



RANGJUNG YESHE INSTITUTE

NEWSLETTER - FALL 2015



NEPAL EARTHQUAKE: HOW THE MONASTERY AND RYI RESPONDED

Just before noon on April 25, 2015, Nepal was hit by a 7.8 magnitude earthquake that triggered a series of tremors across the Himalayan region. Numerous aftershocks occurred including a second major quake just two weeks later. Tragically, over 9,000 people lost their lives and more than half a million homes were destroyed. Displaced people took shelter wherever they could including in tented camps across the fourteen hardest hit districts. Even today,

rows and clusters of tents can be seen in many of the open fields in the Kathmandu valley.

Immediately following the first quake, Ka-Nying Shedrub Ling Monastery opened its gates to all those seeking practical help, medical treatment and comfort. Tarpaulins were set up to sleep under, toilets dug, and food prepared by the monks for hundreds of people. RYI played its part by helping to track down missing persons, purchasing

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provisions, and setting up communications and medical stations. By the end of day one, over 500 people were camping out on the grounds of the monastery or on the tennis courts of the near-by Hyatt Regency Hotel. Help was also extended into the local community. RYI's Nepali language instructor, Andy Krakower, spent days helping friends and neighbors to safely evacuate their homes while BA student, Joel Hardin, dispensed first aid at the monastery's main camp for almost two weeks.

Once the main camps at the monastery had been established, emergency response teams of monks, nuns and volunteers led by Phakchok Rinpoche began to prepare the first of the monastery's numerous relief missions to affected communities. Food and medical supplies were purchased, trucks hired and, within two days, the first relief convoy set out for Sindhupalchowk district where over ninety percent of all buildings had been destroyed. The courage shown by this team led directly to several lives being saved

and many others being treated for injuries and supplied with food and medicines.

The monks proved highly effective at identifying where help was needed most, many of them having spent their early years in the worst affected districts. Phone calls to family members and friends provided reliable damage assessments and requests for urgently needed supplies. Monks from each concerned district then set off on motorcycles to make sure that target areas could be reached following which trucks were loaded and dispatched with monks and volunteers to distribute the supplies. The arrival at the monastery within a few days of specialist rescue teams and medical supplies from Malaysia, Singapore, and India allowed much more to be done including re-supplying the front line Dhulikhel Hospital which was working around the clock and running out of supplies.

Within two weeks, as the need for immediate disaster relief changed to helping survivors rebuild their lives, the monastery began



supplying construction materials—including corrugated sheeting for roofs—to assemble temporary shelters and rebuild homes. Over forty missions of this type have taken place to date.

More RYI volunteers stepped up to help the monastery's senior monks in these missions. Joe LaRose, RYI's summer Sanskrit professor, flew in from Canada to assist despite his classes having been cancelled. The institute's Administrative team worked tirelessly to ensure an adequate flow of funds while MA student Joseph Faria and many others joined supply missions. And survivors also showed extraordinary fortitude. As Joel Hardin explains, "Everyone was helping. I saw a woman of about seventy years old carrying twelve tin sheets in a roll weighing about fifty kilograms in a sling supported from her forehead walking the entire seven or eight hour journey to her village. It was a real honor to work with everyone—all the monks and volunteers!"

Funding for all these supply efforts, which will continue into 2016, was made possible by the extraordinary generosity of people living in Boudhanath and Kathmandu and by supporters around the world who donated freely through Shenpen, Shedrub Development Fund, and the Chokgyur Lingpa Foundation.

Special fundraising events organized by RYI's alumni included charity dinners, film screenings, silent auctions and talks to schools and churches. Other notable successes include charity concerts performed by the monastery's chant master Lama Tenzin and other renowned performers in Vienna and New York. Forthcoming events include a celebrity charity auction organised by academy award winning singer and actress Cher in Beverly Hills, California. It is astonishing how much everyone worked together to help those in need, offering labor, time, money, and kindness. Our sincere thanks to all!

NEW SUMMER INTENSIVE COURSE SUPPORTS BA STUDENTS

RYI continues to create opportunities for new and returning students to succeed in its BA program. This summer, a new intensive course was launched to help non-native English speaking students--particularly those from South Asian and the Himalayan region--be better prepared for their BA classes.

Entitled Academic English and Methods, this course was offered to prospective and current BA students wishing to benefit from an improved academic grounding in English language and higher academic study skills.

