



TUSHITA

Meditation Centre

ཨ་ཤེལ་ཏེ་ཤེལ་ཏེ། མཚུ་ཤེལ་ཏེ་ཤེལ་ཏེ། རུང་ས་ལུག་ཉེ་སྐྱེ།



McLeod Ganj, India; Home-in-Exile of His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Newsletter Issue #4



But youth being transient,
The child reaches old age as days,
and months go by. ཕྱིས་ལ་བཞུན་ལུ་ལོངས་སེ་ཉེ།
ཞལ་ལྷ་མད་ཤིན་ལྷས་ལ་ཉི།

How, having obtained this meaningful life of freedom
and happiness – so difficult to find.

Director's Message

Dear Friends of Tushita,

Autumn 2012 saw the inauguration of the main Gompa painting project which meant closing the Gompa to the public in late September, with 2 months of the season still remaining. Whilst the project has been ongoing we have tried our best to ensure that the courses could continue to run well and students were satisfied.

We managed to house ever record numbers in the Medicine Buddha Gompa, not wishing to turn people away from attending our Introduction to Buddhism courses from receiving the Dharma. Rejoice!!!

Over the winter, our building projects included, completing the tile *kora* path around the main Gompa and key work done to our main entrance area to keep up the beautifying of Tushita motivation of 2012.

Other useful behind the scenes work was done, such as a series of new beds and bunk beds being made for the ABC dorm and a lot of rewiring and improving of electrical systems in the main accommodation block.

In early February, staff and volunteers returned to prepare the centre for re-opening amidst an early Losar and wild winter weather conditions. The motivation for the year was set as **consolidation** in all areas of the centre's running, to take care to make sensible improvements in what we are already doing before embarking on new projects. This follows several years of growth and expansion.

The first months of the season have been very active both in terms of the schedule and behind the scenes. Brother Dharmapala has lead a series of Introduction to Buddhism courses as well as an Intermediate course on the "Bodhisattva's Path to Awakening."

Our drop-in meditation classes have been extremely popular thanks to David Marks combining daily meditations and Lam Rim teachings. Plus, the main Gompa opened with a **boom** on April 9th as 90 students checked in for the Introduction to Buddhism course lead by Glen Svensson.

Behind the scenes, the re-opening of the main Gompa following the first stage of the Gompa Painting Project took great efforts from a large team of staff and volunteers.

I would like to take this opportunity to **thoroughly rejoice** in all the efforts of all those contributing to help Tushita happen and keep this ever greater Dharma wheel turning and benefitting students from all corners of the world.

Thank you so much!

Linda

The cover page shows our main Gompa after the completion of phase one of our Gompa painting project, which you can read more about on pages 8 & 9.

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**Linda is pictured here
co-ordinating the Gompa
Painting project with head
painter Pema Dawa - in the
depth of winter 2012-3!**

Hope Prevails at the P.O.C.

By *Venerable Kelsang*

Thanks to the pure kindness of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Lama Zopa Rinpoche, and to the generosity of Tushita and the IMI (*International Mahayana Institute*), we enjoyed an amazing Pre-Ordination Course (POC) in February 2013. The experience was like the appearance of a rainbow, in that many factors merged together beautifully, and not less than miraculously!



There had been many ups and downs in the planning of the course this year. At one stage the entire course and ordination with His Holiness in Dharamsala was cancelled, just prior to the intended starting date. As such, there were seven disappointed new and soon-to-be monks and nuns floating around India and Nepal, some who had travelled from Europe and the USA especially for the course. Prayers continued and then, thanks to the patience and determination of all the organizers, the POC was on again, despite the fact that we were a very small group with uncertain, ever-shifting ordination dates.

We were blessed with really wonderful teachers: Geshe Tsering Chopel and Venerable Tenzin Namdak. Geshe-la gave us a pristinely clear overview of the Four Noble Truths, Refuge, Renunciation, the 12 Links of Dependent Origination, the Grounds and Paths, and the monastic vows. Geshe Chopel is a very warm and encouraging teacher, and was attuned to the class. He gave plenty of time for questions and discussion, which was very helpful, as it was all we could do to keep up with the massive amounts of information being given every day. Geshe-la's relaxed presence and sense of humor were much appreciated, and his examples using "*Lobsang and Tashi*" provoked much laughter. Geshe-la's extraordinarily kind heart became more apparent with each day of the classes, and as one of the course participants expressed at the end: "*what Geshe-la gave to us is so worth much more than gold.*"

The leader of the POC, Venerable Namdak, is also a very inspiring teacher. He generously kept our days full with a well-organized and enjoyable schedule of classes, prayers, meditations, and discussion, patiently answering our lists of questions with very precise reasoning and depth of understanding. Each course participant had the opportunity to lead the morning *lam-rim* meditations, as well as other such helpful experiences for new sangha. Ven. Namdak's sharp mind, kind heart, and tireless Tibetan/English translation were received with much gratitude by the group, and we expressed the hope that he will be teaching much more in the future. It was also so helpful to spend time with other new sangha and to be able to share perspectives.

