attendance for both the Public Talk and the main body of teachings, it being *Nagarjuna's "Letter to a Friend"*.

Khenpo-la's masterly elucidation gave us the full picture of *Nagarjuna's* intent. Even negotiating the rocky road of gender politics, brought on by reading the usual apparently loaded verses of the uncleanliness, or purity of the body, depending on which one you were elated, or disgusted with! It was a lively experience. Khenpo-la just moves through it with his usual humour, patience and skill.

For the Queenslanders there was the famous four verse line, when *Nagarjuna* cautioned his friend, "*Know that a man is like a mango fruit, ripe on the outside and unripe on this inside, or unripe on the outside and ripe on the inside, / ripe in and ripe outside / unripe in and unripe out*". So everyone finished the weekend with the feeling of great appreciation and satisfaction.

We are very lucky to have access to such a quality teacher as Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe-la.

We are so looking forward to the next instalment of *Letter to a Friend*" hopefully early in the new year. Thank you again Khenpo-la!

Venerable Tsultim

Nagarjuna's "Letter to a Friend" is a poem and letter written by an acknowledged Buddhist Master to a King, a householder - a person with a busy day job. Even with the passage of centuries it is still relevant to those of use struggling to juggle day jobs and Dharma practice. On 28 & 29 September Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe, a highly qualified and experienced teacher in the Sakya tradition, gave a teaching in Brisbane on this classic Buddhist text. Over two days we covered forty verses.

Forty verses might not look much on the surface, yet the depth of Dharma teaching which Khenpo brought to those forty verses left me fairly gobsmacked. Some of the key points I take with me are:

- ◆ Buddhadharma is medicine for the mind. The whole purpose is learning about the mind and how to transform the mind to be more positive. To make the harsh mind kind and soft.
- ◆ The importance of ethical conduct. In my paraphrasing, just as a building without a sound foundation will come to nought, so will our Dharma practice if not grounded on a solid foundation of ethical conduct. Positive results are created by virtuous conduct.
- ◆ Look at the long term benefit of our actions. The Buddhist viewpoint contemplates many lifetimes, what a change from the western focus on the results for the current quarter. How might a longer term perspective change our priorities?
- ◆ Practice generosity, practice gratitude, realise accurately the nature of phenomena, treat your mind as precious, and if the mind wanders, bring it back to your positive motivation and to focus on happiness, compassion, joy and equanimity.
- ◆ Lastly the main focus for myself being, to focus on reducing the three poisonous minds - anger, attachment and ignorance. Little by little. Enlightenment isn't something you gain, rather it's about what you get rid of, the three poisonous minds.

My heartfelt thanks to Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe for this beautiful teaching and to Rongton Buddhist Centre for hosting this teaching. **Richard W.**

(The editor would like to formally apologise to Richard for carelessly leaving out his name in Issue 12, page 6, second to last paragraph, thank you for your patience Richard).





Khenpo returns to Alice Springs

We have been blessed once again to receive the warmth, presence and wonderful teaching of Khenpo-la in Alice Springs.

Over the weekend of 19 & 20 October we studied and practiced the Seven Point of Mind Training - Lojong together.

Khenpo brought this teaching alive with examples from everyday life and led meditation practices such as Tonglen, that help us to dissolve our self-cherishing mind. He reminded us of our true nature of mind and explained how our tendencies block this experience and this view. It was so inspiring to hear this teaching given by Khenpo-la. The guided meditations were like a conversation with ourselves, personal and close in.

I came away from the retreat feeling inspired to make my practice more personal, more close-in to the heart of whatever hold me back from knowing my own true self.

Thank you Khenpo-la, from all of us in Alice Springs, please return soon!

Sue F.

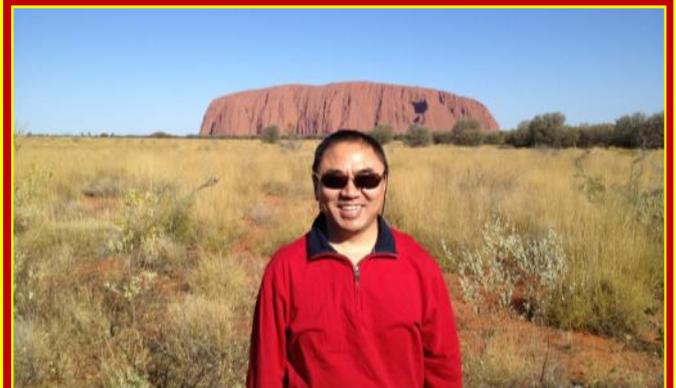
Photos from top to right:

Khenpo-la giving a public talk, Zara & Khenpo-la, Amanda, Khenpo-la and Richard at the Claypans & Khenpo-la at the first Uluru Retreat.