The new course was taught in three sections. Section one focused on critical reading, grammar, English as a Second Language (ESL), and in-class practice reading academic articles typically found in BA courses. The second section addressed the process of academic paper writing, exploring the attributes of good research papers, and helping students structure and prepare such papers. This section also helped students gain experience with oral presentations through in-class discussions and by making research presentations in class.

Finally, the third, and perhaps most theoretical section, covered two topics: an introduction to critical thinking, and an introduction to the theory of knowledge. This section touched upon logic, reasoning, and metacognition--pondering knowledge itself and answering challenging questions such as, "How do you know what you know?" and "What is the value of your knowledge?"

Using examples drawn from courses in the BA program and directly from students' own experiences, the summer course provided an introduction to international academic values, creativity, and high-level thinking skills. Instructors guided students beyond the common practice of memorizing and repeating content through processes of synthesizing, evaluating, and analyzing materials in order to create quality written works of their own.

The six students who successfully completed the summer course will now continue honing their skills by taking follow-up courses addressing similar topics during the 2015/16 academic year. Encouragingly, classroom instructors already report improved student comprehension and confidence in writing and giving oral presentations in English.

Subject to satisfactory enrollment this course is set to run again in the summer of 2016.

"I learned about writing reflection papers, research papers, and also making oral presentations. In addition, I got an opportunity to revise grammar skills. I think these classes will be beneficial to those students who have similar problems to me."

Lhakpa Dolma Lama, from Nubri, Nepal



STUDYING BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY AT RYI



The core of RYI's study program is its approach to teaching Buddhist philosophy. Students aren't just taught *about* how monastics study key philosophical and practice texts, they study these texts themselves--with monastic professors--in the same way they are studied in the Tibetan monastic college. In this way, students have the rare opportunity to experience the traditional Buddhist approach to scholarship.

When you combine this experience with classes taught by Western scholars that explore the historical origins of said texts, examine the development of sects and schools, and trace the ideas in these texts through Asia into other parts of the world, a recipe for a deep, rich, and satisfying learning experience is created.

Ted Alexander, a research affiliate visiting from UC Berkeley, USA, has had a fair amount of experience studying at Western educational institutions and feels that

studying at RYI is unlike other experiences he's had in other educational contexts. *"What's unique about RYI is the degree to which they're realizing the possibility of integrating Western academic methods and protocols with the traditional monastic style of education."* For Ted, it has been tremendously beneficial to his academic aspirations to experience first-hand how the monastic style of education differs significantly from the Western academic style.

Since most of RYI's students are not monastics, one of the benefits of combining these two approaches is that students develop a firm grounding in the traditional teachings at the same time that they learn to question and investigate using the approaches of the modern academy. These are skills will be highly sought-after in their future studies or in the workplace.

"RYI is a banquet of resources for people wanting to pursue scholarship in Buddhist Studies!"

Ted Alexander, visiting research affiliate, UC Berkeley, USA

TSADRA/RYI COLLABORATION - RELEASE OF NEW APP FOR ONLINE LEARNING

EDHARMA COURSES



A new app called *eDharma Course Series* launched on September 12, 2015. The result of a fruitful collaboration between RYI and Tsadra Foundation, it features content from RYI's online learning courses in an attractive, state-of-the-art format. The app includes intuitive navigation schemes, rich content collected from both the Tibetan monastic and Western academic traditions, and a library function to keep track of each course purchased.

The app itself is free and includes a number of Tibetan language resources for textual study. After downloading to an iOS or Android device, users can purchase the first course in the series, *Distinguishing the Middle from Extremes* (Skt. *Madhyāntavibhāga*) for \$39.99. This text is one of the celebrated Five Treatises of Maitreya, a collection of texts explaining the essential elements



of the Mahāyāna, or Great Vehicle, path. *Distinguishing the Middle from Extremes* explains the basic principles of all three vehicles to liberation, and the distinctive features of the Great Vehicle in particular. This is especially relevant to students currently studying at RYI since a course on this text is currently being taught by Khenpo Gyaltsen.

The *eDharma Course Series* app is designed to guide interested students through a self-study experience of pivotal philosophical texts in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition as a means to deepen their engagement with study and practice of the Dharma. Intuitive functionality brings rich textual content to life



through bi-lingual, interactive outlines, video and audio teachings, attractive infographics, evaluations to test one's understanding of the course material, and more. Through the power of modern media and the Internet, this app is the first of its kind, supporting

courses which combine recorded video teachings with ancient root texts and their commentaries in both Tibetan and English. Thus, students receive direct access to a living wisdom tradition of Mahāyāna Buddhism right from their hand-held device!

