

# no.more.caves

The Internal Memo For Today's Spiritual Seeker

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As spoken by HE Tsem Tulku Rinpoche

**T**he heroes we read about in books are not real; but the heroes we see in everyday life - they're real. And who are they? They are just like you and me, except they are not afraid to be wrong, they are not afraid to admit their mistakes, and they're not afraid to admit that they're afraid. And they do it anyway.

The rest of us are afraid to admit or to show our fears, and we don't do it. We make up some lame excuse, we make up something to cover the fear, the embarrassment, the shame, the ego and then we just don't do it. Those are not heroes.

Let me stress, heroes are not people who don't have fears. They are people who have fear but they go ahead and do it, because they think, "What can I lose? What can I lose in the end?"

People like Milarepa had no money, didn't want sponsors, didn't want to live in a great monastery and were not inclined toward having students or fame or to be discovered. So what Milarepa did when he went to look for a place to meditate in caves was to go as far and as high as he could. He wanted to be as secluded as possible.

He made offerings every single day. The outer offerings he made was the mandala; the mandala offerings that someone like Milarepa made was to visualise the outer mandala – the whole world, and all the environments and beings therein – and he would make that offering to Buddha.

Then he would offer his attainments to the Buddha, because he had gained some attainments before he became a Buddha. He also offered his negative points to the Buddha. You might wonder how we can offer negative things to the Buddha. This is because the Buddha can never be defiled. When we offer up something that is "negative" to the Buddha, we don't own that negativity anymore. When we don't own



we start to distance ourselves from it. It's a gradual process and you might wonder what the big deal is. It is a big deal because what else are we doing to distance ourselves from those qualities? Those are the qualities that make us unpopular, that make people lose respect for us, that make people not like us, that make people not want to be with us.

It is important for us to stop playing games out of hatred, jealousy, anger, vengeance... Instead of playing into these games we should tell ourselves to come out of it. And how? The first step is to be open about it, to say, "I am jealous. I am angersome. I made a mistake. I have fears. I am stingy. I can't rejoice for people."

When we make that kind of confession, and it's from our heart, we feel lighter. It becomes easier. We don't have to have defenses against people anymore because people already know that about us. In the beginning, we look really bad. But when they know us more and more, and they realise that we are coming out with our problem they respect us.

*If we're angersome, greedy, hateful, jealous, vengeful, then we should keep offering these things up. In the beginning it is imaginary. But when we keep offering it up, it becomes real.*

that negativity anymore, then we start to go away from identifying that quality with us.

If we're angersome, greedy, hateful, jealous, vengeful, then we should keep offering these things up. In the beginning it is imaginary. But when we keep offering it up, it becomes real. We create the causes for it – we're studying and we're practising and our mind is identifying what should be offered up.

Eventually, offering those negative qualities up becomes realistic because

What's very important is that if we sincerely offer up these negative qualities to the Buddha every single day in our mandala offerings, we'll see ourselves starting to disassociate. Secondly, we must keep reminding ourselves that we have those qualities. Thirdly, if we're around Dharma students and friends, or we have a Dharma community, we can support each other. xxxxxxxx xxxxxx xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

**Dear Readers,**

One of the most marvellous things about the Buddhist teachings are their versatility and the surprising ways in which their presentation constantly shape-shifts to better fit our society changing temperaments, trends and fancies.

These days, Buddhist scriptures aren't dusty tomes wrapped in brocades; they're arty coffee table volumes. While thangka painters often worked out of monasteries, Buddhist artists now work out of a studio in a lively shop-lot. Previous celebrations of Wesak Day have evolved to interactive bazaar-like activities and video screenings in remembrance of Lord Buddha.

At the heart of it all though, no matter what it's dressed in, the teachings remain as pure and constant as they did 2500 years ago. When I first met our Lama HE Tsem Tulku Rinpoche, what drew me most to Dharma was his prevailing message to me that we can be as varied and flamboyant as we like on the outside, but transform the inside towards a kinder, wiser way of living.

As I thought about the articles in this issue, his message has come back ever stronger to me. Our active engagement with the teachings through our activity, Dharma work and volunteerism in the many varied departments of the Kechara family truly allows for us to be who we are on the outside while we also turn our minds towards a path of greater wisdom and happiness.

In the past three months, we've celebrated our newest book in a bar, adapted traditional Buddhist art techniques to modern aesthetics, brought Tsongkhapa to a Portuguese sphere and interacted directly with the city streets through continued efforts to feed the homeless.

In every one of these we discover the vast opportunity to tread in Buddha's footsteps, to gain all the same wisdom that's found in those many dusty tomes that we might probably never read in this lifetime. Rinpoche really has made it possible for us to remain as we are and do the things we like to do while we simultaneously engage in uplifting, inspiring spiritual practice.