**CALLING FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST
*Compassion, Calm Abiding and Vajrasattva
Uluru Retreat*
3 - 9 June 2014**

Khenpo-la will be leading his second group retreat to Uluru next year. Uluru is in the heart of Australia and is a very special location. Aboriginal Australians regard it to be a strongly spiritual place. Many great Buddhist masters have visited there, and Khenpo-la returns to the area annually for a teaching program in Alice Springs. The days during the retreat will start with viewing Uluru at sunrise, then teachings during the day and in the evening the breathtaking views of Uluru at sunset. If you have an interest in attending please contact Ann at: **info@drogmi.org or 02 8005 1757**
Further information will be made available shortly of costs and payment dates.



Rejoicing Mind

“When you rejoice in anyone’s successes, you are going to be happy. Rejoicing is a very intelligent and easy way to bring happiness to yourself”...

A quote from Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe



Precious Green Tara Puja for all sentient beings...



Sangha enjoying Community Lunch with Khenpo following Shamatha Sunday practice. Precious moments spent with our Teacher and Sangha. Good meditation, good food & good company...



News from the Committee Corner

Member Initiatives for Fundraising on Behalf of DBI 2014

Two members of DBI have recently commenced separate initiatives to assist DBI finances

Diedre Niar has become an Amway Representative. Diedre offers friends of DBI and others the opportunity to become a VIP Amway customer, and with any purchase of an Amway product all the profits are donated to DBI. Please check the website www.amwayaustralia.com The products can be ordered on line and delivered anywhere in Australia and New Zealand. For more information and to become a VIP customer, please contact Diedre at diedre.niar@bigpond.com

or call her on **0414 752 293** Bill Chant has taken some lovely photos over the years. Bill now has a website which he sells his photos. The site is located at: <http://www.redbubble.com/people/drogmi/>. On this site photos can be purchased as cards, prints, mounted prints or framed prints, etc. Bill aims to have a 2014 DBI calendar available on the website shortly. A percentage of each payment will go to DBI. The actual percentage depends on the item purchased and can be up to 40% to 50% of the sale price. More details on the website.

Khenpo-la and The Committee of management of DBI would like to thank Diedre and Bill for their efforts on behalf of the centre and we wish them every success with their initiatives!

Diedre and Bill take full responsibility for their respective ventures. DBI appreciates their generosity!

The DBI Committee wishes Khenpo-la, Lama Kalsang and all pilgrims a safe and happy journey to the holy sites in India and Nepal. We also wish to inform you that the Sunday Shamatha and Green Tara practices will continue as scheduled every Sunday so please come and join us. The regular Tuesday night practices will recommence in late February.

Please check our website for updates.

Senior students will be running an Introduction to Meditation Course from:

16 January to 20 February (Thursday nights) 7:30 - 9pm - bookings on line or at the door.



I attended Khenpo's Sunday teaching day which proved to be very timely in terms of boosting my practice. I find Khenpo's stable, calm, happy energy such a wonderful example to aspire to.

Julie

The combination of the pristine natural environment, the warm hearted nature of the hosts and guests alike and the teachings of Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe, made the weekend one to be remembered for a very long time to come. We have only begun our journey into Buddhism and we are so grateful to have met a wonderful group of like minded friends with which we can share our journey and such a highly respected teacher in Khenpo. It would be difficult to highlight any one particular aspect of Khenpo's teachings over the weekend, however there were two auspicious moments not easily forgotten.

The first, when a small Thornbill joined us in the Gompa to share some of Khenpo's wisdom and reluctantly left only when a small party of his followers greeted him at the doorway. Secondly, when during a wind storm that had been gradually building all day, the earth shook (three point something on the Richter scale) and then the wind suddenly and instantly stopped. At the end of the weekend we were sad to leave our new teacher and friends, but as they say "absence makes the heart grow fonder" and we eagerly look forward to reuniting with everyone on the Dharma path.

Nat and Matt



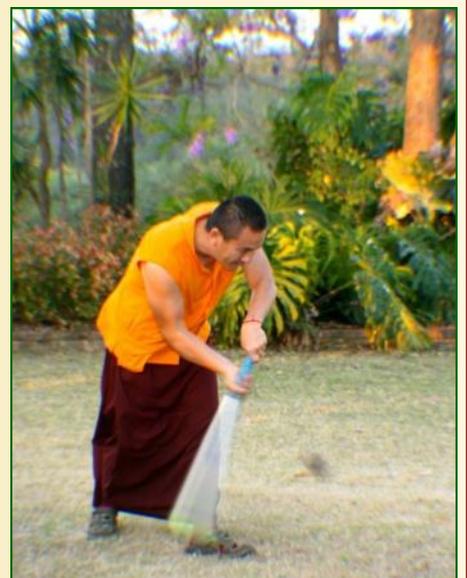
Another year has nearly gone, it appears that the "Time Lord" has his foot flat on the gas pedal and there is no stopping him, so the only good thing about that is that the next visit from Khenpo is sooner than we realise.

