



Issue 14
December 2013
& January 2014



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Bodhisattva Mind /
Lumbini, Nepal

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'The Wisdom Age'

Newsletter of Drogmi Buddhist Institute

A Tibetan Buddhist Centre in the Sakya Tradition

SPECIAL PILGRIMAGE EDITION



Khenpo-la after meditation at Vulture's Peak and whilst in Bodhgaya we were fortunate to have a brief audience with His Holiness the Seventeenth Karmapa

Committee News for 2014

The program for 2013 concluded with the return of the pilgrims from a very successful pilgrimage to India and Nepal. Thank you to all those who participated, to those who helped in the organising and to Khenpo-la and his family for their care and support on the journey. Khenpo-la is now in Nepal with his family having a well-earned rest and will be returning to Sydney in late March. Lama Kalsang is visiting his mother and family in Bir India, and will be returning to Sydney in mid-February. Please refer to pages 5 to 14 for pilgrimage insights, stories and photos.

2014 will be another special year for the centre as we continue to build on the great efforts and achievements from 2013. Khenpo-la's teaching program is extensive again this year, both nationally and internationally, where he will be reaching many more people who wish to hear the Dharma.

As announced by Khenpo-la in the last newsletter, we are to

be blessed this year with the visit of His Eminence Luding Khen Rinpoche in December.

His Eminence will be bestowing the Vajrayogini Blessing and giving teachings on the Sadhana. Khenpo-la has hosted the greatest Teachers in the Sakya Tradition over many years, however this will be DBI's inaugural hosting of a major teacher as a centre.

We encourage all of you to take up this opportunity to meet and receive blessings from His Eminence, and if you are not sure, do not hesitate to discuss this with Khenpo-la or your various teachers. The committee looks forward to working with our members and friends to host this wonderful event. More information will be on the website shortly with updates posted in the newsletter and on our Facebook page.

This year will also mark another significant event, Khenpo-la's 20th year of living and teaching in Australia. A truly great achievement by him and also one worth celebrating. We will

keep you updated on events as they are confirmed.

It is also an ongoing goal to purchase a more permanent residence for the centre in the coming years. The committee will be working more on this in 2014 and will keep you informed of any progress made.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the centre in the past, both financially and through other efforts. We ask that you consider continuing your support and contributions in 2014. Without your support, it is almost impossible for Khenpo-la, Lama Kalsang and the centre to continue the extensive Dharmic activities here in Australia and around the world. One major way to help is to renew or take out centre membership. Renewals are due in March this year. Also there are various ways to help sponsor the centre.

Please check the website for details and to renew/pay membership at:
www.drogmi.org
or email us at info@drogmi.org

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**His Eminence
Luding Khen Rinpoche
DECEMBER RETREAT**

His Eminence Luding Khen Rinpoche has very kindly accepted Khenpo-la and Drogmi Buddhist Institute's invitation to bestow the Vajrayogini Blessing and give the teaching on the sadhana in December 2014. His Eminence is one of the younger lineage holders of the Sakya Tradition in Buddhism. He is an excellently qualified, wise and compassionate Dharma teacher and a member of one of the great families of Tibetan Buddhism. His mother **Her Eminence Sakya Jetsun Chimey Luding** is the sister of **His Holiness the Sakya Trizin** and his father is Sei Kushog, the brother of His Eminence Luding Khenchen Rinpoche, the former Abbot of Ngor Monastery.

His Eminence's training as a lineage holder included all of the common and uncommon teachings of the Sakya tradition. From the tantra, he studied and mastered the precious Lam Dre teaching, the Collection of All the Tantras, Collection of All the Sadhanas and many others, and accomplished all of the many retreats required for a Vajra Master. From the sutra, he spent many years at Sakya College studying religious philosophy under the direction of the famous *Khenpo Migmar Tsering*. As a result, His Eminence is exceptionally well trained in both tantra and sutra.

Further Information on this very special program will be available shortly on the DBI website.

**Easter Retreat
A Residential Retreat
18 - 20 April at Upper Colo NSW**

'Mindfulness and Shamatha Retreat'

Cost: Includes accommodation, all meals and teachings.

Full Retreat: \$275 / discounts available for members and early bird payments made by **10 April 2014**.

Easter Retreat bookings available on line:
www.drogmi.org

ULURU RETREAT 2 - 8 June

**Compassion, Calm Abiding and
Vajrasattva Uluru Retreat**



remaining amount to be paid by 5 May.

Please deposit this amount to

Drogmi Buddhist Institute / NAB

USB: 082 338 Account: 165741384

Code Name: ULURU

For flights, please book arriving Alice Springs **2 June**/departing from Uluru **8 June**. (good deals are available now through Qantas, Jet Star and Virgin Airlines). For further information on this retreat do not hesitate to contact **Ann** on **0403 779 099** or email the centre at: info@drogmi.org

**ANNUAL SHAMATHA
RETREAT
2 - 11 October**

The Annual Shamatha Retreat is all about rejuvenation. Being eight days long this retreat gives time to establish spiritual foundations strong enough to benefit us for the rest of the year, indeed the rest of our lives. **All details of cost for this Residential Retreat will be in upcoming newsletters throughout the year and on our website.**

SHEDRA PROGRAM

RICHMOND NSW

Mondays: 7:30 - 9.00pm

**"Spiritual Guidance to a Friend"
by Nagarjuna**

"Spiritual Guidance to a Friend":
Nagarjuna was a great Indian scholar, who lived in 100 BC. His greatest known spiritual teaching, "Spiritual Guidance to a Friend" was composed for King Gautamiputra - Satavahana, a friend to whom Nagarjuna was karmically linked. This teaching gives a thorough explanation of the Buddhist Path and Practice, leading to temporary happiness and well being, and ultimately, future enlightenment. It is particularly valuable to use this teaching to live ethically and happily in our everyday life. It is one of the most concise overviews of our psychological conditioning and can genuinely be of benefit to oneself and others. The content of this teaching is as relevant today in the 21st Century, as it was when it was first composed. In this Buddhist Course, Khenpo-la will give clear instructions on this text. The classes will be a mix of theory and practice, with time dedicated to meditation and Q & A.

