

# Byoma Kusuma

## Newsletter

Issue 6

January 2011

*“My religion is to live and die without regret.”*

– Milarepa

Dear all -

Hope you are well. We saw lots of important things happen since we issued our last newsletter in early September - from the establishment of Sridhar Rana Rinpoche Education Fund and installation of late His Eminence Chogye Trizin Rinpoche's glowing statue in the Bishalnagar shrine that same month to Venerable Jetsunma's birthday, His Holiness Sakya Trizin Rinpoche's Bishalnagar visit and Asthami Uposad prayers in October. Sadhuwads to all sangha members who woke up very early on that Asthami to pray and fast for the liberation of all the innocent animals sacrificed during Dashain.

Meanwhile, Loving Kindness and Compassion meditation continues at the Bishalnagar monastery beginning at about 2pm every Saturday.

Coming to this newsletter, we have introduced a Focus section, where we will take a more in-depth look at an issue. We have begun with the U.S. sangha's outreach efforts.

In this newsletter, we also feature Q&A with Sahayak Samathacharya (S.S.) Narendra B. Basnyat, who inspires us with his commitment and devotion to the dharma. S.S. Rachana Pandey and sangha member (S.M.) Vinaya P. Adhikary share their poems. In addition, we hope you will also enjoy some of our regular, informative sections.

That's all we have for now. As always, we welcome your feedback, realizations, thoughts, articles, poems or any other Dharmic creations. Please scroll down to the bottom for submission directions.

Thank you,

The Newsletter Team

### TIME LINE

**Sept. 12:** Sridhar Rana Rinpoche Education Fund is established. S.S. Pratistha Karki and sangha member Rajesh Khadka led the efforts, and pledge 250 pounds annually .

**Sept. 30:** A statue of late His Eminence Chogye Trizin Rinpoche is placed in Bishalnagar shrine.

**October 1:** His Holiness Sakya Trizin Rinpoche visits the Bishalnagar monastery.

**October 5:** Venerable Jetsunma's birthday. Sangha members all over the world chant Her long life prayer and the sangha in Kathmandu holds a celebration at 6.30pm.

**October 15:** Sangha members organize Uposad prayers and fasting for liberating hundreds and thousands of animals sacrificed during the Dasain period, especially on the day of Asthami.

**October 22:** Sangha members begin their discussion about the Sangha's official motto and vision.

**December 1:** Sangha members and families are invited to attend S.D. Narayan Rijal's on various aspects of the Buddha Dharma held every Saturday 12.30pm to 2pm at Bishalnagar.

**Tara Pujas:** October 2, 12-hour puja at S.M's Ranjan and Sachi Pant's home in Virginia; November 13, 24-hour puja at S.S. Anupama Dahal's home in Jorpati, and November 21, 24-hour puja at S.M. Rohini and Ambika Mainali's home in Chabahil.

***U.S. Sangha Reaching Out More to the General Community***



A typical scene in S.S. Rachana Pandey's living room the first and third Sunday of each month: A sofa is carried outside and shoved beside the dining table, a tea table and a futon are crammed into the study, a shrine with Ratnashri's photo and Shakymuni Buddha statue is set up, and finally cushions are placed on the carpeted floor in an orderly fashion.

The preparations are needed to accommodate an average of 10 to 20 attendees of the sangha's bi-monthly spiritual sessions, which began in March this year. The sessions are important milestone for the sangha because they are the first sustained initiative to spread Ratnashri's teachings among the general American people.

“The motivation and direction came entirely from Ratnashri, as all of our events and efforts are done in service to him,” says S.S. Pandey, who leads the sessions. In the previous years, she says, the sangha members were less organized and more into finding their own footing as Buddhists and as Ratnashri’s students, studying and progressing on the Krama practice. “However, it became apparent in the last couple of years that it was time for us to get more formally organized and share what Ratnashri has taught us with others.”

The first Sunday of the month is for mindfulness meditation on the breath and a Dharma topic presentation and discussion, which seeks to relate the teachings to the everyday life. The third Sunday of the month features loving kindness meditation (for more information please

visit – <http://www.meetup.com/Byoma-Kusuma-Meditation>). Interested participants sign up for the sessions on the sangha web page on Meetup.com, an online platform that allows people to schedule activities of mutual interest.

**U.S. SANGHA: A SNAPSHOT**

Incorporated	2007
Declared charitable organization	2010
Headquarters	Washington D.C.
Sangha presence (state-wise)	Virginia, California, Massachussets, Michigan, New York, New Jersey, North Carolina, Colorado, New Hampshire, Kansas, and Missouri
Activities	Bodhipushpanjali discussions and group therapy the second Saturday of each month; Guru Padmasambhava ganachakra puja (waxing moon period); Ratnashri’s birthday and Buddha Purnima; Tara and Vasudhara pujas; loving kindness and compassion practice; chanting prayers for those in the Preta (hungry ghost) realm; and volunteering at other Buddhist organizations. During these events, sangha members also get to socialize.
Contributions	Fundraisers bi-annually and on specific occasions, such as events in BK-Nepal; Dharma activities for the sangha as well as the general community.