## Get Busy at Kechara House

Check out KH's new weekly schedule and be a part of our fun, energising activities.

- **Monday**  
8 – 10 pm ..... Setrap Puja (KH2)
- **Wednesday**  
8 – 10 pm ..... Medicine Buddha Puja (KH2)  
8 – 10 pm ..... Dzambala Puja (KH2)
- **Thursday**  
8 – 10 pm ..... Migtsema recitation (KH1)
- **Friday**  
8 – 10.30 pm ..... Lamrim Class (KH1)
- **Saturday**  
4.30 – approx 9pm ..... Kechara Soup Kitchen (starting @ KH2)
- **Sunday**  
2 – 4.30 pm ..... Manjushri Class (KH1)  
2 – 3 pm ..... Manjushri Kid's class (KH2)
- **Everyday**  
4pm til late ..... Volunteer at Kechara Saraswati Arts

### 1st Tuesday of every month

Social gathering for all new friends to meet members and students of KH over a casual, fun dinner.

**Time: 7pm onwards**

**Venue: Changes each month (see below for details)**

**Cost: Price of your meal**

Please call us 3 days ahead of time to find out the venue for the month and reserve your place. **RSVP: Jamie at 012 3709567 or care@kecharahouse.com**

And, I do think, as we celebrate yet another Wesak day, that no matter how contemporary and unconventional all this activity might seem to be, Shakyamuni himself would have approved!

**With love and prayers,**

**Jamie**

As approaches in Dharma evolves to suit the times and people, so too do the tools. The modern day Buddhist scripture, in glossy store displays, brings Buddha's wisdom to the 21st century.



## We want to hear from you!

nmc is brought to you by Kechara House Buddhist Association. For more information about Kechara House, its branches and activities, please contact us.

### Kechara House Buddha Oasis

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### KH Committee

President: **Datin Ng Wee Chin**

Vice president: **Dato Jeffrey Ng**

Committee members: **Dr Chuah, Eric Choong, Dr. Tikfu Gee, Bill Keith, Dr Ming Hui Ying, Julia Tan, Tan Sio Chian**

### Kechara House administrators

• **Sofia Lim**, sofia6lim@yahoo.com, 016 365 0496 • **Bonita Khoo**, bonita@natmedia.com.my, 012 623 3437 • **May Woo**, mayywoo@yahoo.com, 019 212 6288

For a further details of all Kechara House departments and contacts, please refer to our organisation chart on [www.kecharahouse.com](http://www.kecharahouse.com).

Kechara House also comprises 18 liaisons who are Tsem Tulku Rinpoche's personal assistants. Full details of the liaisons' council and their departments can be found on [www.tsemtulku.com](http://www.tsemtulku.com).

### Who's who in the cave

Spiritual advisor: **H.E. Tsem Tulku Rinpoche** Editorial advisor: **Joseph Chan and Susan Lim** Editor: **Jamie Khoo** Writers: **David Lai, Lim Han Nee, Miguel and Graca Ribeiro, Sharon Saw** Photography: **JJ Chong, Lee Kheng San, Loh Seng Piow, Miguel and Graca Ribeiro, Justin Ripley, Chris Tan** Designer: **Rosalind Tann** Printer: **Les Couleurs Communication Studio**



Heruka team (left) and Vajrapani team go head-to-head in their debate of the 2nd verse.

# So How Much Do You Really Know?

The first annual Kechara House Manjugosha Debate Tournament saw an exciting few four weeks as teams debated their way to greater wisdom and realisation.

By **Jamie Khoo**

Through precise logic and active engagement with the teachings, we learn the subject thoroughly for ourselves, rather than to rely solely on faith or acceptance of the teachings.

**N**o matter how much we read, do and think we know, it's probably never enough and won't ever be enough until we're Buddhas! To push everyone to their next level of learning, Kechara House's Education Committee, led by Liaison Ngeow Voon Chin organised the inaugural Kechara House Manjugosha Debate Tournament to put everyone to the test.

The debate sought to increase participation and interaction in Dharma classes, giving everybody the chance to talk, share what they knew and discover what they didn't. Kechara House departments were encouraged to send in their representatives to debate in teams. As we had nothing to lose but everything to gain, the teams were quickly formed and everyone got ready to strut their stuff on the debate arena.

Based on Kechara House's heart teachings The Eight Verses of Thought Transformation, each debate session focused on one of the verses of this very profound and beautiful prayer. To give it a more distinctive angle, teams had to base their arguments on our Lama HE Tsem Tulku Rinpoche's commentary on the verses, as outlined in his book *Compassion Conquers All*. This encouraged us therefore, not just to learn the verses but also to internalise the accompanying teachings.