Cost: \$15 per night

Where: Richmond Community Hall, 20 West Market Street Richmond

Term 1: 31 March-14 April then 28 April

SHEDRA PROGRAM

Lawson - Blue Mountains, NSW

Wednesdays: 7:00 - 8:30 pm

**"Spiritual Guidance to a Friend"
by Nagarjuna**

Cost: \$15 per night

Where: Mountains Community Resource Centre cnr. San Jose & Loftus St. Lawson
Term 1: 2 to 30 April



Above photo of Lawson Shedra Group 2013

Sydney

Thursdays: 7:30 - 9:30 pm

"400 Verses on the Middle Way"

by Ayurdeva

Over the course of this year Khenpo-la will teach from this important text in great detail. The Indian Master Ayurdeva was a disciple of Nagarjuna and his 400 Verses on the Middle Way is a classic Buddhist text. It was written to explain how, according to Nagarjuna, the practice of the Buddhist path enables those with Mahayana motivation to attain Buddhahood. He does this by explaining both conventional and ultimate reality in accordance with the philosophical views put forward by Nagarjuna himself. The 400 Verses is one of the foundational texts of Mahayana Buddhist philosophy. The text contains 16 chapters, each with 25 verses. The first eight chapters discuss how to develop merit so as to understand emptiness, by showing how to correct distorted views of conventional reality and how to overcome disturbing emotions. The second eight chapters explain the nature of ultimate reality, according to *Prasangika-Madhyamaka*.

Cost: \$20 per night

Where: 37 Albert Parade Ashfield (access via side gate, Gompa at back of main house).

Term 1: 3 April to 8 May

BEGINNING OF YEAR COURSES

Introduction to Meditation

This six week course is offered to people with all levels of experience in meditation, from beginners to the more experienced. Learn the theory of meditation and its benefits, how to develop a correct sitting posture and methods to focus your concentration during meditation. The course instructors are senior students at Drogmi Buddhist Institute and have been practicing meditation for many years under the guidance of resident teacher Khenpo Ngawang Dhamachoe.

Where: Ashfield Centre / 37 Albert Parade, Ashfield

When: Thursdays - 7:30 - 9.00pm
16 January - 20 February

Cost: Suggested donation
\$10 class / \$50 course

Bookings available on line at:
www.drogmi.org **or at the door**

Tibetan Language Course

with

Lama Kalsang

In this six week course students will learn the Tibetan alphabet, to read and write script and basic vocabulary. It is designed for those with minimal prior learning of Tibetan and for those wanting a refresher. Lama Kalsang has regularly taught the Tibetan language to westerners in India and Sydney, having a natural love of teaching. He is assistant Lama at DBI.

Where: Ashfield Centre / 37 Albert Parade, Ashfield

When: Wednesdays - 7:30 - 9.00pm
26 February - 2 April

Cost: \$50 Full Course / \$10 per class
Bookings available on line at:
www.drogmi.org **or at the door**

Losar (Tibetan New Year) Program

Friday 28 February:

Vajrapani Practice at DBI Centre, 7:30 - 9.00pm and light offerings.

Saturday 1 March:

Traditional cleaning of the temple before New Year, 10am.

Sunday 2 March:

LOSAR / New Years Day. Sixteen Arhat Puja and light offerings will take the place of regular Shamatha at 10.00 - 11.30am.

REGULAR CENTRE PRACTICES

◊ Shamatha Meditation Practice

Every Sunday: 10.00 - 11.00am at 37 Albert Parade, Ashfield, Sydney

◊ Green Tara Practice (Buddha of Compassionate Action)

First Sunday of the month:
9.00 - 10.00am at 37 Albert Parade Ashfield

◊ Chenrezig Practice (Buddha of Compassion)

Alternate Tuesdays: 7.30 - 8.30pm
(Please see DBI calendar on our website for specific dates)

◊ Vajrasattva / Medicine Buddha

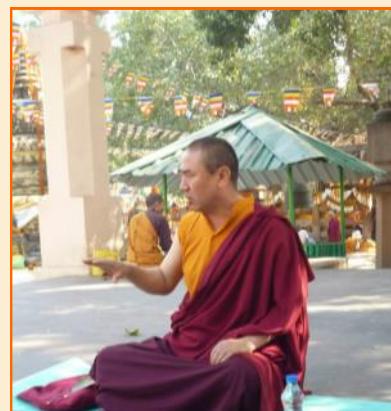
Alternate Tuesdays: 7.30 - 8.30pm
(Please refer to DBI calendar on our website for specific dates,
www.drogmi.org)

Vajrasattva Practice is for mental and physical purification. It is the most powerful purification practice we can do in daily life.

Medicine Buddha Practice is not only a very powerful method of purifying and healing for both oneself and others, but also for overcoming sickness such as negativity, attachment, ignorance, etc.

INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL TEACHING PROGRAM

will be available on our website within a few weeks as well as in the next issue of 'Wisdom Age' coming out March 2014!



Continued from page 1

As you may know, the committee is working to change Lama Kalsang's visa so that he can stay in Australia and offer valuable assistance to Khenpo-la and the centre. As mentioned at the last AGM, the cost of processing this visa is considerable, and we welcome any contributions you may wish to offer to help with these costs. If you wish to do this, you can make a donation on line and note the label '**Lama's visa**' or email the DBI Treasurer Peter Green at pgr07@tpg.com.au

Though we have some major events on the calendar this year, including the Uluru Retreat in June, the regular centre activities continue to run as usual, such as regular practices, Shedra program of study, Introduction to Meditation course, Tibetan language course and the like. Your continued support to run these events, such as leading practices, coordinating classes, driving Khenpo-la etc., is highly valued, so we ask you to consider assisting this year.

We take this opportunity to introduce the committee for 2014...

Jack Heath - President

Vanessa Howie - Vice President

Linda McKeone - Secretary

Peter Green - Treasurer

Ann Kelly - Spiritual Program Coordinator

Mark Mulcany - Book Keeper

Suzi Walker - Catering and Retreat Mother

If during the course of the year you have any questions or issues that you wish to discuss about the centre, the program or other things that may arise, please do not hesitate to contact one of the committee members via email at info@drogmi.org. We would be most happy to assist you in any way possible.

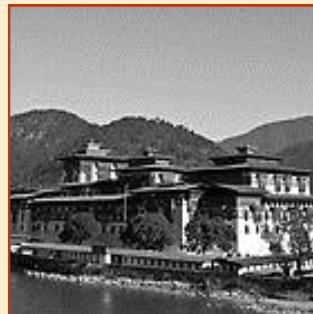
We look forward to sharing with you all the blessings of the year ahead.

Ann Kelly on behalf of the DBI Committee

Redbubble Images

**by
Bill Chant**

An ongoing fundraising project donated by photographer and a student of Khenpo-la's.



Drogmi Buddhist Institute Dharma Photography Shop...

The online photography shop is up and running and we would like to thank those that have purchased items off the site so far. We hope you enjoy your photos and calendars.

The site works by having photos uploaded which can then be purchased in various ways from greeting cards through to framed prints. You can buy items off the site and they are all printed for you by the hosting company, Redbubble, and delivered to your door. All images are donated to the site and 100% of all profits go to Drogmi Buddhist Institute with only manufacturing and postage costs having to go to Redbubble. This is a great way to support the centre from a distance and to acquire some great Dharma related works.