I think the highlight of the course was when it was announced to two of the POC participants, Yeshe and Kelsang, that they'd be able to take Gelong ordination with His Holiness the next day (*pictured right, with Ven. Namdak in the centre*). As at that stage the ceremony had been cancelled, they were no longer expecting anything. At that moment they looked like two of the most fortunate beings in all the worlds, it was so moving to see the way that their faces lit with such pure joy at the news!

Thank you to everyone directly and indirectly involved in this year's Pre-Ordination Course at Tushita. I hope that the benefits for all sentient beings will be vaster than the light of infinite suns!



Tushita would like to hugely rejoice in the tireless perseverance and dedication of Venerable Namdak and our SPC Venerable Kunphen who works for several months each year arranging the POC with HH the Dalai Lama's office, through all the manifestations of impermanence!

Asking for Directions



On the Dharma Path

A Regular Series of Questions and Answers with Tushita's Teachers

This issue: **GLEN SVENSSON**

Q: *Why should we have compassion or forgiveness for those who try to harm us? They don't deserve it!*

A: One of the main reasons we find it difficult or even unreasonable to have compassion for those who behave badly is because we wrongly fuse the person with their behaviour and end up seeing them as a 'bad person'. This is often referred to as 'cognitive fusion'. You won't generally find this term in Buddhist texts, however what it refers to is often discussed in various contexts within Buddhism. It is a term borrowed from psychology which I find very descriptive and clear.

So what exactly is cognitive fusion? It refers to mentally fusing two related things and making them one. In this context it refers to mentally fusing the agent with the action. It refers to identifying the agent with the action. And when we do that, problems often follow.

For example, if a person is acting in a bad or harmful way we often mentally fuse or identify the person with their behaviour and subsequently see them as a 'bad person'. If we do this it then becomes almost impossible to have compassion or forgiveness for this person. To try to have compassion or forgiveness for a 'bad person' feels like we are saying that their bad behaviour is OK. And of course their bad behaviour is not OK!

And once we see them as a 'bad person' it usually leads us to react in one of two ways, neither of which is very helpful. The first is that since we have fused the person with their behaviour, we often end up **attacking** the *person*, even though it is in fact their bad *behaviour* we don't like. Or alternatively, if we feel that attacking the person is not the right thing to do then we often end up **accepting** their bad behaviour in a passive, resentful way.

The solution is to not fuse or identify the person with their behaviour but rather to *distinguish* the person from their behaviour. In this way we see them as a '*person who has done a bad action*' rather than as a 'bad person'. We can then have compassion or forgiveness for the person and at the same time not accept their bad behaviour. And with a compassionate motivation we can address their bad behaviour without attacking the *person*. After all, that person is just like ourself in wanting to be happy and wanting to be free of suffering. And it is due to their confusion and mental afflictions, such as anger and attachment, that they engage in harmful behaviour.

Q: *But if we separate the person from their behaviour wouldn't that mean that they are not responsible for their actions?*

A: We need to *distinguish*, not separate or disassociate, the person from their actions. Both *identifying* the person with their actions and *disassociating* the person from their actions are wrong conceptions. Agent and action *are not* identical but they *are* related.





Q: *Is cognitive fusion the reason we often feel guilty or have low self-esteem?*

A: When we do or say something harmful, how do we see the situation? Don't we often identify with our harmful behaviour and think of ourselves as a '*bad person*'? If we do this then of course guilt and low self-esteem can easily follow. And guilt is not helpful since it focuses on the person and not the action, and it just paralyses us, making us feel bad.

Whereas if we do or say something harmful and we avoid identifying ourselves with our actions, then we can see ourselves as a '*person who has done a bad action*' rather than as a '*bad person*'. In this way then instead of feeling guilty or having low self-esteem we can have sincere regret for the bad behaviour and look at ways of correcting it.

Q: *So guilt and regret are not really the same thing?*

A: Guilt is based on cognitive fusion and is not helpful. It is focused on the person and doesn't really address the bad behaviour, whereas regret is *not* based on cognitive fusion and is helpful. Regret is focussed on the behaviour and leads us to looking at ways of overcoming that bad behaviour.

Q: *Is it also the reason we feel stuck in our lives?*

A: Whenever we identify ourselves with any of our habits we often feel stuck. For example, if we have a strong habit of getting angry and we identify with that, then we will simply see ourselves as an '*angry person*'. '*That's me and you better get used to it*'. It seems almost impossible for us to change.

Similarly, we often identify ourselves with our thoughts, emotions and memories. And often it is our *negative* thoughts, emotions and memories that we identify with most, leading us to see ourselves as a bad person, an angry person, a depressed person, a jealous person, a hopeless person, a weak person, a lazy person, and so on.

We are not our emotions. We are not our habits. We are not our thoughts. We are not our behaviours. We are not our memories. We are not even our personalities. These are all things which we *have*. We can't *be* something and *have* it at the same time. And as long as we identify with any of these things we feel stuck. When we understand that we *have* these things rather than *being* them then change is possible. For example, instead of seeing ourselves as an '*angry person*' we can see ourselves as a '*person who has a strong habit of anger*'. So rather than identifying with anger and hence making *anger* the subject, we can see anger as an object and thus something which we can change, something we can overcome.

