

## Nurturing Seeds into a Blooming Garden

### Message from Lama Konchok Sonam

In our previous classes, we talked about the importance of being kind and caring to everyone and how we should see everyone as our friends. This month we will learn and practice compassion. What is compassion? We need to have Bodhi mind that includes a kind heart to care about others and always wish others to be well and happy. We need to have a compassionate heart too in wanting others to not only be well and happy, but at the same time to be free from unhappiness and suffering. When you are compassionate, you aspire to make an improvement of the circumstance to help others to be free from suffering. When we see someone in pain, even if we cannot help him or her to stop the pain, at least we must have the wish that, "Oh how I wish this person is free from pain!". This type of aspiration is compassion and everyone can easily do it. There are other situations we can practice compassion too. Like when we see an animal injured or someone is hurt, we seek help to rescue them. This is also compassionate practice. Being kind and being compassionate are the essence of Buddha's teaching and wisdom. When we have these positive qualities, we will feel happy and be free from suffering too.

### Month of Compassion

"If you want others to be happy, practice **compassion**.  
 If you want to be happy, practice **compassion**."  
 - H.H. The 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama



"For those who wish to attain Buddhahood,  
 do not study many Dharmas.  
 Only learn one.  
 What is that?  
 It is great **compassion**.  
 For those who have great compassion, it  
 will be like having all holy teachings of  
 Buddha in their hands."  
 - Buddha Shakyamuni

### Ask the Lama

LBS: Why do we meditate?



Lama Sonam: In nature, our mind is like pure, crystal clear and calm water. But due to our ego and ignorance, our wild mind processes a lot of thoughts - happy thoughts, sad thoughts and even neutral thoughts like what are we going to eat for dinner tonight. These thoughts are like sand or glittering particles in the water. When our mind is full of thoughts, the water which represents our mind becomes muddy, which means we get emotional easily and cannot have a calm mind. Meditation allows us to just rest and relax our mind, allowing the particles to settle. The longer and frequent we meditate, our mind will become clear and calm again once the thoughts settle; just like after the particles and sediments settle, the water becomes pure, clear and calm again. With a clear, calm and pure mind, we will have true happiness in our mind and we can think clearly.

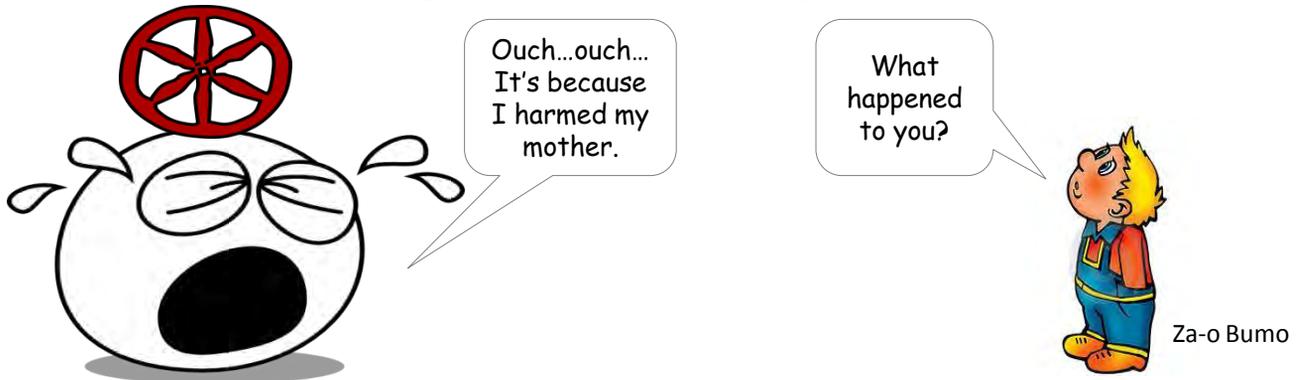
*(This is a column specifically for LBSs to ask questions about Buddha-Dharma. If you have any questions, please email us or drop off your questions to the "Ask the Lama" jar during class. We would invite Lama Sonam and other Buddhist teachers to answer selected questions.)*

## Compassion Liberates Za-o Bumo

Once upon a time ago, in the city of Varanasi in India, there was born a child whose father, a sea captain, died during one of his ocean journeys in search of precious gems. His mother never told him the truth of his father's profession, fearing that he, too, would wish to go to sea and might be drowned there. The child was very respectful to his mother, but one day he learned the truth, and announced to his mother that he would go to sea.