Bill is endeavouring to add more photos to the site from his large collection and also make the DBI T - Shirts available for sale on this site as well. Bill will give updates in the newsletters as new works are added. If anyone has their own

photos they would like to offer please send them through to Bill and they will then be uploaded to the system.

Details of Redbubble are:

<http://drogmi.redbubble.com>
and/or contact Bill personally to send through any images you would like to offer at:
billchant@gmail.com



Thoughts from a pilgrim on one of the many long bus journeys through India 2013

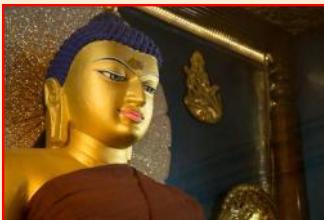
*Conical stacks of tyres:
modern day stupas.*

*The scrawny cat limps down metal stairs hampered by the weight of the fat rat in its mouth,
I have compassion for both
and gratitude for my precious human rebirth.*

Desire: the number of goats prostrate on bended knees straining their tethers to gain the just out of reach morsel.

*I have the good karma to not have to use my head to carry bowls of cement
And bundles of newly harvested grain.
Best I make good use of it while I enjoy conditions so favourable...*



Bodhgaya, India

Our eight days at Maha Bodhi Stupa gave me a pleasant and peaceful feeling. This holy place looks very grand, especially the Buddha and the stupa. The golden spire and stupa shines out even when seen from a distance. I was amazed with the continuous flow of people to the stupa, day and night. After doing circumambulations, I felt very peaceful and happy. The environment gave me a very warm feeling and the place just made me want to return there, again and again. I find that sitting meditation and saying mantras give me peace of mind. Even though we did prostrations before and during the teachings, they did not make me feel tired at all. **Joyce**



Sarah and I would like to thank everyone on Khenpo's 8th Pilgrimage to India and Nepal. We were made to feel part of the "family" instantly, and had the most wonderful experience - something we will remember for the rest of our lives. There were many, many special moments for me, but I would like to recall two in particular: The first was during a teaching with Khenpo at the Maha Bodhi Stupa in Bodhgaya. A little stray dog walked up to Khenpo whilst he was teaching, settled under his arm and Khenpo without faltering in his teaching or loosing eye contact with us started stroking the dog so gently. Both seemed



very much at peace and at ease with each other. This simple act of kindness made me think how easily it should translate to humans and their treatment of each other. Kindness surely is a part of happiness.

The second moment was also at the Maha Bodhi Stupa where we made light offerings for the first time. It was a special moment for many of us I know. The lighting of candles, and the practice of prayers that followed allowed me to reflect on a very personal loss. Special moments like these are few and far between in our day to day lives. Thanks to everyone again. **Jenny S.**



The last time mum and I went to Bodhgaya, three years ago, we saw lots of street children and the conditions they lived in. So this time round we were both eager to do our bit to help them. We found out about the Prajna Vihar School, a non-government funded Primary School and High School which seeks to foster inter-religious understanding as a contribution to the diversity of religious faith in India.

We went to the school laden with simple gifts of books, clothing, pens and pencils,



which the Principal Sister Shobha assured us would be greatly appreciated by her students. She told us how most of them were too poor to attend even public government schools and then proudly let us know about all the awards they were now winning and how two of her students had even managed to gain scholarships to study overseas. Mum and I, Jenny and Sarah then visited several classrooms of students aged 5 to 16 years of age learning Maths, English, Hindi and Science. I was amazed at all the students' wonderful behaviour, perfectly worn uniforms and the girls neatly braided and beautiful long hair. Having started school with light exercise and meditation at 7.30 am, by 9.00am it was time for a well-earned break. All the students piled out of class into the small playground to chat and play a badminton-like game



with their toys. After seeing the stark difference of those children's lives, I will try to never again take my childhood and education for granted. Hopefully returning to Sydney I will be able to create a link between my school and PVS to provide further assistance for these children in need. **Gini**





Upon entering the town of Bodhgaya in the Indian state of Bihar, I was overcome with a deep sense of appreciation and admiration for *Buddha Shakyamuni*. Nearly 2,600 years ago, a young Prince Siddhartha went searching for the Truth, and forsook his position and all his worldly possessions, to help others. He conquered all his defilements, both gross and subtle, and gained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree in this very place. Travelling through the holy town, it was hard to imagine how Buddha had done this. For me, looking out the bus window, even the grossest levels of suffering seemed insurmountable, let alone all the subtle ones. The question that played around in my head on the way to the guesthouse was "How did Buddha stay focused, how did He not become distracted, despondent and overwhelmed? How was it that He never gave up"? On the surface Bodhgaya can seem to visitors, the most emotionally and physically challenging of places. However, in time, another layer to Bodhgaya begins to reveal itself. Bodhgaya is, on the spiritual level, an extremely special place. Buddha displayed, right here, that with some effort, it is possible to eliminate all our sufferings. This gave me great purpose at the start of the pilgrimage, to try to get the most out of it that I could.

After an amazing eight days in Bodhgaya, we boarded a bus with our fearless and most patient guide, Khenpo-la, and continued on our pilgrimage to the major and minor Buddhist holy sites of India and Nepal. Our next stop was *Patna*, the capital city of the state of Bihar. Bihar has a rich and colourful history, though in more recent times, has been politically and economically unstable. However, things are changing as it now boasts a new Governor who seems to be promoting Buddhism and steadily improving the life of the local community. The city of Patna has a significant museum with Buddha Relics and

wonderful Buddhist art works. It is also the site of a new stupa, the *Paltiputra Karuna Stupa*, which was built by the new Governor on the site of an old prison. It was opened in 2013 by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The main stupa contains five beautiful miniature stupas containing Buddha relics which were donated by various countries.



After leaving Patna, we stopped at the small town of *Vaishali*, another Buddhist site of great significance to Buddhists. It was here that Buddha visited five years after gaining enlightenment and where He was famously offered honey by a monkey. It was here also that Buddha ordained the first woman and a nunnery was built some time later. Significantly, the site has the only remaining fully intact Ashoka Pillar.