Q: *But isn't cognitive fusion helpful when we identify with our positive actions?*

A: Even if we identify ourselves with our positive actions, this can potentially lead to problems. For example, let's say we were very generous in helping others. If we identify ourselves as a '*very generous person*' then this could lead to a puffed-up mind thinking we are special and that other people are not as good as us. Rather, we should focus on and rejoice in our positive actions.

Born in Australia, Glen's first contact with Buddhism was as a student on an Introduction to Buddhism course here at Tushita in 1995. He has since graduated from the 7-year Masters Program in Advanced Buddhist studies at ILTK in Italy and has been teaching at Tushita since 2008, where he has become one of our most popular guest teachers.



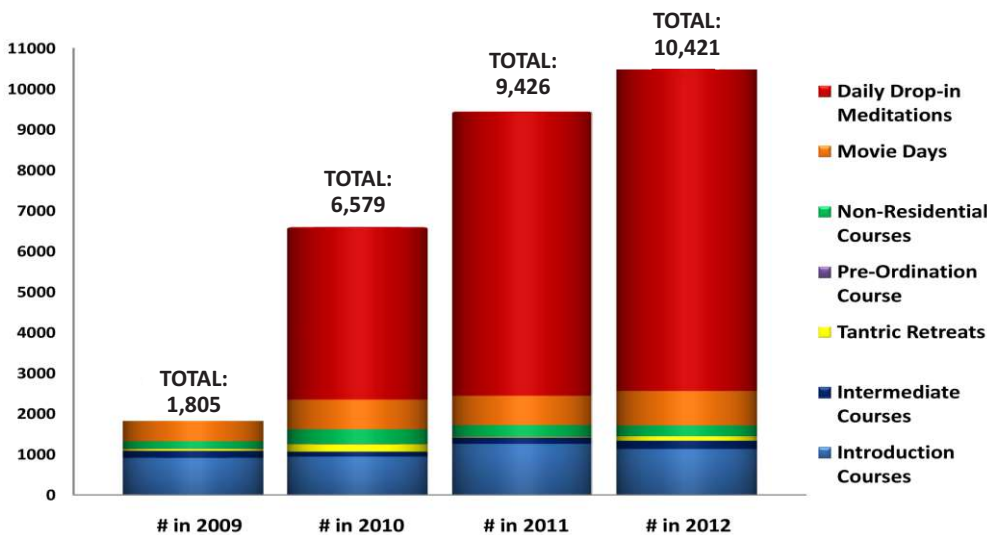
Gelug Mahamudra May, 2013

The 2012 Report



Another incredible year at Tushita, which continues to thrive and offer authentic, accessible Dharma teachings - in an increasingly beautiful environment!

Number of Students at Tushita from 2009 to 2012

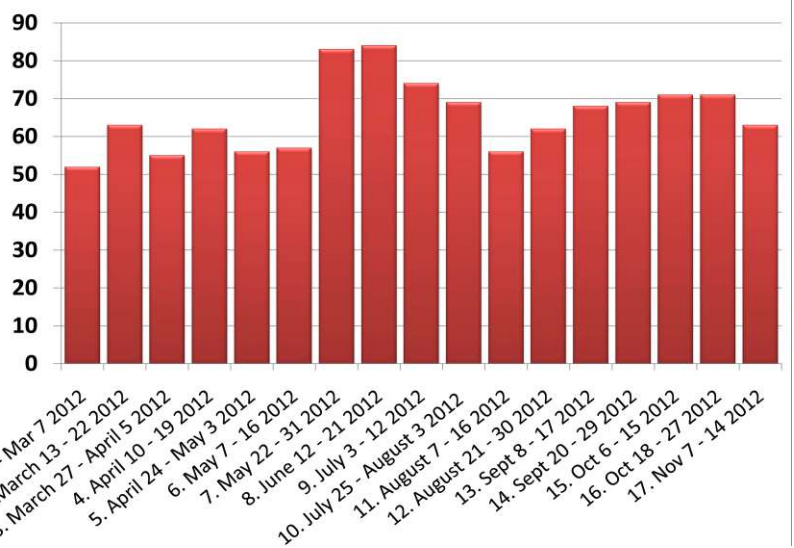


You can see that since we started keeping records in 2009, Tushita has grown *a lot*, particularly since we began to offer our daily guided meditation sessions in April 2010. In the past 4 years, our drop-in sessions have amassed more than 23,000 “cushion units”!

That’s to say that the same people often attend these sessions frequently, so it wouldn’t be accurate to say that this many *individuals* had attended, but our drop-in sessions are *definitely* well attended!

There have been more than 5,000 students on our residential courses over this period and clearly, Introduction to Buddhism courses continue to be the most popular in our *residential* programme, with 77% of our students taking part in them during 2012. The chart to the right shows a calendar of all 17 Introduction courses we held in 2012. The smallest course was the first of the year, attended by 52 students. May-June is our busiest season, with our largest course having 85 students.

Introduction to Buddhism Courses in 2012



Who Are Our Students?