The sessions begin with the refuge prayer and end with the dedication prayer, both in English language. The prayers are optional for the non-sangha attendees, who belong to diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. While the majority are Caucasian, with a Christian upbringing, there are quite a number of African-Americans, Asian Americans, South Asians, Middle Easterners and Nepalis as well. Most of them come to “expand their spiritual life and/or to learn meditation” and “they are curious and open and willing to learn,” S.S. Rachana Pandey says.

S.S. Asim Pandey says the meet-up sessions have been “great” to introduce meditation and Buddhist teachings to interested individuals. “This is also the only way so far,” he adds.

More than 150 participants have signed up for the sessions so far, and some of them have been very regular “which indicates (to) us that the BK-US is expanding slowly but steadily,” says

S.M. Ranjan Pant, who is also actively involved in the D.C. activities. He also says the sangha is now “eagerly waiting” for S.D. Narayan sir's arrival to “further spread Ratnashri’s teachings and involve more community members to join this path.”

The meet-up discussions are usually very lively, with participants asking numerous questions as well as sharing their experiences. S.S. Rachana Pandey is always well-prepared, equipped with easy-to-relate examples, and confident in answering any type of question. The non-Sangha attendees have also given very positive feedback about the sessions on the sangha's meetup website.

“These meditations are consistently good with excellent discussions and opportunities to learn,” comments Tim Anthony, a very regular participant.



“I had been searching for a group like this for a while,” says Govinda, another participant. “The organizer (& others in the group) are great, fun and their approach & explanation of the concepts is very refreshing, enlightening & easy to relate to.”

Anthony and Govinda are among our newest sangha members, as they both took refuge

with S.S. Rachana Pandey under the guidance of Ratnashri on December 12.

While the sessions are primarily meant for non-sangha participants, sangha members who participate also benefit a great deal. The program “provide a place to come together for group meditation,” says S.S. Asim Pandey, adding that he always feels a “group energy” during the sessions. S.M. Rakshya Pant says the discussions and sharing of insights from people with diverse backgrounds are very enriching as “you get to see the same thing from different angles.”

S.S. Rachana Pandey, on her part, says she is very happy that people are finding value in the sessions. When the sessions began in March, she was “a little apprehensive” about who would come and how relevant the attendees would find the sessions to be. But there was a surprise in store: the participants turned out to be “so wonderful, and so willing to learn and participate,” which she says she really appreciated. She adds that the presence of sangha members in the sessions also provides a great deal of supportive environment for the attendees and to the discussions.

“With Ratnashri’s blessings, I feel we are contributing something positive to the community,” she says.

Sangha members laud the efforts of S.S. Rachana Pandey in opening the sangha more to the general community. “She has taken her time out of her busy schedule to spread the teachings of Ratnashri, so huge 'Sadhubaad' goes to her,” S.M. Pant says.

The attendees at the sessions appear to learn much about Buddhism and benefit from the teachings and the sit-down meditation practice. However, many Westerners want time to explore different spiritual traditions before making a commitment to one. S.S. Rachana Pandey, while stating that she often wishes the attendees to just jump up and say 'I want to take refuge,' acknowledges that people need to open in their own way and that “all we can do is provide a space for them to do this, to provide a supportive environment, the teachings and techniques, and a bit of a challenge to their usual way of thinking and living, and let the rest unfold.” But because Ratnashri's blessings and teachings are always present during the sessions, the participants “are making a connection to him, some connection,

## DHARMIC CREATIONS

*Offered at the feet of my Guru Ratnashri*

*Dedicated to Bodhichitta, Cultivating the Mind of Enlightenment*

### **To All my Mother Beings: Where Do We Meet, You and I?**

By Rachana Pandey

Am I this, and are you that  
You over there, me here  
Is there a space where we meet  
Where I am you and you are me  
Where there are no boundaries  
Of form and mind

Am I the eyes that look at you  
Are you the sweet face that looks back  
Or are you the sweetness that I feel  
Or wait, is that me

When I cry and tears fall  
Is that my pain or is it yours  
Do you end at your fingertips  
When you caress my face  
And where is it that I begin  
What is this space of love and joy

Is it here that we meet  
You and I

How often have we met  
In what forms and ways  
As we've travelled through lives  
And time and space  
Once in such time

that even if they don't take refuge now, they will find their way back to him at some point in time, whether in this life or another," she says.