King Ashoka reigned most of what is now modern India, between 268 - 232 BCE. He made it a large part of his life's work as King to install these magnificent pillars at the Buddhist holy sites. Ashoka was born in Patna and his seat of power was based in the state of Bihar. He embraced Buddhism after witnessing the mass deaths of up to 100,000 people during the Kalinga War, which he himself had waged out of a desire for conquest. Ashoka dedicated much of his reign to the promotion and spread of Buddhism across Asia, and established monuments marking several significant

sites in the life of Buddha Shakyamuni, which included the one at Vaishali. He recognised the unifying qualities of Buddhist Philosophy as a way to bring together different peoples. History is



Above Stupa for Buddha's disciple Ananda

everywhere in India. To embrace this history brings past events alive and makes the Buddha's deeds and great accomplishments so much more relevant. This was for me the standout benefit of the pilgrimage, that and the great lengths of time to do sadhanas at the holy sites and on the long bus rides (a retreat on wheels, wonderful, no mobile phones ringing, and no deadlines to meet, just time before the next stop... bliss)! *Continued on page 13.*



Ann at Padmasambhava's Cave, Nepal

During our stay in Bodhgaya we took a day trip to *Vulture's Peak* and *Nalanda*. We set off early in two vehicles. On the way we stopped briefly at a curious site where there are the remains of wagon wheel tracks scarred into the hillside. This was an ancient road said to date back to the time of the Mahabharata, possibly 5,000 years old. It was fascinating to consider this when looking at the site



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Vulture's Peak & Nalanda University Ruins

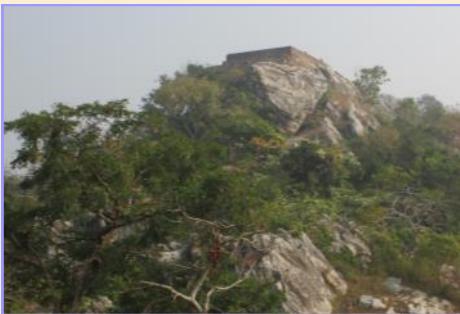
At the base of Vulture's Peak (also called *Gridrakhuta Hill*) there was almost a carnival atmosphere as we were surrounded by shops and stalls and the inevitable hawkers and beggars. We enjoyed a "chai" and started up the hill.

Vulture's Peak is located where once stood the city of *Rajgir*. Buddha spent a lot of time at this city and befriended the then king, King Bimbisara, who in turn became a follower and supporter of Buddha. It is the place where the "bamboo grove" existed (a park where Buddha met followers and gave teachings), where Devadatta tried to harm Buddha and where the first Buddhist Council was held some months after Buddha's Parinirvana and His teachings began to be written down.



The city is no longer there but we were able to visit Vulture's Peak. This place where the *Perfection of Wisdom* sutra was given is truly magical. The climb up was not too difficult on a wide path populated by vendors, beggars and occasional wild monkeys. It was a hot morning. We rested a couple of times on the way. The climb did not prepare you for the sense of presence when you stood atop the peak at the shrine there and imagined the Buddha there surrounded by the Bodhisattva's and the many, many monks and lay followers who would have been there all down the hillside whilst He taught and meditated. If such imaginings can bring forth a heartfelt wonder and exhilaration as I felt there that day then being present there at the Buddha's time must have been incredible.

We prayed, offered, chanted and



prostrated. We sat awhile and took it in. We crawled into the caves of disciples (said to be those of Ananda and Sariputta) and we paid homage.



We wandered back down the hill deep in thought at the experience. It is a great gift. I will never forget being in that place and I believe (as we are taught by Khenpo-la) that with pure perception and a sincere wish to do so one could still see the Buddha in this and all places he frequented and realisations may come from that if we are fortunate enough. You don't really appreciate this until you are actually there. Go if you can!



Nalanda blew me away. This is a place we hear so much about. Where great Buddhist scholars walked the walk and talked the talk. They lived, laughed and taught Dharma here like nowhere else. *Virupa*,

Atisha, *Nagarjuna*, *Shantideva*, *Asanga* and *Aryadeva* to name a few of the great Masters who resided, learned and taught here. It is legend. From the Nalanda Atisha went to Tibet to teach the Dharma, Virupa attained enlightenment and Nagarjuna realised the *Madhyamika*. So that's how mind blowing Nalanda is when you walk among those ruins in the actual corridors, kitchens, dining halls, gardens and dwellings of these legendary Masters!

Before it became the place of the famed Buddhist University the area of Nalanda (at the time considered an outlying part of the city of *Rajgir*) was a place of learning known to Buddha. He is said to have visited there many times. It was a prosperous and busy place. At one time *Shakyamuni* was offered a mango grove by 500 merchants here. His disciples *Sariputta* and *Moggallana* came from the area. It is said Sariputta attained Nirvana here. In fact Sariputta's relics are here and a beautiful stupa is built over them.



It was amazing to consider this whilst standing in front of this very holy stupa and also having been inside Sariputta's meditation cave at Vulture's Peak!

"Nalanda" means "insatiable in giving", "charity without intermission". It is believed this name may derive from one of Buddha's previous births where He was the king of a city in this place. Scholars seemed to converge here and monasteries were built. At its peak Nalanda was enormous, there were over 3,000 teachers, over 10,000 monks and students and over nine million manuscripts in the library. The university was surrounded by 200 villages which supported the enormous number of sangha. These details are taken from the diaries of a Chinese pilgrim, Hsuan Tsang, who spent five years there in the 7th century AD. In time there was a resurgence of Hinduism and Buddhism became less popular in India. *Continued on next page*.

Nalanda Ruins, Patna Museum & Paliiputra Karuna Stupa

There were fires at Nalanda damaging the University and around the 12th century there was an invasion by Turkish Muslims. All of these things lead to the eventual loss of Nalanda and reportedly by about 1235 AD there were only two monasteries left and the amazing development of Nalanda Buddhist University and many of its records and texts were lost. Impermanence!

The ruins were discovered in the 1860's and excavation began in 1915 - 1916. Nalanda as excavated is only part of what existed back in the day as much is still underground and probably built over by later village construction.

Khenpo-la engaged a guide and we walked through the excavated buildings and gardens as he explained the rooms and places, their uses and construction. I thought of Atisha being there and Nagarjuna, imagining them walking these corridors, eating in these dining halls and walking or contemplating in the gardens among the statues. I thought of Virupa as he left Nalanda and Shantideva giving his teaching. To be in that actual place was a sense of connection to and experience of these enlightened masters and all they have given us, a great treasure.

We walked, we breathed it in, we sat and we chanted. Khenpo-la told the story of Shantideva and we nodded in wonder as Lama Kalsang filmed away. It was great!

Joe



Patna Museum

Having an interest in stone carving I appreciated the many impressive Buddhist sculptures exhibited at the Patna Museum. Most of them discovered at Nalanda, Gandhara and Orissa.

The particular standouts being the grey statues of Avalokiteshvara, and Maitreya, seated in the one-leg-folded posture.