The child pleaded, *"Mother, I wanted to follow dad's footsteps to become a sea captain."* Holding him by the feet, the mother tearfully pleaded, *"My dear son, please don't leave. It would be dangerous for you to be a sea captain."* But he only became angry, kicked her in the head and left. His mother prayed that he would not suffer the negative karma of having harmed her.

During one sea journey, the son's ship was destroyed by crocodiles. But he managed to float to dry land where he was greeted by beautiful goddesses who offered him food, drink, rich garments and wealth. Thereafter, wherever he wandered he met yet more goddesses who offered him ever more lavish hospitality. Finally, he arrived at the "City of Iron", but as he entered, the city gates immediately locked behind him. He passed through several further doors, and at last he beheld the terrifying spectacle of a huge being with a wheel of iron turning on the crown of his head. This creature was being nourished by the pus oozed from his head. Za-o Bumo (for that was the man's name) asked the cause of the great being's obvious misery.



The creature answered, *"It is because I harmed my mother."* Immediately, Za-o Bumo realized that fate had brought him to the City of Iron for he, too, had harmed his mother by kicking her.

From the sky, a voice announced, *"Liberate him who is tied, and tie him who is not tied."* Instantly, the being with the wheel of iron was liberated while Za-o Bumo now suffered the horrific pain of the iron wheel turning on the crown of his own head.

He asked, *"How long will this wheel turn on my head?"* The voice in the sky replied that the wheel would remain fixed to his head for sixty thousand years. Za-o Bumo then asked whether any other beings would suffer the same fate. The answer was that whoever had harmed his mother would suffer similarly. Through his sufferings, Za-o Bumo acquired great compassion for other sentient beings.

He proclaimed, *"I will assume the suffering of this turning wheel for all those who share this karma."* Immediately, Za-o Bumo was freed as the wheel of iron arose in the air the distance of a tala (palm) tree. He died and was reborn in the Tushita heaven. Then Lord Buddha revealed that he was Za-o Bumo in a previous life. By giving his earnings to his mother (which he had done before finding out her deceit), he found enjoyment. By kicking his mother he experienced suffering. But by cultivating compassion, he had been freed of suffering.

## Parents' Corner

[Parenting is a challenging task especially in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. We intend to share some parenting suggestions given by various Buddhist practitioners and teachers via this Parents' corner in our newsletters.]

**Q:** How can I practice Dharma in a day-to-day basis as I am always busy and I have to also take care my children and family; I really do not have free time to do prayers and to study Dharma?

Lama Konchok Sonam: You can easily practice the six-perfections (generosity, discipline, patience, joyous effort, meditative concentration and wisdom) by taking care of your children and your family.

We try to give the best things to our children (and family members) putting them first before ourselves. This is the practice of **generosity**.

We abstain from all rude and disrespectful behaviors to our family in particular the elderly. This is the practice of **morality**.

No matter how tired or stressed we are, we tend to the need of our children and family members, especially when our children misbehave, we do not lose our patience and continue to provide the best for them. This is the practice of **patience**.

We work hard to offer the best to our children and family, attending to their every need even if they may not appreciate us or when we are unwell, we continue to care for them, this is the practice of **joyous effort**.

No matter what distraction and obstacles we face in life, we focus on providing the best to care for our children and family, this is the practice of **meditative concentration**.

Lastly by applying the first five perfections practice, we gain the understanding of self-less when serving others. This is the practice of **wisdom**.