Download the free app



GOOGLE PLAY FOR ANDROID



APPLE STORE FOR iOS

PLEASE VISIT: WWW.RYI.ORG/EDHARMA-COURSES

UPCOMING COURSES...

Additional courses currently in production for the app are the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* (*Distinguishing Phenomena from their Intrinsic Nature*), Śāntideva's *Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra* (*The Way of the Bodhisattva*) with commentary by Kunzang Pelden, and Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (*Root Verses of the Middle Way*), with commentary by Mabja Jangchub Tsöndrū. Stay tuned for release dates of these courses!



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STUDY ABROAD AT RYI



A few of RYI's study abroad students

In an average four years of higher education, about ninety percent of US American college and university students stay within their comfort zones; they do not study abroad. Of the ten percent that do, UK, Italy, and Spain are the top destinations. Rarely does a student choose Nepal as a study abroad destination, but when he does, he is rewarded with an experience that can alter the way he thinks about himself in the world.

"My time at CBS--including the classes taken, the people met, and the broader Tibetan-Nepali cultural milieu in which I lived--was the single most indispensable experience of my young career."

Boston College Study Abroad Student

RYI's relationship with various sending schools has grown since fall 2004 when the first study abroad students from Boston College (BC) sat in a beginning colloquial Tibetan class. To date, a total of thirty-eight Boston College students have taken part in the exchange. One student returned to complete his MA in Buddhist Studies

and has gone on to a PhD program in the US. RYI has also hosted a number of BC graduate students and alumni during their Fulbright scholar year.

Since then, students from Humboldt State, East Tennessee State, and Emory Universities; Universities of Vienna, Leipzig Lausanne, and Hamburg; and Middlebury College have experienced living with host families, learning Tibetan and Nepali languages, studying with outstanding Western scholars of Buddhist Studies, and wrestling with Buddhist philosophical concepts with learned khenpos and lopons.

Exchange has been the focus of RYI's study abroad ventures. "Shouldn't a modern education include travelling to see how others live, extending ourselves to examine our full capabilities and seeking the most profound insights into the human condition? A semester studying at RYI will deliver on each of these counts. Why would the open-minded and enquiring student *not* come?" - RYI's Principal Greg Whiteside

RYI continues to offer students a rich cultural experience living in Nepal in addition to exposure to the study and practice of a living Buddhist tradition in the context of academic study. Watch this space in the upcoming newsletter issues to read more about the individual study abroad student experience.

RYI ALUMNI - WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

KRISHNA GOPAL SINGH -- BACHELOR OF ARTS AND MASTER OF ARTS IN BUDDHIST STUDIES GRADUATE



Krishna Gopal Singh

After retiring from a long, busy career as a maintenance engineer for Nepal Airlines, Krishna Gopal Singh became interested in Buddhism in 1990. He began attending teachings by Sri Dar Rana, a prominent Nepali Buddhist teacher. Krishna tried to understand what he said each week, and read some Buddhist books to supplement the teachings. His interest grew, and he found himself looking for a deeper level of meaning. Coming from a Hindu family, he met with some criticism, but continued his inquiry all the same.

He was introduced to Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche at some point around 1992 and began to attend Saturday teachings at Ka-

nying Shedrub Ling Monastery. One week, RYI's founder, Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche, said, "First you have to understand something, then you have to practice." Intrigued by Rinpoche's advice, he decided to try it out.

Rangjung Yeshe Institute held its first classes in 1997 and Krishna was one of the first students. There were twenty-five all together at that time, studying twelve hours a day. Thomas Doctor and Heidi Köppl were the translators. Krishna studied slowly over twelve years, eventually earning an MA in Buddhist Studies in 2010.

These days, Krishna quietly practices what he learned in all his years of study.