Dating from eleventh century, they were originally found on both sides of a Buddha statue. Also impressive are two large statues of Manjushri carved from black stone. They produced a powerful and magnetic effect. Another object of particular interest in the museum is a round terracotta plaque called the Kumrahar Plaque depicting what seems



to be the Maha Bodhi Temple at Bodhgaya. The plaque portrays a good idea of what the temple might have looked like shortly after it was built.

Of most impact however, was when all of us pilgrims were allowed to be admitted into the sacred space which holds a relic casket containing the mortal remains of Lord Buddha. This soap stone relic casket (5th Century BC) contains a copper punch mark coin, a fragment of golden leaf, silver pieces, a small conch and a bead. **Pam**



Paliiputra Karuna Stupa Patna

Firstly I would like to thank Khenpo and his family for looking after us so well on the recent Pilgrimage. We visited Buddha Smriti Park in Patna. It was inaugurated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 2010. Ashes of Buddha and other relics from Sri Lanka, Japan, Thailand, and South Korea are kept inside a glass enclosure, encasing these many small stupas in the main hall. Like all the sacred sites we visited, I found a sense of peace once we entered the park. It also brought back memories to me of when I offered a stupa to His Holiness Sakya Trizin. He asked me what is this? At the time I had no idea what a stupa was. I replied I don't know. Now I feel I really know what it is. It represents the Buddha's body... **Vanessa**

Continued on page 9





We also visited the **International Buddhist Academy (IBA)** in Kathmandu. IBA was established in 2001 by Khenpo's late teacher the Most Venerable Khenchen Appey Rinpoche. He is quoted as saying *the main objective of sentient beings in this universe is to avoid suffering and obtain happiness. This objective can only be partially and temporarily realised through worldly methods. Only the Dharma can eradicate all suffering and accomplish permanent happiness. So it is essential to practice the Dharma. For this, it is important to first study and contemplate.* Since many people in this age are interested in Tibetan Buddhism, Khenchen Appey Rinpoche founded the IBA with the vision and hope that they can study the Dharma in a proper environment and that it will flourish worldwide.

On arrival we made offerings of katas to the memorial stupa dedicated to the Most Venerable Khenchen Appey Rinpoche located in the courtyard. We were then offered morning tea and a meeting with the director of IBA Dr Khenpo Ngawang Jorden. Many of us had met Dr Khenpo Jorden when he visited and taught at Drogmi Buddhist Institute in March 2013. It was lovely to be able to meet him again and ask questions, particularly about studying as an overseas student at IBA. Then our Khenpo gave us a guided tour of the Institute.

We visited the Late Most Venerable



Khenchen Appey Rinpoche's room where we were offered His relics. We also visited the Mahakala Shrine Hall where Tsering Norbu performs daily Mahakala pujas and meditations. A group of us from DBI sponsor this monk.

May the wishes of the Most Venerable Khenchen Appey Rinpoche be fulfilled.

Vanessa



Saranath / Deer Park & Varanasi

Deer Park is the site of Buddha's first teaching after His enlightenment, of the *Four Noble Truths*. Green and beautifully kept lawns dominated by a large round brick stupa, and an immediate subtle calm like the light mist in all directions.

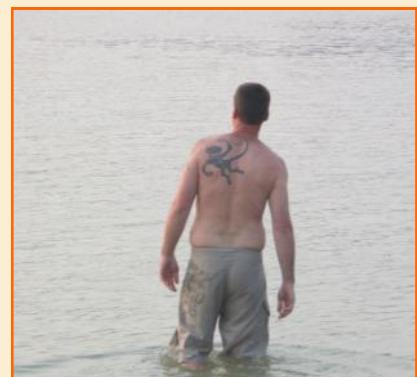
Contrast to the overbearing push of sellers, beggars, traffic noise and dust



outside the gate. Humbling to think that Buddha really lived, walked and taught right here in this place. We had the opportunity to sit down, meditate, chant and consider the *Four Noble Truths*, to clearly and logically examine the causes of suffering taught by Buddha. In a place surrounded by obvious suffering, it was a

great chance to understand equanimity and to investigate the real causes of suffering.

In the afternoon we enjoyed a head spinning rickshaw ride through the Varanasi streets where our bus could no longer drive (a feast for all the senses). Then a walk along and through crowded streets filled with endless food, ancient markets, clothing and more, following our faultless guide, Khenpo-la. The narrow lanes opened finally to present the famous Ganga River (Ganges). A dream I have had for many years. A boat ride as the red sun set across the Ghats, and a chance to swim and wash in the Ganga, like the millions before and the millions after.



All followed by a delicious meal, a wander through the dark streets with street kids attached to each of my arms, we all made it home a little changed, whilst the teachings from Deer Park remain the same.

Dino



Shravasti

Shravasti was a highlight for me.

We left early from Varanasi for a ten hour bus journey. By the time the sun had risen we were hailed by the friendly locals from the roadside, for virtually the whole trip. Shravasti is off the usual tourist route. It is a rural area, much different from the other places we had seen. I had little idea of the significance of the place before arriving. Khenpo-la explained that Shravasti was where the Buddha spent many rainy season retreats (20 or so). The Buddha spent many years in total in Shravasti teaching the Dharma and constantly benefitting countless beings. I learned that it was the setting in which one of my favourite stories from the Buddha's ministry was played out, the Buddha's meeting with *Angulimala*.

The whole area is dotted with monuments and sacred sites. The park containing the original monastery is said to have been donated by *Anathapindika* to the Buddha and His sangha.



It is a quiet place with a powerful atmosphere, conducive to introspection, as if the Buddha had left a powerful presence within the very fabric of the ancient ruins. It was a memorable experience.

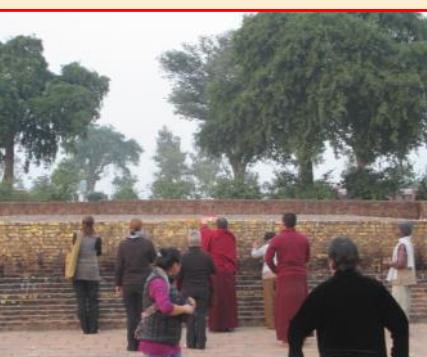
Samten

Uttar Pradesh was where the Buddha and sangha spent 20 or so rainy seasons. Khenpo-la explained the origin of the rains retreat. Due to the rains bringing about so many insects, the Buddha would stay in one place so as to not kill these beings moving about.

Jetavana has the excavated remains of buildings the Buddha and sangha lived in. We made offerings at the Gandhakuti remains. This was the place Buddha spent the most time, giving many teachings.