A general challenge the sangha faces is to find more funding and time (It's the U.S., remember?) to devote to the dharmic activities. "To set up programs and events, to liaise with other groups, to fund visits for S.D. Narayan sir and others, and the like, we need resources, and we need time," says S.S. Rachana Pandey. Also, more sangha members with new talents, skills, energy (and time) are needed, she adds. S.M. Rakshya Pant, who manages meet-up finances, says the donations from attendees are enough to self-sustain the program – as long as the sangha does not have to bear the rental cost. But as the program grows, there will be a need to rent a space outside.

"If we were to rent a more formal place like a meeting room in a library then I am not quite sure, as the charges vary from place to place," S.M. Rakshya Pant explains. But she says the donations collected this year will probably cover most of the expenses for next year.

Nevertheless, S.S. Rachana Pandey is optimistic that with Ratnashri's blessings, the funding, time and personnel aspects will gradually open favourably in the days ahead.

Moving forward, the sangha is seeking to increase the number and types of sessions to better address the needs of the general community, S.S. Rachana Pandey informed. Also, the translations of Bodhipushpanjali would help not only to be used when needed for the general community, but also for the new and old English-only speaking sangha members to refer to.

Despite challenges, BK-D.C. and BK-U.S. have managed to grow in organization and outreach. "And with Ratnashri's continued blessings and our dedication and commitment to serving him," S.S. Rachana Pandey assures, "I have no doubt that with we will continue to grow and be of greater service."



We were mother and child

Now is there a dimension

Where we still meet

You and I

When you are happy

Does it bring me joy

When you cry

Do I feel the pain

Your laughter makes the flowers bloom

Your tear drop reaches me as rain

I am the flowers and that rain

And we meet once again

You and I

When I walk the Path

Do you feel the steps

If I send out love

Will you catch the joy

If I change my mind

Will it change yours

If I move towards liberation

Will you come along

Then I walk for you

And in the space of your inspiration

We meet again

You and I

Somewhere in the play

Of existence and non-existence

We are never really separate

You and I

But as long as we have

This illusion of being apart

And pain and tears

Shadow the bliss

I will seek to attain the space

Where we are one

My mother, you and I

### **Search and Searcher**

By Vinay Prasad Adhikary

When there is no search, there is no any search !

If there is no any search,

there is no any searcher !

When there is no search and searcher,

Ah then,

Self or No-Self !

God or No God !

Exists and Nays

Pop ups with blinks of Vikalpas

Extremes of Hypothecation !

Settling with settled Names and Labels !

Rather Subsiding with !

A cup of tea under blue sky !

Sip after Sip !

A Black cat leaps the naughty rat !

No more Gods !

Neither the Self !

No Need either !

Long Distance Short Distance !

Heaps of pebbles and stones !

Stamped as a Mountains and Hills !

Void !

Yet Mountains and Hills !

Mesmerizing thousands !

Neither existing nor prevailing !

Appearance !

Appears to be ! As if !

When there is no search, there is no any search !

If there is no any search,

there is no any searcher !

When there is no search and searcher,

Ah then,

Self or No-Self !

God or No God !

#### SOME FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW

The **last four** of the 12 links in Dependent arising (The first eight steps were described in previous issues)

**1)** Ignorance (*Avidhya*); **2)** Volitional formations (*Sanskar*); **3)** Consciousness (*Vigyan*); **4)** Mind-Body (*Nam-rup*) **5)** Six senses – spheres (*salayatana*) **6)** Contact (*phassa*) **7)** Feeling (*vedana*) **8)** Craving (*tanha*)

**9) Grasping (*upadana*)**

Represented by a monkey reaching for a fruit. Also known as clinging, it means mentally grabbing at an object one desires.

#### **10) Becoming (*bhava*)**

Represented by a woman in late pregnancy. Just as she is about to bring forth a fully developed child, the karma that will produce the next lifetime is fully potentialized though not yet manifest.

#### **11) Birth (*jati*)**

This link is represented by the very explicit image of a woman giving birth to a child.

#### **12) Ageing and Death (*jara-marana*)**

The final link is represented by a dying person. Ageing is both progressive, occurring every moment of our lifetime, and degenerative which leads to death.

([www.buddhanet.net](http://www.buddhanet.net))

#### SANGHA SPOTLIGHT

Q&A with **S.S. Narendra B. Basnyat, Gyaneshwor**



**When did you join the Sangha?**

July 1999

**What inspired you to join the Sangha?**

People consciously or unconsciously have faith in the Dharma but what they make of it differs as per the time and situation that unfolds. My wife Urmila was a Hindu by birth. However, she was searching for the right Dharma and the truth. In the search process she finally and fortunately met Guru Ratnashree and had the opportunity to discuss and learn about the Buddha Dharma. She was convinced that that was what she was

searching for and straight away decided to practice the Dharma under his guidance and is still happily and wholeheartedly continuing.