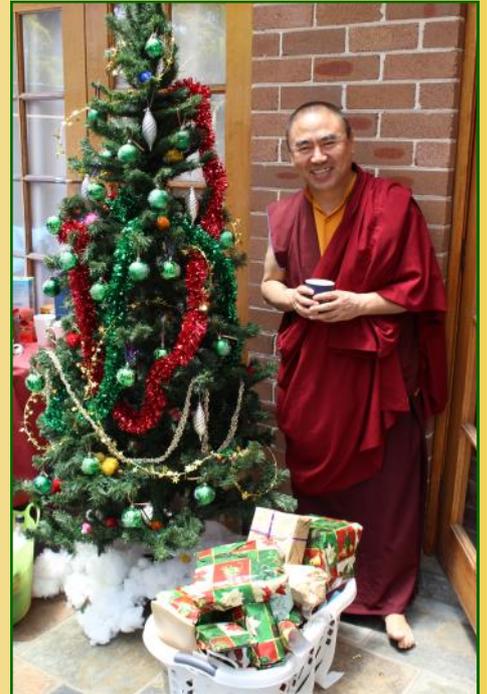
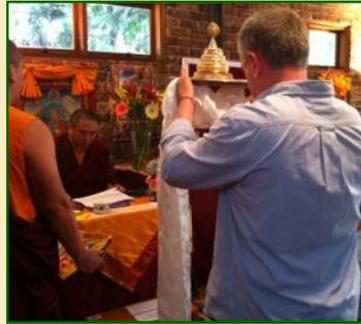
We here at Dharmachakra Gomba wish to thank Khenpo for his teaching visits throughout 2013. In this last visit Lama Kalsang gave us the pleasure of his presence and a good time was had by all, Khenpo and Lama made their infamous momos and we all gobbled them down like it was our last meal on earth, but more importantly than all, is that it was the teaching on "*Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*" being the highlight for us humble students.

The length and effort that the great *Master Atisha* made to obtain this most precious teaching, makes us feel very spoiled and we pale into significance with our easy access to all the great masters who only think of our welfare.

We would like to thank as well, Khenpo for his efforts and also for his utmost respect for his great teacher the wonderful compassionate Master Khenchen Appey Rinpoche, we all benefit from His compassion towards all sentient beings... Best wishes to all

Rob and Sandra





*A day of celebration
and a Long Life Puja
for our precious teacher
Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe
and for all the precious
Dharma Masters*

The day began with the Annual General Meeting and the election of the committee for 2014. In Khenpo-la's address to the members, he thanked those who had supported his efforts throughout the year, including those who help with sponsorship of the centre, driving, organising events, managing the centre and coordinating the newsletter..

*Khenpo-la said that next year is going to be a very special year with the visit of **His Eminence Luding Khen Rinpoche** in December. Khenpo-la also said that it was his wish to purchase a permanent residence for the centre in the coming twelve months if possible.*

In the Presidents report, Jack Heath repeated Khenpo-la's thanks to the supporters of the centre. Jack reminded everyone that 2014 will be the 20th Anniversary of Khenpo-la's arrival in Australia, making it an even more important year for the centre members.

Following the AGM, the group of Dharma friends from as far away as Alice Springs gathered to share in this beautiful annual event. This is the day that centre members practice the White Tara Long Life Puja and dedicate it to Khenpo-la and to all our precious teachers who unceasingly help us along the path. We pray that they live long and healthy lives to benefit countless beings. The puja included the offering of tea and auspicious rice, a mandala offering by students, and long life prayers. A sumptuous luncheon was then served!

It was also a day to reflect upon the year that has gone, and the most amazing achievements that Khenpo-la has made by spreading the precious Dharma around the country and overseas.

Also it is an opportunity to acknowledge the great support he has from the Sangha to do this.

Thank you to everyone for coming and making this a most glorious day of celebration in the Dharma...

More photos of this event on the following page.





A few more words from Shamatha Retreat by Sally

This was a wonderful retreat for Jane and myself. Feeling somewhat like the “new girls” from across the Tasman, we were immediately made to feel welcome and included in the group.

We loved the deeply settled environment surrounding Ararat Lodge, the novelty of the Australian birds and trees, the fresh and tasty food coming from the kitchen.

Khenpo’s teaching was profound, practical and inspiring and we returned home keen to try our new “techniques” our in the world.

Thank you to all at DBI - we’re looking forward to returning next year!