*Editorial note: With pure motivation when taking our children and family members, treating them as one of the sentient beings we are serving without attachment and bias, we are accumulating merits and wisdom. We will share more about this in the next newsletter.*



**Congratulations & Thank You**



**Happy Birthday and congratulations to the following Little Bodhi Seed** whose birthday falls in January:

1. Tenzin Mulung-Labrang

We also **thank** Kristen Saidla, Kristin Mullen and Thinleg Ghapontsang for donating to our program.

Green Tara prayers will be dedicated to our birthday Bodhi Seed and donors and donors' families during the month.

## Recap of the Third LBS Dharma Class & Year-End Family Party

The third Dharma class was held on 20 December 2014. Lama Sonam commenced the class with silent meditation and some breathing yoga exercise. He then talked about “friendship”, introduced the word “sangha” and talked more on “Taking Refuge” and the “Three Jewels”. Before the class adjourned, Lama Sonam presented all Bodhi Seeds each a blessed hand mala (rosary) that were offered by an anonymous sponsor. The malas had been blessed by Jowo Rinpoche and all Buddhas & Bodhisattvas in the shrine room for one month prior the event. We were also thankful to have invited our sangha member, Deb Ogden, a professional artist to come teach us make special beautiful masks. A year-end family party was followed immediately after class. We thank Kristen, Thinlay and Kelsang for bringing delicious food and to Mary for helping with food preparation for the party. After lunch the adults enjoyed a play of “The Prince Saving the Swan” story self-directed and performed by the Bodhi Seeds. Great job Bodhi Seeds! We also had a birthday cake-cutting to celebrate the birthdays of five Bodhi Seeds who celebrated their birthdays in December.



**Sacred Mask-making in action.** Not only the Bodhi Seeds enjoyed this activity, even the adults liked it too.



**Dharma Class.** Parents and Bodhi Seeds leaning Dharma together. How wonderful! A-La-La-Ho!

The year 2014 was a wonderful and memorable year for us. This was the year where the Little Bodhi Seeds (LBS) program was established. We had three special events (Learning Party and Back-to-School Party in the summer and Year-End Family Party in the winter), an Open House as well as three LBS Dharma classes held in 2014. Two LBS publications (Kind & Compassion; and Buddha and His teachings in a Nutshell) as well as five issues of the LBS monthly newsletters were published and distributed free. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have contributed and supported our program one way or another in particular special thanks to Lama Sonam, the LBS team, parents and last but not least our Little Bodhi Seeds. We rejoice in everyone's good merits! May all benefit from the LBS program!



**Year-end Family Party.** We rejoice in all the good merits and good karma everyone has done in the year, both worldly and spiritual aspects. May our virtues benefit others.



## LBS Dharma Class Calendar

**17 January 2015**

### Theme:

Compassion

Topic: Who is

Buddha? What did he teach? Part 4 –

The Four Immeasurables

21 February 2015

21 March 2015

18 April 2015

16 May 2015

20 June 2015

10 am to 12 pm

## Dharma Game Time

*Everyday is a new beginning. We can perform this little “game” every morning the moment we wake up before we go to school or enjoy our holiday/weekend. Try this everyday, you may add more positive and good thoughts in all the activities you do too. Be creative. This game is suitable for adults and children. It’s good for the parents to do together with their children – make it a family Dharma game time.*

Every morning when we **wake up**, we think, *“How fortunate I am today to be able to see my family and friends. I will make good use of my time today to be kind and compassionate and not have negative thoughts.”*

When you **eat and drink**, think *“How I wish everyone has food and drink. I wish to share the food and drink I am enjoying now with everyone.”*

At night **before you sleep**, think *“I rejoice in all the good thoughts and good actions I have done today. For all the negative thoughts such as anger, jealousy or greed that I have done today, I am determined not to do it again.”*

### Little Bodhi Seeds (LBS) Club free membership

Interested to sign up your child for our LBS programs? Membership is free. Sign up your child today at [littlebodhiseeds@yahoo.com](mailto:littlebodhiseeds@yahoo.com)