I didn't join the sangha with her then. It wasn't that Buddha's life and teachings hadn't amazed me, but that I hadn't studied about this Dharma deeply enough.

During Urmila's six or seven years of practice, I also came across Jetsunma and S.D. Narayan sir. Besides my wife's persuasion, Jetsunma also encouraged me to attend the Bodhipushpanjali series and other programs at Bishalnagar. And as time passed by, circumstances were such that I decided to take refuge in Guru Padmasambhava to set myself free from this ocean of suffering. It happened as if like some deity was guiding me to follow the path, and I was doing so blindly. As a result, I started visiting Bishalnagar regularly. All in all, the credit for inspiring and motivating me to start practicing the Dharma goes to Jetsunma and my lovely wife Urmila.

### **What is your daily life like?**

Time and tide wait for none. Whether we do anything or not, they flow by. Presently my main priority is my Dharma practice. I spent most of my time doing the daily practice and other activities related to Dharma. Normally my practice starts at around 5-6 am and lasts for about four hours. Completing my evening practice takes around three hours. As I am also a householder, I also need to assist my family with the daily chores to keep the house organized and running. We live in society and therefore we are bound and sometimes compelled to spend some time with our relatives and friends. I also do some light exercise to remain fit, as they say a healthy mind exists in a healthy body. Besides, we also need to keep ourselves, to a greater or lesser extent, informed about what is happening around us. This is a general routine but sometimes if anything (else) comes up, I adjust my routine accordingly.

### **How do you incorporate practice into your daily life?**

As we have only 24 hours in a day and since time waits for no one, everyone has to flow with it.

Similarly I, like everyone else, also try to incorporate and optimize my practice in the best possible way.

### **What does the future hold for you?**

Even though this question may sound very simple, it's a solemn one. For an ordinary practitioner like me, who does not even know 0.1 percent about enlightenment, it will be meaningless to try to answer this question. However, all I can say is that I am on the Bodhisattva path with an aim to attain enlightenment. For a true Dharma practitioner, whatever point we reach while practicing tirelessly and sincerely becomes the biggest accomplishment. Therefore, any achievement that we get from our sincere efforts through practicing our Dharma is more important and what really counts than where we see ourselves in the future.

### **What advice you have for the Sangha members?**

Human life is very precious and extremely difficult to obtain. Even the fortunate ones unknowingly waste it getting involved in negative habits and behaviours. To get this precious human life and to have the opportunity to involve ourselves with the sangha are purely the results of our great Karma. We have been blessed with a Guru like Mahayogi Acharya Shridhar Rana Rinpoche *jyu*. My advice to the sangha members is to sincerely focus on their Krama practice, which are the fruits of Ratnashree's self realizations through years of his practice and have his immense blessings as well. Therefore, Krama practice greatly helps one to realize the truth. To join the sangha and not to practice and progress in the krama practice is like reaching the bottom of the sea and finding the pearl but returning empty-handed.

Only through proper practice can wisdom be developed, and there is a vast difference between wisdom developed through practice and without practice, an experience very different and difficult to put in words. While continuing with our practice, I am sure we will definitely see and feel changes in ourselves. If we don't feel any change, then we need to ask ourselves whether or not we

are practicing honestly, and find the answer ourselves.

When sharing one's experience with fellow sangha members, the most important thing to remember is to be truthful. If one is sharing things that one has not actually realized in practice, it can misguide others as well as the person him/herself. Therefore, one has to be very careful and at the same time bold enough to share what one has actually experienced in real.

We all have weaknesses or shortcomings in one or other forms. We should not deny but rather need to accept this fact and try to correct ourselves. Just avoiding to repeat the previous mistake will also bring a lot of change in ourselves. Let us sincerely do this. Thank you.

## SOME USEFUL BUDDHIST TERMS

### E

**Eightfold Path:** The path that leads to liberation, consisting of right understanding, right aim, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

**Emptiness:** (Skt. Shunyata) (Pali, Sunyata) The actual way in which all things exist, the absence of the apparent inherent existence of things.

**Enlightenment:** Complete elimination of all negative aspects of the mind and perfection of all positive qualities.

[www.buddhanet.net](http://www.buddhanet.net)

## CONTACT

We hope you enjoyed reading our Newsletter. Should you be interested to contribute your articles or share information any sangha/spiritual events, please contact our editorial team at: [bk-uk@byomakusuma.org](mailto:bk-uk@byomakusuma.org).

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- Your article should be no longer than 500 words.

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