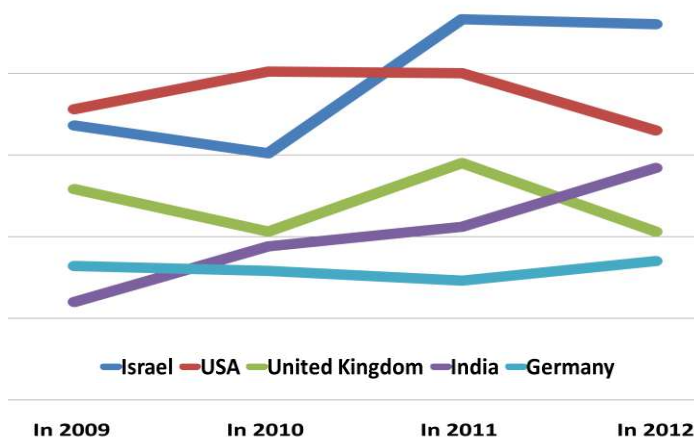
In the last 4 years, we've had students from **82 countries** on our residential courses!!

You can see the list of all 82 on our website, but all the nationality info we have space for here is in the form of a chart looking at how the demographics of our top 5 nationalities have changed since 2009:

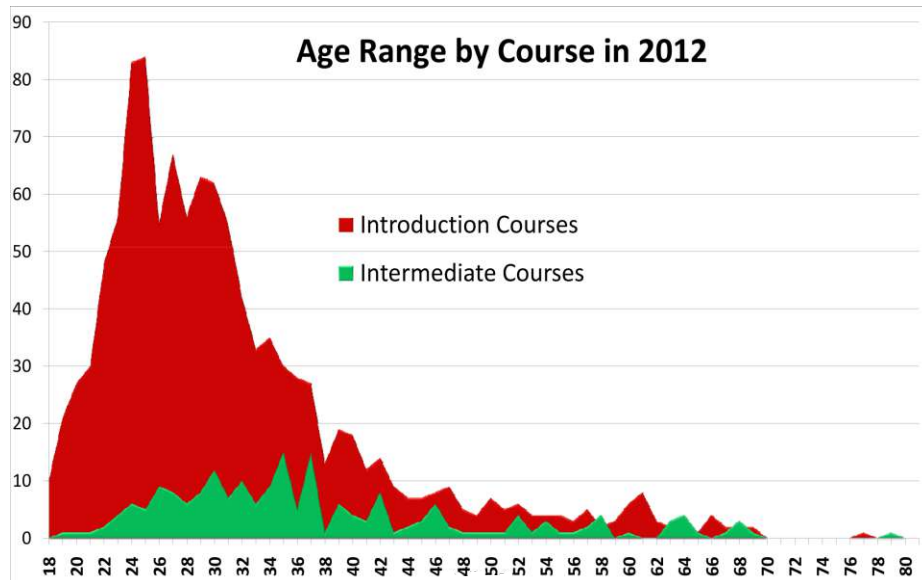
One of the most significant changes we've noticed over the past 4 years is the shift in national patterns of participation, primarily The Rise of India!!!

As you can see here, although Israel and the USA are still our highest national representations, there has been a gradual, but significant and sustained rise in numbers of Indian citizens on our courses. We're so happy that interest in Buddhism is blossoming within India itself, birthplace of Dharma!

Top 5 Nationalities at Tushita 2009 - 12



Age Range by Course in 2012



As you can see left, in 2012 we had students between the ages of 18 and 79! This has been almost exactly the same range and pattern of student ages in each year we've looked at. On our Intermediate Level courses (*those who have taken one of our Introduction courses, or equivalent, before*), there is a very even spread of age groups (from 19 - 79), while on our Introduction to Buddhism courses there is a huge peak in students in their 20s, the highest in 2012 being age 25.

59% of students learning about the foundations of Buddhism at Tushita in 2012 were aged under 30.

The gender balance has also remained steady throughout the past 4 years - there are always slightly more women than men on our courses (**58% Female, 42% Male**).

It seems that our aim of providing a conducive environment for anyone who has a genuine interest in Buddhism, regardless of age, gender, nationality, race, class or caste, is being fulfilled. All we can say in conclusion is:

REJOICE!!!



The Gompa Painting

Eight painters arrived on September 26th 2012 to get started on the great transformation of Tushita's main Gompa. In the preceding days, Tushita's housekeeping team had been extremely busy, carefully packing and storing everything in preparation (*pictured below*).



On the first day that the painters arrived, they helped us with the final packing up of our most precious Lama Tsongkhapa statue and the other statue cabinets (*pictured above centre*). We were struck by their agility and team work as they carefully climbed up and around the main statue and the cabinets. The air was full of anticipation for the much awaited project to start.

For the first 2 months the painters patiently prepared the background of the walls and the beams. The beams were prepared for mantras and verses with beautiful flower surrounds. A very detailed and stunning *shambu* design was painted around the top section of all the walls (*pictured below left and centre*). Once the *shambu* was complete, some of the painters started preparing the design for the Vajrasattva mandala, working from an image provided from Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche's collection (*pictured below far right*).



The Vajrasattva mandala took 3 months of very careful work to complete. This mandala has been painted in the largest ceiling section of the Gompa. Towards the end of the work, more and more painters were working altogether to finish the finer details of the artwork and it was an amazing sight to behold as they worked so closely and carefully together (*pictured below*).