In each session, one took the position of Defender (defending the verse) and the other, the Challenger (opposing the verse). After 15 minutes, they would exchange roles giving everyone a fair chance to thoroughly debate the subject from both sides.

As the sessions progressed and as we headed closer and closer towards the finals (held on Wesak Day), the debates got more and more heated and participants debated with each other with increasing excitement. Some were completely caught off guard by their opponents, some showed themselves as surprisingly strong debaters and others got thoroughly confused as the debates become more complex and profound.

Whatever the outcome of each session, it made for an extremely insightful few weeks of learning Dharma, learning how to speak well and of course, learning how to really have fun in Dharma.

It gave us a precious opportunity too, to learn a strong lesson of humility. The teams that we had all expected to soar – those comprising senior students or students who work directly and closely with Rinpoche's teachings – were frequently caught dumbfounded by their opponents, who were often newer students.

Actually, the point of debate, as has been practised for centuries in the monasteries, has never been about winning or losing, but about encouraging either side to gain deeper insights and understanding of the topic at hand. We challenge and defend as a means of helping ourselves and the other side to question, to think through every possible angle of a subject and to dispel all doubts.

Through precise logic and active engagement with the teachings, we learn the subject thoroughly for ourselves, rather than to rely solely on faith or acceptance of the teachings. It is said that in the monasteries, hundreds of monks gain realisations on the debate courtyard itself, as they discuss and ponder subjects over and over with each other.

Although we're still Dharma fledglings at Kechara House, this inaugural debate tournament showed us plenty, especially of the long journey we still have up ahead in perfectly realising the teachings and the greater potential we have to learn much more than what we already think we know.

As Buddha Shakyamuni himself always encouraged his disciples, the path is about constantly "questioning", studying and learning the truth for ourselves.

**i** The debate sessions have been filmed and videos of the tournament can be seen on YouTube under "TsemTulku". Written accounts of the debate are also available on [www.kecharahouse.com](http://www.kecharahouse.com)



JJ Chong from the Tara team presents his view.

## New Lamrim Dharma Classes

Under the guidance of Education Liaison Ngeow Voon Chin a new Dharma programme based on the Lamrim Chenmo and HE Tsem Tulku Rinpoche's teachings was launched at the end of May.

Following a more structured format, the class seeks to give participants a comprehensive understanding of the Lamrim teachings, following the steps and teachings in the order that they are presented in the Lamrim itself.

Covering all topics in the Lamrim, the class is distinctive in its

incorporation of very profound yet practical insights from Tsem Rinpoche's teachings and its encouragement of lots of discussion and interactivity to facilitate greater learning.

Though everyone is welcome to join the Lamrim classes, participants are encouraged to attend all the classes in the programme, as they follow a progressive structure that builds on previous sessions.

For more information, please contact Mr. Ngeow at 016 605 2996.



New Liaisons Tan Sio Chian (far left) and Sharon Saw (third left) with existing liaisons Susan Lim (second left) and Joseph Chan.

# Broadening our Reach

As two new liaisons were recently voted in to support Rinpoche and Kechara's expanding work and activities, we look at the vital role of liaisons within a Dharma centre.

By Chuah Su Ming

**A** Saturday in mid March saw another auspicious day for the Kechara organisation as it was another swearing-in ceremony for two newly appointed liaisons.

Having been students of HE Tsem Tulku Rinpoche and members of Kechara House for several years now, both our new Liaisons Tan Sio Chian (Liaison of Fundraising and Kechara Southern Jewel Chapel) and Sharon Saw (Liaison of Communications) have been incredibly dedicated towards the many projects of the centre. They were voted in by the existing liaisons to further support the immense growth of Dharma activities and to establish more efficient ways of bringing Dharma to more people.

Presently, there are 18 liaisons reporting directly to our spiritual guide, HE Tsem Tulku Rinpoche. Thanks to Rinpoche's kindness, the liaisons structure was set up in 2006 for the centre to function more efficiently and effectively. This structure stems from the system established in the monastic institution of the great Gaden Monastery hundreds of years ago and endures even to this day.

As Rinpoche's work grows, there is a need to have more people to assist Rinpoche to benefit more people on a wider scope. New liaisons are appointed when a need arises as Rinpoche's work expands and grows.

People with relevant experience and/or skills are nominated by the current liaisons and presented in the liaisons' meetings.

Votes are then cast amongst liaisons and upon completion of this democratic process, the names are presented to Rinpoche for his blessings. The new liaisons are testament to the growth and expansion not only of our organisation but also of the growth of Dharma in this area, country and Southern region.