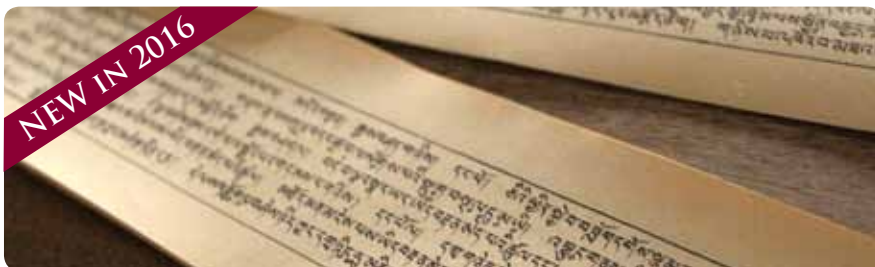
"I am trying to quiet my mind slowly. I am so lucky to have studied at RYI and, by Rinpoche's blessing, understand something. Now the disturbing emotions have come down a bit, but it's taking a very long time."

Krishna Gopal Singh

"I'm seventy now," Krishna explains, "And maybe in five or ten years, I won't be here anymore. I want to settle my mind now."



NEW FOR SUMMER 2016: INTERMEDIATE CLASSICAL TIBETAN



RYI will offer Intermediate Classical Tibetan for the first time during this coming summer's intensive programs. Equivalent to the full second year of classical Tibetan, the course offers six academic credits. For students wishing to quickly develop proficiency in classical Tibetan, the addition of this course to the summer offerings means that three years of classical Tibetan study can be accomplished in just two academic years (one year of study in fall and spring; the equivalent of a second year of study during the summer; and a third year of study in the following fall and spring).

Students who join the course should already be familiar with the fundamentals of Tibetan grammar and vocabulary (the eight cases and their associated particles, common grammatical structures and verb tenses, plus knowledge of Buddhist terms

and vocabulary). Summer students will experience how that basic grammar is used in a variety of Tibetan texts: the course materials consist of readings from different genres of texts, including indigenous Tibetan philosophical literature as well as texts translated from Sanskrit. Students will read and translate Buddhist literature during class so they can consolidate their understanding and develop further knowledge of grammatical structures and Buddhist terminology. And, students will read together in groups, with handouts that complement the texts they are reading provided to enhance learning. As with all of RYI's summer courses, this course meets for four hours per day. If you're interested in pursuing classical Tibetan beyond the basics, this course could be of benefit to you!



GOMDE UPDATE



Denmark (gomde.dk)

Tsoknyi Rinpoche - Experiencing Emotions With a Spacious Mind.
October 20 - 25, 2015



Germany-Austria (gomde.de)

Phakchok Rinpoche - Skillfully dealing with practice and daily life - How to get rid of difficulties.
October 23 - 26, 2015

Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche - Winter Seminar.
December 28, 2015 - January 7, 2016



UK (gomde.org.uk)

Weekly Meditation and Study Group
Tuesdays 7- 9pm - All are welcome

Lama Oser Weekend Teachings:

Four Noble Truths
October 16 - 18, 2015

Dependant Origination
October 23 - 25, 2015

Four Seals of the Dharma
November 6 - 8, 2015



Scotland (gomdescotland.org)

All Buddhist Sangha Gathering.
October 17, 2015

Lama Oser at Gomde Scotland.
October 29 - November 4, 2015



USA (gomdeusa.org)

Tara Sadhana of the Four Mandalas - ten-day intensive retreat.
October 16 - 25, 2015

Lama Kunzang Drolma - Cultivating Compassion and Loving-Kindness through Meditations on Avalokiteshvara.
November 20 - 22, 2015

Lama Gerry Prindiville - Annual New Year's Vajrasattva Retreat.
December 27, 2015 - January 3, 2016



Russia - Ukraine (rangjungyeshe.ru)

Regular practices on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday at 7.30pm

For further events in please refer to website.

Please check the websites of each of the centers for additional activities and teachings.

WHERE ARE CLASSES NOW?

The monastery has provided RYI with a beautiful temporary space on the second floor of one of the new buildings. We are very grateful for their support and flexibility!



DID YOU KNOW?

The staff and managers at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Kathmandu were wonderfully helpful and supportive to RYI and the local community during the April 25 earthquake.

Around sixty students, faculty, and staff from RYI who were unable to return to their homes due to suspected earthquake damage were provided with space to erect a makeshift camp on the hotel's tennis courts. The RYI contingent made up around one fifth of the total number given refuge, the others being

stranded tourists and local Nepalese and Tibetans who also were unable to return home.

The Hyatt staff fed everyone without charge for three days, offered showers and sanitation facilities, bedding, and rain shelters, as well as phone lines and internet connections to allow people to contact family and friends. RYI is enormously grateful for this support provided during such a difficult and challenging time!



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