Project *Lifts Off*!!

Although we had originally planned to have most of the ground floor ceiling mandalas painted, we later received advice to print these mandalas. Thus the Vajrasattva mandala is the only *painted* mandala at this stage. The printed mandalas were recently installed: 1000 armed Chenrezig, Tara, Medicine Buddha, the 16 Arhats, Namgyalma along with two chakra images. One chakra image which was first shown at Kopan nunnery and the other, the Wheel of the Meritorious Elephant Generating Power. The installation of the printed mandalas is pictured right, and the cover page shows these new mandalas in place.



The final mantras to be painted were the Five Powerful mantras on the main beams around Lama Tsongkhapa (*pictured below left*). The Five Powerful mantras are those of Mitrugpa, Stainless Pinnacle, Kunrig, Wish Granting Wheel and Namgyalma. These mantras free sentient beings from the lower realms.

The project is now moving to the exterior of the building. In the photos below centre and right, you can see work underway on the Gompa's main entrance archways, which are being filled with the 21 Taras and the 8 Medicine Buddhas. A later part of the project will involve the painting of four Highest Yoga Tantra mandalas inside the Gompa, on the ceiling above Lama Tsongkhapa.



It has been an extraordinary process to witness such a massive transformation to the main Gompa. It has been a multi-layered project to piece together Rinpoche's vast vision for Tushita's Gompa and see it gradually manifest. We hope and pray that many students and visitors will come and benefit from the painting work for many years to come.

The main Gompa re-opened its doors on April 9th 2013....
The number of people and the variety of skills that have contributed to completing the first phase of Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche's wishes is astounding.

*We would like to **hugely rejoice** in all the efforts of all who have helped thus far!*

We send the greatest thanks from the very bottom of our hearts to all sponsors for supporting this project thus far, and to all those who have contributed in whatever way, big or small. Above all, we would like to rejoice in **the tireless dedication of the Gompa painting team** (*pictured right*).



Merit Making Opportunities!

Over Spring/Summer 2013, the painters will be focusing on transforming the exterior: the main entrance, and the windows and pillars of Tushita's main Gompa. There are still several exciting sponsorship opportunities for those wishing to contribute to this great artwork for Tushita's Gompa, to help us fulfill Lama Zopa Rinpoche's advice in making the Gompa more and more meaningful, more and more beneficial.

Exciting Sponsorship Opportunities Still Available...



The Six Long Life Symbols

Will be painted to the left of the main doors. The six symbols that represent long life are: the old man, the tree, the stork, the deer, the mountain and water.

Sponsor One Long Life Symbol for **10,000 INR**
Sponsor all Six Long Life Symbols for **50,000 INR**



The Four Harmonious Friends

Elephant, Monkey, Rabbit, Bird will be painted outside, to the right of the main doors.

Sponsor One Friend for **15,000 INR**
Sponsor all Four Friends for **50,000 INR**

The Future Vision

- behold the further aspects yet to unfold...



The Wheel of Life will be painted and framed alongside a teaching by Lama Zopa Rinpoche,

on the pump house, next to the main Gompa kora path.

Inside the Gompa, there will be paintings of:

- The 5 Aspects of Lama Tsongkhapa to the right of Lama Yeshe's door,
- The Maitreya Pureland and the merit field for the wall behind our main altar.
 - Highest Yoga Tantra Mandalas for the 4 upper ceilings (sponsorship still available for 3 of the mandalas: *Gyalwa Gyatso, Guhjasamaja and Heruka (16 deities)*).

There will also be 2 framed paintings of merit field *dakas* and *dakinis*, which will hang above the ground floor Gompa windows.

Lama Zopa has advised that the yellow blocks above the main Gompa windows be painted with clouds, flowers and mantras.



Sponsor 1 set of window blocks for 12,000 INR
Sponsor 3 sets of window blocks for 36,000 INR

If you are interested in contributing to this project, contact Linda on director@tushita.info

The Lama Tsongkhapa Disciples Story

The Lama Tsongkhapa Disciple statues arrived at Tushita in May 2012. Fundraising began at the beginning of 2009 and took 2 ½ years to complete. The project was made possible thanks to 121 kind sponsors who supported the project. Since June 2011 we had been waiting with bated breath for the arrival of these most precious holy objects.

Each part was carefully unpacked and checked, as the statues had travelled all the way overland from Kathmandu, Nepal to Tushita (*the 1st image below*). In September 2012, as the main Gomba closed its doors to the public for the start of the Gomba Painting Project, a team of local builders set about extending the main altar where the new disciple statues would be placed (*pictured far right*).

We decided to wait until the most auspicious day for the statue filling, that day being Lama Tsongkhapa Day, December 8th 2012. The preparation, filling and blessing was done by monks from the Gyudmed Tantric College (*pictured below*).



The statues had been cleaned and prepared ready for the auspicious day. Rolls of microfilm of both the Four Dharmakaya relic mantra, and the Stainless Pinnacle mantra had been sent from the USA.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche emphasizes the importance of both of these in the filling of statues: “If you ever put 100,000 of the mantra on microfilm or on paper in a statue or stupa, then it's (the) most unbelievably powerful **“boom”**, internal and external boom, then internally it becomes Dharma for the mind, so it becomes very very powerful, so it can even be put in small statues or stupas, the technology helps to collect extensive merits.” (*Quote from Rinpoche for labelling a box containing microfilm of the Four Dharmakaya relic mantra in July 2010*).