All 18 liaisons come from many different professions which contributes strongly to the growth of Dharma as they bring their many specialised skills, talents and work experiences to furthering our Dharma work.

New Liaison Tan Sio Chian, who is also the former President of Kechara House has her own business in the media industry; Liaison Sharon Saw has been a professional script writer and freelance writer for many years, and is also a senior editor of our publication house, Kechara Media and Publications.

Their professional background and many years in the media industry will readily complement the expanding portfolio of the liaisons council and bring much needed expertise to help our projects expand and grow. Our many congratulations to them for dedicating their lives towards the growth of Dharma and benefiting others all over the world!

## What keeps them ticking

### Sharon Saw, Liaison of Communications

It's an immense honour to be one of Rinpoche's liaisons. Rinpoche and his liaisons have been very inspirational to me in their drive and commitment to the Dharma and I am very honoured and happy to work with them to make the Tsongkhapa lineage grow!

### Tan Sio Chian, Liaison of Fundraising and Kechara Southern Jewel Chapel

I'm very happy to go the next step to join the liaisons in their work to serve Rinpoche and the Dharma. I myself have found tremendous benefit in Dharma and I wish to share this with others. Being a liaison will give me this chance to bring the same benefit to many more people in the world.

**i** To find out more about the individual roles of each liaisons, please refer to the following website <http://www.tsemtulku.com/V02/contacts.html>



Sio Chian (left) and Sharon make prayers to Dharmapala Lord Setrap to pledge their commitment to the Dharma

# Painting Divinity

It's been a very busy few months for Kechara Saraswati Arts. We look in on the tremendous growth of their projects and activities.

By Jamie Khoo

The Kechara Saraswati Arts volunteers have been hard at work over the last few months, engaging in a huge number of projects that have required many hours of tireless work.

What is most admirable and amazing about this little busy department in SS2, Petaling Jaya, is that every single person who works there contributes their time, efforts and skills on a voluntary basis. There is no paid or full-time staff there and the volunteers all have other work and family commitments that they have to balance alongside their time at the art studio.

Committed to their tagline, "Spirituality through Arts", every one of

the volunteers dedicate their time and skill towards making beautiful Buddha images available for people's practice here and around the world. It is never just about statues, but about opening the doorway for someone to enter practice, creating beautiful images that will inspire others onto a spiritual path.

It is also one of the busiest departments, where people from all over, from within and without the Kechara organisation, converge to paint, roll mantras, string beads as well as chat, relax their minds, share Dharma and even gossip! Here's a look at the happy goings-on at KSA over recent months and what they have managed to produce.

## Big Statues, Big Merits

KSA's largest project in recent months has been to complete the preparation and painting of 16 4-foot Tsongkhas, seven 3-foot Vajrayoginis and five 3-foot-Dzambalas – no small feat for the small team!

Volunteers were rallied and for nights on end, KSA kept its doors open until the wee hours of the mornings, as everyone worked hard to meet the deadlines.

As with all the other beautiful statues we now see in the outlets, much work has to be put into preparing them. This includes:

- cleaning the statues
- painting base coats and intricate face details
- preparing thousands of mantras to be put inside the statues for consecration
- sewing the accompanying clothes and hats
- making customised pearl offerings

Since its opening late last year, KSA has evolved into many little sub-departments which take care of each aspect of beautifying Buddhist images and statues.

The full assignment was completed in mid-April, making many more Buddha images available to people for practice, prayer and collection of merits for advancement in their spiritual path.



Beautifying an army of Tsongkhas statues.

## The Hring Room

As the say goes, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy!" So in appreciation of the volunteers and to reward them for all their hard work, HE Tsem Tulku Rinpoche kindly arranged for a chill-out, relaxing area to be set up on one side of KSA's studio.

New sofas, cushions, cuddly toys, a big red rose lamp and a big tank with six flirty parrot fish make up what is now known as the Hring room (named after Saraswati's seed syllable). Here, after many long hours of working, volunteers have a place to rest and relax; or, for the really ambitious, work like beading or rolling mantras can also be done in this cosy space.

Rinpoche explained to all of us that providing conducive and comfortable environments and even material needs for all Dharma workers is just as important (if not more) than getting the work done. We have to start first and foremost with the people who put in so much of their personal effort and time for the benefit of others.



Chilling out in the Hring room with Rinpoche.

## Stars in Our Eyes

KSA's very own celebrity, James Long (centre), also the head of the KSA department, was recently part of the star cast of Jewel of Tibet, a stunning musical produced locally about Princess Wen Cheng's journey from China to Tibet. Performing as the Tibetan minister, Gar Tsongtsen, James really stole the limelight, proving to be one of the strongest and most charismatic personalities on stage.