Beyond the park the lush green forest looked like it probably would have almost

2,600 years ago. Walking around the remains of buildings I had a strong sense of a peaceful place full of Dharma activity, of the wisest, kindest Teacher; of teachings and explanations; of students of all abilities listening, studying, meditating, asking questions and living the teachings. It was easy to imagine a monk taking the opportunity to ask the Buddha to clarify some point they were struggling with as they walked from one building to another, or around the grounds. This reminded me of how we are with Khenpo-la, trying to understand teachings, asking for his guidance, and trying to live our lives according to the teachings.



For me Shravasti, held a strong presence of the Buddha and sangha, and I am grateful that I have been blessed with the opportunity to come to this holy place.

May all beings have these opportunities.

Linda

The Other Side of Pilgrimage

Although I have visited India many times and thought myself anaesthetised to its filth, pollution and poverty I was very much mistaken. Bodhgaya is in the poorest state of India - Bihar. The number of beggars, especially children is really quite frightening. These people hang out for hand-outs from visitors to the sacred places, and see westerners as being absurdly wealthy. On some occasions our pilgrimage group offered food in answer to their catch-cry of "chapatti, chapatti" whilst rubbing their stomachs. This was all to no avail, all they wanted were rupees. This makes me think there must have been a

Fagan-like character in charge. If the children received rupees they would then run off and disappear, soon to reappear for the next group of visitors.

One of the saddest tableaux I saw was when we arrived in our air-conditioned bus at Patna. We drove up to the gate of another sacred site and a group of children were sitting outside. A couple of the young girls raced across a busy road and came back with two babies on their hips and began begging. I had seen this ploy many times before, yet this time it really hit home. I just can't get the images of those girls out of my mind. They were about the same age as my granddaughters - five and seven - and the babies were only about four months old - the same age as my younger grandson. My grandchildren have everything. These souls have nothing. The awful thing is I can do nothing about that. There are hundreds of thousands of children in India in that situation and the outlook for them is grim.

India may be going ahead in leaps and bounds. I saw no evidence of this in Bihar. Since coming home I once again fully realise how lucky we, and our children and grandchildren are to live in Australia. I feel glad, too that you aren't able to see the tears in my eyes as I write and remember what we saw and experienced nor hear the crack in my voice as I read it over. **Suzi**



An Ayurvedic massage at the Ganga & Aussie bus lunches by Suzi

Kushinagar



On eight December we visited the remains of ancient **Kushinagar**, where Buddha entered Parinirvana. With his final words, the Buddha urged His followers to be diligent in their efforts to attain enlightenment. Lying on His right side and in a state of profound meditation, He left the world and passed into Nirvana, a state of true peace which is beyond death. The Nirvana Temple houses a 6.1m long monolithic sand stone statue of Buddha in the reclining pose. The atmosphere inside the Nirvana Temple had a sense of awe, majesty and extraordinary tranquillity, as we meditated and made offerings to the Buddha statue.

Paying homage to Buddha at Kushinagar helped me relate to the moment of death, and made me see with clarity that at the point of death, the Triple Gem is our only refuge; that we can only take our mind with us. It brought to life the message of the teachings, that the body we hold so dear will also be left behind. For me, this was a poignant moment. Death was in our face. It made me understand that either we practise now, or we are wasting our precious human life.

Cheng

Lumbini

From Kushinagar we headed for Nepal and **Lumbini**, the birthplace of Buddha.

We have all read the accounts of the Lord Buddha's last birth in this world in the Lumbini Grove as His mother *Queen Mayadevi* leaned on the branches of a shala tree. Imagine going to that place and actually standing at the site where His birth took place and these amazing things happened. This place, Lumbini, (the first stop for the Buddha in that life), was the last stop for us on pilgrimage following the steps of His life.

As we approached the Indian / Nepal border our spirits were high. We were looking forward to the relative ease and change of pace travelling in Nepal and staying in Kathmandu after the tricky business of negotiating India. I found the border crossing fascinating with all kinds of people passing through and much activity, all at a pretty hectic pace. The unknowns of getting through immigration, over the border and into new territory, it was exciting. With their uncanny ability to read the situation, speak the lingo

and put folks at ease with a friendly smile Khenpo-la and Lama Kalsang had us beyond the magic gate, into Nepal and cruising towards Lumbini in no time. Even Ann came through without interrogation about the shady contents of her bulging purse...

It is said that on the day Shakyamuni Buddha was born others who were to play a major role in His life were also born such as His wife Yasodhara, His groom who freed Him from His father's palace, His horse on whom he rode away from the palace, King Bimbisara who supported Him in Rajgir, His protector *Vajrapani* and even the Bodhi Tree itself sprouted on that day! The mind boggles. Can we accept this? I don't know; can we accept a manifestation of Tara growing by itself out of a rock on a hillside near Kathmandu? We saw the latter no doubt; but that's another story.

His Eminence Chogye Trichen Rinpoche who passed away in Kathmandu about 4 years ago was a great and highly respected and realised Sakya Master. He has two monasteries in Lumbini and we were fortunate to stay in the guest house of one of these. It was beautiful. The rooms were clean and comfortable. The monks and others were very kind and welcoming. The temple was stunning and the whole grounds seemed to me like a sanctuary, especially at night. These temples and the monks and others who live, visit and practice there are helping to revive the district of Lumbini and the Buddha's birthplace. Such was the foresight of His Eminence.

After settling in we walked to the site of



Buddha's birth. Here there sits the other of His Eminence's Chogye Trichen's monasteries, completed in 1975 and a large white building which was constructed by Japanese Buddhists only 15 years ago to protect the birth place. All surrounded by lovely gardens with prayer flags flying in a thousand colourful waves overhead. It seemed an oasis of peace in what appeared to me an otherwise wild and remote part of the country. This is Lumbini Grove where we saw the excavated stone slab said to be marking the actual spot where Shakyamuni Buddha (then Prince Siddhartha) was born! Being a sacred place there has, over centuries, been temples built there. Two hundred years after Buddha's birth Indian Emperor Ashoka visited Lumbini. He

identified the birth place and marked it with a stupa and pillar. Part of the Ashokan pillar is still there and on it is an inscription which reads "*Buddha Shakyamuni was born here, the blessed one born here*".

There are several layers of ruins built over the birth place and these have been excavated to reveal the stone and a sculpture which is the place Queen Mayadevi stood as Prince



Siddhartha was born.

The shala tree is no longer there and there is a building housing it all with a viewing platform built for visitors. The sense of being there and the feeling of devotion and connection with the life and teachings of *Shakymuni Buddha* is not something I can put into words and which will be a personal thing to all who visit there. And something which I think is important to contemplate is what Khenpo-la said in answer to a question about where the Buddha Dharma started; "*it actually started at Bodhgaya with Buddha's enlightenment but here with His birth was the cause for that to happen*". I thought about this, how when we look deeply cause and effect is always there on every level and we started our pilgrimage with the 'effect', Bodhgaya, the place of enlightenment and ended it at the "cause", Lumbini, Buddha's birth place... Nice.