As well as the microfilm rolls and the texts, the statues were filled with other precious objects such as, two blessed pills given to us by His Holiness Dalai Lama's palace, precious pills from the Men-Tse-Khang (*Tibetan Medical Institute*) and *mani* pills from His Holiness office; along with blessed earth from pilgrimage sites in India and Nepal.

The Gyudmed monks performed a blessing ceremony for the statues and they helped us arrange for special robes to be made for the statues. On one visit to Tushita, Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche had left a very special gold cloth which contains gold thread from the Jokhang Temple, Tibet, to be used for the Gomba. A piece of this cloth has been sown into the existing robes of our main Lama Tsongkhapa statue, as well as the new ones made for the disciples.

We hope to host a special inauguration ceremony for the 2 Disciples very soon, once the ceiling installation work for the mandala prints is finished in the main Gomba.

A Taste of Tushita

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING ON THE HOLY HILL?

SPECIAL GUESTS



Dagri Rinpoche gave teachings on "*Lojong: Seven Point Mind Training*", from August 31 - September 3, 2012. Rinpoche has conferred many Initiations here, but this was only the second time he has *taught* at Tushita. (Rinpoche is pictured above left, being greeted on his arrival by Assistant SPC Tenzin Pelza and Director Linda).

On November 6th 2012, the Buddhist festival day of Lhabab Duechen (*Buddha's Descent from Tushita*), Serkong Tsenshab Rinpoche gave Medicine Buddha commentary and Q&A to those who gathered in our Medicine Buddha Gompa (pictured above centre), the first time that Rinpoche has taught at Tushita - in his current incarnation!

Our old friend Venerable Thubten Chodron visited us on the 13th of November 2012, and gave a short talk to students on the November 7-14 Introduction to Buddhism course (pictured above right). We are always so delighted whenever she can find time in her busy schedule to visit us.

Our Nyung Nay Chenrezigs were so fortunate as to have their initiation conferred by Denma Locho Rinpoche over two days, May 8 & 9 2013. And extra added fortune - Geshe Kelsang Wangmo was the translator (pictured right).



TWO NEW DOGS - WISDOM AND HAPPINESS!

We only had "Great Compassion" until we adopted "Wisdom" in October 2012, and accepted "Happiness" into our lives in February 2013... And so now we have all three, more familiarly known by their Tibetan names: "Nying-je Chenmo", "Yeshe" and "Dekyi" - Tushita's canine sangha!

Nying-je has been our resident darling since she arrived as a battered and malnourished stray in 2005, but she has been very lonely since the death of her best friend Jangsem Kalu in October 2011. Enter Yeshe, spotted by teacher Ondy Willson and SPC Ven Kunphen in autumn 2012. Ondy reports: "*Yeshe started life in a tar barrel with 5 other pup siblings and her Mum. Some people took the other pups because they were 'pretty'. From the Himalaya Chai Shop, we watched her getting mangy and skinny and neglected. Ven. Kunphen gave her a home*". Yeshe is now healthy, beautiful and full of energy - and very much at home.

They were joined by another friend early in 2013, an abandoned shepharding dog of undetermined age who arrived, decided to stay and was subsequently named Dekyi. *In the photo to the right, Nying-je is the grey dog in the top right corner, Dekyi is to her left, and Yeshe is in the foreground.*





GOODBYE A-FRAMES, HELLO RETREAT HUTS!

On May 10th 2013, it felt like history was in the making when our three A-Frame retreat huts that were built in the mid-1970s started to be dismantled to make way for three beautiful new retreat huts to be built this autumn (the first stage of Tushita's Retreat Hut Project). The day began with a *sang* incense offering to pacify the elements and a look back at almost 40 years of service to retreatants at Tushita which the huts have provided.

Our Resident Teacher, Brother Dharmapala (*Uldis Balodis*), who did retreat in one of the huts in 1978, kindly spoke of his experiences. At that time, the Centre had only been running for 5 years and conditions were extremely basic. Brother Dharmapala recollected *"Water was brought down to me, not every day, just every second or third day. They would bring down a bucket of water and that I would use for everything: offering bowls, to flush the toilet, to wash my dishes, wash my clothes, wash myself. It was amazing... I learned how to be very economical with water."*

Brother Dharmapala and volunteers Fred and Maya took a last look around (*above centre*) before de-construction began (*above right*). Lama Yeshe is pictured *above left* in an A-frame in 1973. What foundations to build on!



EXTENDED DAILY MEDITATION SESSIONS

The 2013 season began with a wonderful surprise! Our old friend David Marks (*left*) returned to Tushita after 4 years, and offered to guide and teach here for a few months. David led an extended version of our daily drop-in guided meditation sessions with additional lam-rim teachings, from April to June 2013. He named these sessions *"Meditation & Teachings on the Buddhist Path to Peace"*. David's teachings have proved to be as powerful as ever, and from the first week of these events, attendance soared - the only problem has been finding enough cushions for everyone!