Bravo! Here he is backstage with some of the liaisons (from left) Ngeow, Sharon Saw, Yap Yoke Fui and Ruby Khong.



# Celebrating, Now

KMP goes to new heights with the celebration of their newest book release, *If Not Now, When?* and plenty of fantastic promotion in bookstores.

By David Lai and Jamie Khoo

**H**ETsem Tulku Rinpoche has often said that more Dharma books should be written to fill the shelves. These new books should be written to reinterpret the classical scriptures to suit the time, place, and karma of the people. Kechara Media and Publication's newest coffee table volume, *If Not Now, When?* edited by Jamie Khoo and Sharon Saw is such a book – a treasure trove of little bite-sized quotations taken from Rinpoche's teachings and SMSes to students, that are paired with beautiful and meaningful images.

A book launch and a press party were duly organised to promote the book to the public and also to raise the profile of KMP to readers and people in the book industry.

Both events were landmarks in promoting Rinpoche's teachings and our very own in-house stars like Jamie Khoo and Liaison Sharon Saw. These events also gave KMP strong credibility and exposure

as a new publishing house, bringing them to greater public awareness. Since these events, we have had coverage on The Breakfast Show on NTV7 and more journalists have expressed interest in reviewing the book in their newspapers or magazines.

From these events, the Kechara organisation as a whole is once again in the spotlight, giving Rinpoche's teachings and Dharma wider exposure.

In both, KMP staff worked extremely hard to prepare and host the event, with the hope that the exposure would bring the wonderful wisdom and benefit of Dharma teachings to more people. Though the launch and party were hosted in what looked like unconventional, unspiritual places with "worldly" fun and entertainment, the underlying motivation, as always, was to bring Dharma right to the doorstep of contemporary Malaysians.

## The Book Launch – Times bookstore, Pavilion, March 29 2008

The venue for the book launch was secured at the large Times bookstore at Pavilion shopping centre for March 29, and all logistics were planned and executed by JJ Chong, Kechara Media and Publication's young production and promotions manager.

When the day came, chairs and tables from San Terri Café within the bookstore were placed in a cosy arrangement, in line with the coffee table book concept. Guests were greeted by a warm, inviting reception table and buntings, where special copies of the book, autographed by Rinpoche, were on sale.

Each guest was also given a hand-wrapped door-gift featuring the eternal-knot motif of the book. A series of beautifully designed posters with images taken from the book, were printed especially for the event and suspended midair along the walkway, leading guests from the bookstore entrance to the café.

The event began with Liaison and KMP's CEO Joseph Chan introducing KMP and its goals and vision. Then, Liaison and KMP's

COO Susan Lim gave a detailed presentation about Rinpoche and his works in Malaysia.

Next, the two editors of the book, Sharon Saw and Jamie Khoo gave an account of their experiences editing the book. Senior Editor and Kechara's Liaison of Communication Sharon described the process of putting the book together – from conceptualisation to editing to design and production.

Finally, KMP's English Chief Editor Jamie spoke and gave an insightful account of her experience in editing the book. She shared how the quotes were not merely words and how it mattered to her spiritual practice. In a surprising twist, she ended with a reading session that included participation from the audience who read individual quotes from the book.

After the more "serious" presentation, guests were then welcomed to join KMP for tea, where they had the chance to talk more in detail the editors about the book and KMP's work. It was also a valuable opportunity for KMP to garner greater contacts, meet new friends and share their work on a public platform.



**FROM TOP TO BOTTOM**  
KMP's Liaisons and Editors share their experiences of editing the book and engaging in its teachings.

Big, bright displays welcomed guests to the book launch.

Fame! Editor Sharon Saw autographs books.



## Press Party – The Social, Bangsar, April 2 2008

The exciting press party, held a few days after the launch to celebrate the release of the book, was held at The Social in Bangsar, a cosy watering hole with pool tables and an inviting ambience to match.

For that afternoon though, the venue came alive in a different way. Buntings promoting the book were placed outside, posters of the book's images and quotations were dotted around the inside, and even the tables were embellished with red ribbons, recalling the red-stringed motif of the book again.

The majority of the guests were from the press along with a handful of celebrities invited especially for this event. The likes of actress Ida Nerina, 8TV host Owen Yap, fashion designer Eric Choong and Dato Khoo, the proud father of our English Chief Editor were among the guests that graced the event.

Celebrity MC, Chacko Vadaketh was the invited host of the day. He introduced our own KMP celebrities, Liaison Joseph Chan

and Liaison Susan Lim, who gave a brief introduction to Rinpoche and KMP. A video presentation about KMP, the staff and their work was then screened on the multiple TV screens for the first time to the public.