We stood there in turn, taking it in, we went back for a second viewing, we left as the sun set reflecting on the last site of a long journey. *Tayatha Om Muni Muni Maha Muni Svaha*. The next morning we boarded a shining golden chariot that had arrived in the dead of the night co-piloted by the smiling face of Tsering, Khenpo-la's younger brother, to be carried off to Kathmandu wherein, over the misty mountain, lay promises of sleep ins, rest days and shopping. **Joe**





Swayambhunath & Boudhanath Stupas

We arrive in Kathmandu to backed up traffic and a wonderful mix of old and new. Our accommodation ; the Potala Guest House; how grand is that! We wave goodbye to Lama Kalsang, Tsering and Niece Tsering who will stay at the family home. Khenpo-la sees us safely ensconced in the guest house; weary travellers over the misty mountain pass; twelve hours in a bus on a rough and windy road, arrrrhhg! Once sure we were settled Khenpo-la too, retired to his family home; a truly well-deserved rest and family re-union after seeing this lot through pilgrimage and India without loss or harm. Thank you Khenpo & Co. So where to in Kathmandu? Sacred and ancient Stupas of course;

Swayambhunath & Boudhanath. These Stupas are very individual in their own way and have characters so real you can hug them like a brother. The sense of spiritual devotion and historical connection to Buddhists and Hindus over many centuries is breathable at these places and there they are doing Kora and worshipping temples and statues as they have done for centuries. It is like stepping back in time but then it is timeless and you fall into step with them , circling the stupa clockwise; mala in hand, mantra filling your mind, dodging monkeys, dogs, and people alike, turning the prayer wheels and keeping pace. Your heart expands and your mind is glowing with the feel of it all and the people beside you, young, old, ordained, lay people, Tibetan, Nepali, Western, Eastern, crippled and sick; together we go around. It is a beautiful and amazing experience. I can't wait to go back and do it again. **Joe**



Lord Buddha's Seat under the Bodhi Tree and Khenpo-la gazing & meditating here.

For me every moment on pilgrimage was extraordinary.

We were cared for in every way possible and protected for the entire journey by our most precious teacher, Khenpo-la. He was *always* there, yet we had to have our own experience and sometimes trauma of witnessing the relentless suffering of others from our own perception and somehow bring this into our lives and practice and understand our own suffering, so we can continue along the precious Dharma path.

There are three particular instances of Khenpo-la's wisdom which still resonate with me each day since returning home. The first being at the Maha Bodhi Stupa, Bodhgaya. Whilst sitting only metres away from the actual seat of Buddha Shakyamuni's place of enlightenment Khenpo-la reminded us *that this very place is the most holy Buddhist site in the whole world, no other is more important and to place our minds here and nowhere else; that nothing else matters right now except this very moment of being there. Everyone in your world, all your tasks and problems are safe, let them be at this time and practice Loving - Kindness.*

Secondly, along the way we asked Khenpo-la, "how can we help these tragically suffering people as it clear that offering money, clothing, and food to the begging children, some with polio and/or lying disfigured and disabled on the ground, is not necessarily helping? One of Khenpo-la's responses was *that some of these offerings may help a little bit, yet the best way to help them is to include them within every aspect of your practice, to include them within 'all sentient beings', include them in developing your Bodhichitta Mind, so you and they can achieve perfect*

Buddhahood and find everlasting True happiness.



Tara was with us everyplace we travelled. Khenpo-la and Lama would chant the twenty one praises of Tara at the beginning of every bus trip, long or short, after we all chanted Her mantra together. Her statue was within the structure of the Maha Bodhi Stupa and this statue is said to be the "*Talking Tara*", as She once spoke to a devotee. And later in Kathmandu, I found myself sitting within arms length of the "*Arising Tara*" which rested on a rock with a small Temple encasing it, able to squeeze in twenty monks and lay people sitting. Somehow I found myself nestled and gently pushed forward in our group towards the very front of this temple and I found an actual miracle presented to me. She is there.

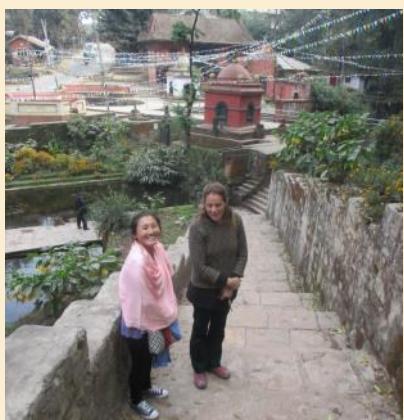


The third instance was when Khenpo-la had just expressed to me prior to this experience with the *Arising Tara*, as we climbed the hill to Padmasambhava's Cave, *that whatever conditions arise from our own causes, we must fully accept this. Not to punish oneself, or to judge yet to learn and experience the condition, to transform it to a positive and then continue along the path.* So, acceptance... acceptance of who we are. Due to our ignorance negative causes are created, and then negative conditions arise. In awareness this process of karma can be transformed into a positive. Mindfully creating positive causes can slowly lead to a more virtuous existence. This is possible, to change by applying the antidotes, applying the teachings in every moment.

Continued next page.

Continued from page 12

Thugs rje che Thugs rje che (thank you thank you) to our most precious teacher, Khenpo-la. We are completely blessed with such a pure spiritual Guide and Teacher. To Lama Kalsang, so gentle, compassionate and a true spiritual friend, to Tsering Drolkar, your nurturing along the journey shall never be forgotten. To Sonam, Tsering-la, and to Khenpo-la's entire family we are forever grateful. Last but certainly not least a most whole hearted thank you to Vanessa whose great kindness and devotion to helping Khenpo-la organise and run a most beautiful and successful pilgrimage is greatly appreciated! Lael



International Buddhist Academy (IBA) Kathmandu

Continued from page 4 by Ann...

A very significant day for the group was our visit to IBA in Nepal. I had been there twice previously on pilgrimage and met and received teachings with the group from the founder and head of IBA, and Khenpo-la's Guru, the Late Most Venerable Khenchen Appay Rinpoche. It was with mixed emotions this visit, since the passing of Khenpo Appay Rinpoche. However the new head, Venerable Khenpo Ngawang Jorden is a most accomplished successor, and the academy is forging ahead with a world class Buddhist Philosophy course/s for International students.

Khenpo-la then gave us a tour of the facilities, sharing with us, his great love and devotion to his most precious Guru Khenchen Appay Rinpoche. It was a great teaching for us all in Guru devotion, that we never forget our Guru's, and what they do for us. Sometimes due to our lack of mindfulness, we can take it for

granted, but the real significance of their assistance to us, whether it be leading us on pilgrimage, giving us one minute of their precious time, a glass of water, whatever it is, we should never forget their great kindness towards us, and work hard to repay it in striving to be the best that we can be. Ultimately what they are doing for us, is guiding us to enlightenment.