OBITUARY FOR VENERABLE NAMDROL

We were very sad to learn that Venerable Lobsang Namdrol, the longest-term resident of our monastic community and subject of the *"Our Mandala"* article in our Autumn/Winter 2012 Newsletter, passed away on January 13th 2013 at Drepung Monastery, Karnataka State, South India. He was 85 years old and had been in good health right up until his peaceful departure from this life.

Venerable Namdrol spent most winter breaks with family members at Drepung, and had just attended HH the Dalai Lama's teachings there from 30 November - 13 December 2012. A relative of Venerable Namdrol's told us:

"When an attendant went to check on him in the middle of the afternoon, Gen Namdrol-la was packing up his things as if he was ready to go and he mentioned that he had a pain in his side. An hour later Gen Namdrol passed away very peacefully in his room".

We have received any messages of condolence from old friends and former students, most of which remarked upon how Venerable Namdrol's beautiful smile lingered in their memories, years after they had left Tushita.



Our Mandala

A Series of Interviews with Members of Our Community

Penpa

I really don't like to talk about myself, and there isn't much I can tell you anyway because I know very little about my early life, about my parents, where or when I was born. So, I'm not sure how old I am - probably around 54, maybe older. Yes, it's possible that I could have been born around 1959, when the first Tibetan refugees started arriving in this area. I look Tibetan, so it seems that my parents must have been Tibetan. But apart from that I don't know anything about them, they were never in my life. I don't know their names, if they died or if they just left me at the Tibetan Children's Village (TCV) in Dharamsala, which is where my first memories are. I've never known, I will never know. It's just like that.

My arm? Yes, it's a little paralysed, my leg too. My whole left side, that's why I limp a bit. It has always been like that, I was probably born that way. But it's OK, it's not a big problem, it doesn't stop me. I have always worked and can mostly do the same things as others. Some people complain about small difficulties, this isn't a big deal.

I was moved around a lot when I was a child. TCV was just beginning then and they didn't have the facilities to look after us all, so the Indian Government helped and we were sent to residential schools all around Himachal Pradesh, maybe further. I was transferred to 2 or 3 different places, the last one being Dalhousie, where I stayed until I left school when I was about 14 years old. Yes, I suppose it was difficult, but TCV and the Indian Government looked after me, what would have happened to me without them? I'm very grateful and I love India very much, especially Hindi movies and music!

After I left school I came back to McLeod Ganj and worked in restaurants and guest houses. No, I never got married, you need too much money to get married! I started working at Tushita in 1997 and have been here ever since. I'm the longest serving staff member now. I've worked with many different staff and Directors and have seen many changes.



In my first year I was the nightwatchman, then I changed to day-time work, cleaning toilets, sweeping, helping organise the laundry, things like that. I just do what needs to be done, so my job has changed a lot over the years. In general, I take care of the property. That can be difficult because the monkeys destroy everything. For a few years I was in charge of the water supply. That's a hard job because of the shortages and Tushita getting so much bigger, needing more. Water and monkeys are the biggest problems; not enough of one and too many of the other!

The thing I love most about Tushita is the dogs. I've had many favourite dogs here over the years: Mani, Choggu, and now Yeshe. She's only been here since October last year, but I love her very much (*Penpa is pictured with Yeshe, left*).

My chai shop? It's true, some people remember me as the Tushita chai shop man, but actually it was only open for about 3 years or so, before the old Gompa was torn down. There isn't a place for it in the new building but that's OK, Tushita is different now, so many more students are coming to do retreat here now that there's more space in the new building and that's very good. If they didn't come, Tushita would close and we wouldn't have work. It isn't always easy, but I'm happy to see Tushita so busy.

Meet the People of Tushita!

What's On this Season?

IN THE SECOND HALF OF 2013

INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHISM COURSES

HH the Dalai Lama teaches locally: June 1 - 4!!!

JUNE 6 - 15

JUNE 20 - 29

HH the Dalai Lama teaches locally: July 1 & 2!!!

JULY 4 - 13

JULY 18 - 27

AUGUST 6 - 15

HH the Dalai Lama teaches locally: Aug 25 - 27!!!

SEPTEMBER 6 - 15

HH the Dalai Lama teaches locally: Sept 3 - 5!!!

SEPTEMBER 19 - 28

OCTOBER 7 - 16

OCTOBER 22 - 31

NOVEMBER 4 - 13

NOVEMBER 18 - 25 (8-DAY)

HH the Dalai Lama teaches locally: Dec 2 - 4!!!

During the teaching days of our Introduction to Buddhism courses, experienced teachers explain Buddhist philosophy and meditation from a modern perspective. Topics include: the mind and emotions, karma, rebirth, love and compassion, and the nature of reality. The daily schedule combines teachings with various styles of meditation and discussion groups.

10-day courses end with a two-day intensive meditation retreat

To give you the chance to familiarize yourself with and gain insight into the topics that were covered in the teachings. Most importantly, you can learn how to apply these Buddhist techniques to increase peace and happiness in your daily life.

PLEASE NOTE:

Tushita is closed every December & January for our Annual Winter Break.