The press had a field day! A set of NTV7 crew interviewed the editors while reporters sat through the press party writing notes and taking pictures. The book reading session featured the celebrities themselves, who stood up on stage to read out their favourite quotations from the book.

Party guests also had a great time. The event was set in such a social venue and party energies were high, as people were excited to finally see the much talked-about book! Though the presentations ended quite early, many guests stayed on until the early evening to interact with KMP and its editors.

Well, there's always a reason to party – especially if it's for bringing Dharma to others, even in this most unconventional, social way!



**FROM TOP TO BOTTOM**  
Celebrity MC Chacko Vadaketh brought the show alive.

Relaxing, lounging and having a good time – in the name of Dharma!



Gorgeous arrangements of KMPs products in Times, BSC.

## Storming the bookshelves

Times were incredibly supportive of our book launch and helped greatly in promoting our books throughout the months of April and May. If Not Now, When? was featured as the book of the month in April and given prominent displays throughout their stores.

Then, in May, KMP was the featured publisher of the month at Times bookstores. Prominent and beautiful arrangements of our books were displayed in the centre of their largest branches, in Pavilion and Bangsar Shopping Centre.

In celebration of the Wesak Month, Times

highlighted all Rinpoche's English and Chinese books and offered a 20% discount on all KMP products; Times members received 25% discount!

In the spirit of giving, Times also donated 10% of all proceeds from KMP books towards Kechara Soup Kitchen.

If Not Now, When? was such a spectacular hit that we even made it to the Times' bestsellers list and our initial print run of 1000 books was almost all out within two months. We've gone onto our second reprint, which will soon be in a bookstore near you!

## We couldn't have done it without you

None of this almost overnight success would have been possible without all of you. Yes, you! KMP wishes to extend our biggest and most heartfelt thanks and appreciation to everyone who has supported this newest book and all our publications.

To the sponsor of our first print of If Not Now, When? who so humbly wishes to remain anonymous (but you know who you are!), we thank you for making it possible for us to bring this book and Rinpoche's teachings to the world.

A massive thank you also to Dato' Peter Khoo (our own KMP English Chief Editor, Jamie Khoo's proud father) and his friends for the sponsorship of our second reprint. On behalf of all those who will benefit from all the wisdom and compassion contained in the book, we fold our hands and thank you deeply.

To all our sponsors, may your every virtuous wish be fulfilled and thus inspire many towards this joyful path of living; and to all our readers, may you find as much happiness and peace as is expressed in the teachings we publish.

# Compassion Conquers All on Wesak Day 2008

A member of the new KH working committee shares her experience of Wesak this year, both as a volunteer and participant.

By Lim Han Nee

For members of the Kechara House Working Committee, this year's Wesak Day will long be remembered for the significance of its theme for this year, Compassion Conquers All. In the days preceding Wesak Day, we learnt in a meaningful way, how it is that in order to benefit all sentient beings through serving KH our Dharma centre well, we need to be sincerely and truly committed. We need to renounce, in one way or another, our selfish concerns. We need to cut our ego and work together as one.

Intensive preparation for Wesak Day celebrations began more than a week before. Planning for it was detailed, and even included several contingency plans. KHWC members and several volunteers worked, with much care and devotion, to clean and clear KH 1, prepare the offerings and set up the altars.

KH 2 was declared reopen by our Lama, H.E. Tsem Tulku Rinpoche an hour before midnight on Wesak Eve and just immediately after the Taking of the Eight Precepts Ceremony and the final phase of the cleaning and preparation of KH 1

for Wesak Day had been completed. The same team, that had just completed their work in KH 1, went into KH 2 and cleaned it and prepared it for the Great Day, with the same painstaking care and devotion. It put the finishing touches to the job by the early hours of the morning.

The programs in both KH 1 and KH 2 ran very smoothly on and before the Great Day, with a simple yet beautiful Precepts Taking Ceremony to start the day's events on Wesak eve.

## THE BIG DAY

On Wesak Day, the much awaited finals of the Manjugosha Debate on the last two of the Eight Verses of Mind Transformation took place in the afternoon. (The ongoing Manjugosha Debates' theme was based on Compassion Conquers All, which is also the title of the book containing our Lama H.E. Tsem Tulku Rinpoche's teachings on the Eight Verses of Mind Transformation).

It was a true battle of wits between the Vajrayogini (KH representatives) and the Avalokiteshvara (Tsem Ladrang representatives) teams, as they debated the profound topics involving the wisdom aspect of compassion. Eventually, after much excitement and anticipation, the Vajrayogini Team won by a small margin.