Thank you to the group of pilgrims who were a lovely group to travel with on this journey.

Thank you to Khenpo-la's family, to his inspiring parents, his aunty, his sisters, and sister in law, his brother Tsering-la, nephews Sonam and Lama Kalsang and his beautiful niece Tsering Drolkar, who embody the true meaning of love and family. Finally, most heartfelt thank you to Khenpo-la, for your great generosity in sharing your knowledge and wisdom and for never giving up on us all.

Ann

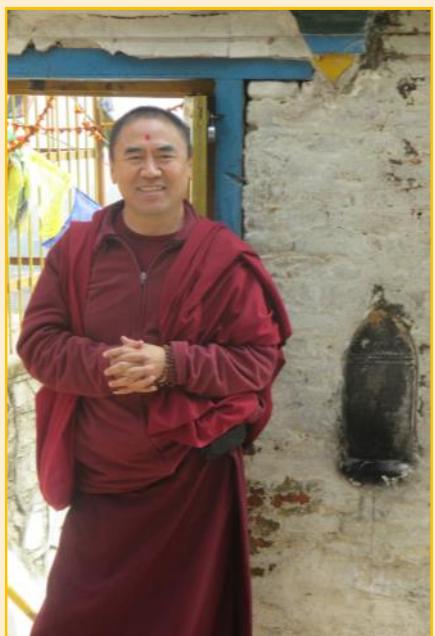


Khenpo's family for making our group feel so welcome in their home. It is a great privilege to meet Khenpo's mother and father, and an opportunity to let them know how very much we appreciate their gift of having Khenpo-la as our teacher in Australia.

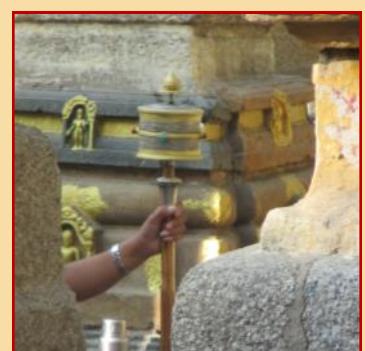
Linda



Khenpo-la's family generously invited us on the second day in Kathmandu for a home prepared lunch. An abundance of the most delicious food was presented to us, and was very much enjoyed by all. On behalf of the group I would like to give our heartfelt thanks to all of



Collage of Photos to Share of the Pilgrimage



From the Epitome of Purification of the Environment by Jnanagarbha (Tashi Rabten Ling Monastery, Lumbini)

When sitting in a house a Bodhisattva should think,
"May I reach the place of great liberation"
When sleeping,
"May I obtain the reality of Buddha"
If dreams occur,
"May I realise that all things are like dreams"
When waking,
"May I awaken from ignorance"
When dressing:
"I am putting on the garments of conscience and awareness"
When tying the sash:
"May I fasten the roots of virtue"
When sitting on a cushion:
"May I obtain the adamantine seat, the core of enlightenment"
When leaning back:
"May I recline in the field of enlightenment"
When lighting a fire:
"May I burn the fire of truth"
When cooking:
"May I brew the nectar of Truth"
When eating:
"May I eat the food of the meditative absorptions"
When going outside:
"May I escape the prison of samsara"
When descending stairs:
"May I descend into samsara for the sake of beings"
When opening a door:
"May I open the door to the city of liberation"
When closing a door:
"May I close the door on the three lower existences"
When setting out on a road:
"May I embark on the superior path"
When travelling upwards:
"May I establish all beings on the happiness of the higher existences"
When descending:
"May I break the continuity of the three lower existences"
When meeting a being:
"May I meet the perfect Buddha"
When settling down a foot:
"May I support the welfare of all beings"
When raising a foot:
"May I pull all beings from samsara"
When seeing a person adorned with jewellery:
"May I wear the ornaments of the (32) signs and (80) marks of a great being"
Seeing someone without jewellery:
"May I be endowed with the good qualities of purity"
Seeing a full vessel:
"May I be filled with good qualities"
Seeing an empty vessel:
"May I be emptied of faults"
Seeing many happy people:
"May I be happy in Dharma"
Seeing someone displeased:
"May I share the pain of his displeasure"
Seeing a happy person:
"May I obtain the bliss of Buddhahood"
Seeing a miserable being:
"May I allay the misery of all beings"
Seeing a sick person:
"May I free all beings from sickness"

Seeing an attractive person:
"May all beings obtain attractiveness of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas"
Seeing an ugly person:
"May all beings avoid unvirtuous spiritual teachers"
Seeing kindness returned:
"May I return the kindness of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas"
Seeing kindness unreturned:
"May I not return the kindness of wrong views"
Seeing a monk:
"May I become involved in superior Dharma"
Seeing a person practising austerities:
"May I be able to practice the austerities of holy Dharma"
Seeing an armoured person:
"May I don armour to seek holy Dharma"
Seeing an unarmoured person:
"May I not bear the armouring of non-virtuous action"
Seeing people quarrelling:
"May I stop all opponents of the correct view"
Seeing a person praised:
"May all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas be praised"
Seeing a city:
"May I see the city of liberation"
Seeing a forest:
"It is a gathering place for all holy beings"
When teaching Dharma:
"May I never stop learning Buddha Dharma"
When crossing over water:
"May I cross the ocean of samsara"
When washing:
"May I be cleansed of physical and mental taints"
When hot:
"May the pain of the afflictions be destroyed"
When cold:
"May I obtain the coolness of nirvana"
When reciting Dharma:
"May I obtain the unclouded vision that sees all Buddhas"
When seeing a reliquary:
"May it be an object of worship for all living beings"
When beholding it:
"May all beings uphold the Dharma"
When bowing:
"May I not be considered anything special by the world"
When circumambulating:
"May I be near Buddha"
When reciting the good qualities of a Buddha:
"May I encompass all the inexhaustible qualities"
When reckoning an account and transacting business:
"May I obtain the seven riches of the superiors"
When irrigating a field:
"May I nurture the crop of mind for enlightenment"
When planting:
"May I plant the seed of mind for enlightenment in all beings"
When yoking two bulls:
"May I unite both wisdom and method"
When ploughing:
"May I break up the power of the afflictions"
When reaping:
"May I gather the crops of Truth"
When washing grains:
"May I the fruit of perfect Buddhahood"
When climbing stairs:
"May I climb to the top of the ten stages"
When arriving at a house:
"May I arrive at the stage of perfect Buddhahood".