WE ARE HAPPY TO OFFER THE FOLLOWING COURSES AND RETREATS

NON-RESIDENTIAL COURSE SHAMATHA MEDITATION RETREAT

with the Four Immeasurables

*2-day Silent Meditation Courses led by **Glen Svensson***

MAY 29 & 30

For those who have taken previously one of our 10-day Introduction to Buddhism courses (or equivalent).

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL COURSES

WISDOM & COMPASSION

Seven Point Mind Training

JUNE 7 - 15

*with **Glen Svensson***

The practice of *lojong* or "mind training" enables us to fully develop these qualities, to awaken our mind and to open our heart.

WHAT IS THE MIND?

Lo-Rig (Awareness and Knowledge)

JUNE 17 - 29

*with **Geshe Kelsang Wangmo***

During this intensive study course we will examine and discuss the nature of the mind, in order to gain the control we need to transform the mind.

9-DAY SHAMATHA RETREAT

OCTOBER 23 - 31

*with **Glen Svensson***

Shamatha is the practice of developing single-pointed concentration - a calm, clear and focused mind. This retreat will be restricted to 25 people maximum.

ANNUAL TANTRIC RETREATS

These are most suitable for those who have taken refuge and received the appropriate Initiation. However this year's Medicine Buddha & Chenrezig retreats are also suitable for those who are not yet ready to make a commitment to a Buddhist path.

MEDICINE BUDDHA RETREAT

OCTOBER 8 - 16

Led By

Venerable Tony Beaumont

CHENREZIG/TONG-LEN RETREAT

with an Introduction to Tantra

NOVEMBER 5 - 13

*Led By **Jimi Neal***

GREEN TARA RETREAT

NOVEMBER 16 - 25

*Led By **Jimi Neal***

The Green Tara retreat remains suitable only for established Buddhists practitioners.

*Please Note: All phenomena are subject to change!!
To check current information, see our very informative website:*

www.tushita.info

Ongoing Drop-In Events

From February to November

DAILY GUIDED MEDITATION

Monday - Saturday

9:30 - 10:30am

Led by an experienced student, followed by an optional Q & A. All welcome, no need to register!



OUR EXCELLENT LIBRARY

Monday - Saturday

(Office Hours)

We welcome you to our excellent library, with books and items for loan and sale.



MOVIE DAYS

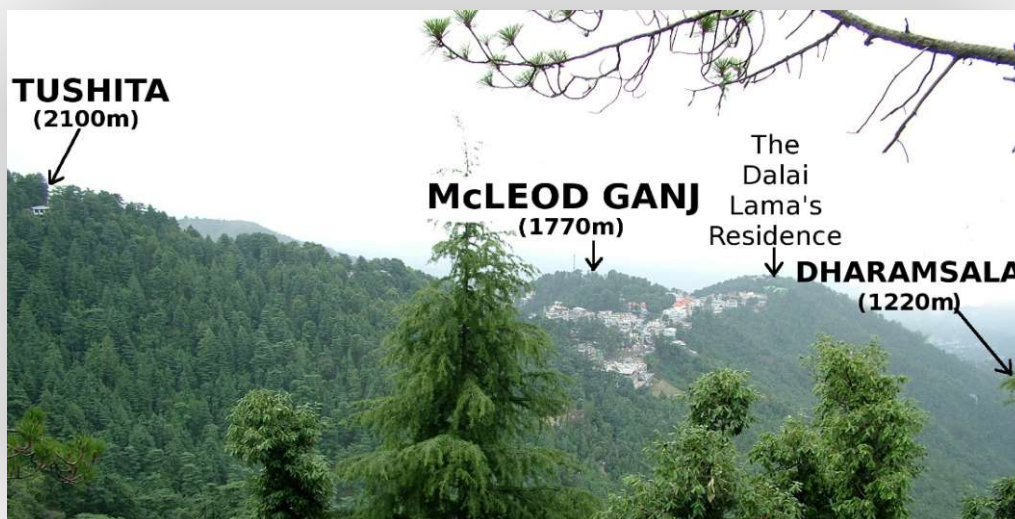
Mondays & Fridays at 2pm

On Mondays & Fridays at 2pm we screen movies and documentaries of Buddhist interest, followed by chai and optional discussion. You don't have to register, just come and enjoy!

On Mondays, we show 2 titles from the FPMT's "Discovering Buddhism" series, while on Fridays we show a variety of Dharma movies.

Titles we often show include: "The Unmistaken Child", the documentary tracking the discovery of Geshe Lama Konchog's reincarnation; "Kundun", Martin Scorsese's bio-pic of the early life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama; "Brilliant Moon", a beautiful documentary about Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche; "Cave in the Snow", a documentary about the 12-year Himalayan retreat of British Nun, Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo, and many more.

See our online calendar of events for specific schedule information.



We hope you can join us soon on the blessed hill!

CONTACT INFORMATION

TUSHITA MEDITATION CENTRE

McLeod Ganj,
Dharamsala,
Himachal Pradesh,
India 176219

Phone:
(+91) 8988 160988

**Office & Library
Opening Hours:**
9:30 - 11:30am
a break for lunch, then...
12:30 - 4pm
(Closed Sundays)

Or visit our very
informative website:

www.tushita.info