On the day itself, before the morning prayers began at KH 1, the President of KH, Datin Ng, gave a speech, which carried the all important message that we all had to transform our lives and benefit others. Meanwhile, down below KH 1, under two canopies, a Dzambala bathing platform had been set up, with a big Dzambala statue smiling down on a much smaller one. The whole day saw a never-ending stream of visitors who eagerly came forward to bathe the little Dzambala whilst reciting his mantra, following the age-old tradition and practice of bathing the Buddha.

A colourful array of other booths had also been set up to sell flowers, pearls, candles and khatas and to promote the activities of Kechara Media and Publications, Kechara Southern Jewel Chapel and Kechara Saraswati

## FROM TOP TO BOTTOM

Rinpoche congratulates the winning team of the KH Manjugosha Debate Tournament.

A small group of students take refuge with Rinpoche on this most auspicious day.





KH members and new friends stop by to make prayers and offerings to Dzambala.

Arts department. However, the booth that drew the largest crowds was the Kechara Discovery department, under Liaison Paul Yap. This booth had been set up towards the back of the gompa of KH 1 promoting their new beautiful Setrap tsatsas and statues that had been sourced from other countries in Asia. Paul's work to make a wide range of Buddha statues available and affordable to Malaysians is truly commendable as it allows so many more people to engage directly in prayer and making offerings.

By the end of the day, KD had sold about ten big Setrap Tsa-tsas and a big statue of Rinpoche's previous life, the partial proceeds of which will also go towards supporting Tsem Ladrang, the headquarters of our organisation and residence of our Lama.

Among the booths downstairs, in a separate canopy, the Kechara Soup Kitchen team had also set up tables to provide a vegetarian buffet lunch to members and visitors for the day.

KH 2 provided a separate, comfortable venue for movies on the life story of Buddha Shakyamuni. In the cosy ambience of our multipurpose hall, Buddha Oasis, kids and their parents sat down to enjoy and learn at the same time, with Dharma sister Maple taking charge. Sitting there, in quiet relaxation, I let the words of Lord Buddha on "cause and effect" roll over my mind. Coming from over 2500 years ago, these words were still as powerful in their message of truth.

### THE SURPRISE VISIT

Our precious Lama graced KH 1 with His presence for the evening prayer session. We were absolutely thrilled and deeply touched when we listened to the announcement that Rinpoche would be coming to conduct the events of the night, despite being very ill.

Rinpoche's wonderful talk would come to be the peak of the day and night's events, where he emphasised how very beneficial it is to do Dharma work in the form of serving KH and all eleven departments. As Rinpoche explained, when we do Dharma work we benefit ourselves as well as others. In fact, "the measure of our Dharma or spiritual attainments is how much more we are able to work for others". Dharma work is all the more important now as it serves as "bridging to something big". We need an institution, like our future retreat centre, to preserve the Dharma.

The final event of the night was a moving and beautiful Refuge taking ceremony, where eight new friends took refuge under Rinpoche, following a beautiful teaching on what it means to commit to a spiritual path and the sacred teachings of Buddha.

A successful day thus drew to its close. Wesak Day owes its success to the kindness and compassion of our Precious Lama, and to the tireless efforts of committed KHWC members, and volunteers. A big Thank You to all!

As Rinpoche explained, when we do Dharma work we benefit ourselves as well as others. In fact, "the measure of our Dharma or spiritual attainments is how much more we are able to work for others".

The two strongest teams go head to head in the debate finals.



# What's cooking at Kechara Soup Kitchen?

For what started out as a tiny little department that worked on foot, KSK sure has grown. So, what's been cooking?

By Sharon Saw

**P**lenty! Over the past couple of months, Kechara Soup Kitchen has been busy with various fundraising and public awareness activities as well as increasing its distribution to the homeless and urban poor in KL.

Since its humble beginnings, where a few kind volunteers set out on foot to distribute packets of food to the city's homeless, KSK has grown by leaps and bounds. Now, the radius of our reach has far expanded, the number of food packets has increased and strong relationships have been developed with our clients on the streets. Here's just a glimpse of what we've been doing, and where we hope to go in the future.

## THE LATEST IN KSK ACTIVITIES

At the end of March, KSK's mission was highlighted to KL's glitterati in a fundraising fashion show hi-tea, generously hosted by KL's fashion couturier, Melvin Lam, and The Westin KL. The event was a resounding success and raised much needed funds.

It also drew media attention for KSK in the form of an article in The Star newspaper and resulted in a live interview on Hello on 2, the RTM2 breakfast show.

The beginning of April saw KSK at the community corner at 1Utama Shopping centre, where we had the opportunity to raise awareness about KSK and display our KSK video. This arose from the kindness of the Assistant PR Manager at 1Utama who had been touched by our KSK video at previous public awareness event we participated in at Sunway Pyramid.

She invited KSK to participate in their Community Corner annual programme, where 1Utama sponsors a free promotion space to non-profit organisations such as KSK in aid of their fundraising and awareness goals.

Further, throughout the month of May, Times Bookstores generously offered 10% of all retail sales of KMP books to KSK. It is very heartening to see these prestigious companies who are going the extra mile to support KSK.

All this work towards increasing public awareness and raising funds allowed KSK to distribute more food to the homeless and urban poor. From distributing 20 packets

of food in 2006, we are now distributing 250 packets to the areas of Puduraya, Pudu Market and Chow Kit.

We are now also able to give basic first aid to our many clients; we have even built a relationship with a medical doctor whose clinic we can bring those who need more serious medical treatment. In addition, our numbers of volunteers are increasing, with friends from Singapore and as far as Indonesia and Philippines contacting us and asking to participate.

## THE PARAMITA OF GENEROSITY

KSK is truly a gift. Everything about KSK celebrates the paramita of generosity – of giving. While we give food and first aid to the homeless, they, in turn, give us the opportunity to care about someone else who has less than us. They give us the opportunity to do physical work to benefit others, to practise mindfulness in respecting others, to be open-minded and non-judgemental of others. HE Tsem Tulku Rinpoche says that true happiness is in giving to others, and I dare say KSK volunteers have all experienced this joy of giving.

KSK's medium-term plan is to get a physical building in the centre of KL for our soup kitchen, where the homeless can come for hot food as well as a shower and a place to rest.

Our long-term plan is to have a nurture centre, where those who wish to be



**FROM TOP TO BOTTOM**  
Volunteers gather every weekend to hand-pack food for the homeless.

Team leads Anna Tan (centre) and Peter Nicoll (right) spend much time talking to their clients each week.

KSK provides food to everyone regardless of race, religion or background.



employed can undergo training and counselling to become integrated back into the work force.

To achieve these plans, we need funds, help with locating a building in a suitable location and human resources to assist us in carrying out these plans.

If you are interested in our food distribution rounds, please join us – every

Saturday, we gather at Kechara House 2 at 4.30pm to pack the food and then head out to the various different areas in town to distribute. We usually finish around 9pm. If you would like to contribute in other ways, please contact any of the numbers in the adjacent contact box.

 More information about KSK's work can be found on [kskcommunity.org](http://kskcommunity.org)



High society got together at Melvin Lam's fashion show hi-tea to support KSK's work.

## Kechara Soup Kitchen Contacts

New and interested volunteers should contact:

**Anna Tan:** 012 614 0861

**Peter Nicoll:** 012 705 9022

For matters relating to the search for a permanent KSK building, please contact:

**Bob Teasdale** 012 201 1836

For all fundraising matters, please contact:

**Peter Nicoll** 012 705 9022

**Ruby Khong** 012 203 3373

For all monetary donations and gifts in kind, please contact:

**Maple Keh** 012 212 0718

## Stan Collymore supports KSK at 1 Utama and has a wonderful surprise!

A surprise awaited shoppers at 1 Utama Shopping one day in April as the legendary footballer, Stan Collymore, dropped by the KSK booth at the old wing!

The ex-Liverpool and England International football player, "Stan-the-Man" Collymore is a household name for many. After retirement from football due to a leg injury, he has contributed to a biography and even acted alongside Sharon Stone as the character of Kevin Franks in the film Basic Instinct 2. He is now a sports commentator for BBC, ESPN and Star Sport.

Bob Teasdale, an advisor to the KSK committee and the project lead for the Soup Kitchen's nurture centre, had invited Stan to KSK's booth at 1 Utama to show support for KSK's mission to provide food to the homeless.

The 6' 3 1/2" tall man strolled easily into 1 Utama in a white t-shirt, with Kechara Soup Kitchen's logo proudly embroidered on its collar. Immediately a crowd gathered and young football fans queued up for autographs.

Stan shared that he had become interested in Buddhism and had even attended a Buddhist retreat in Birmingham, UK. He also asked about various aspects regarding Tibetan Buddhism with genuine interest.

Then, as we chatted, the lucky visitors in 1 Utama received yet another surprise! HE Tsem Tulku Rinpoche, the inspiration behind KSK, came to express his thanks to Stan for taking time out of his busy schedule to support the soup kitchen.


They talked awhile, with Rinpoche relating how he had experienced homelessness and hunger in his teenage years, which is why he has been inspired ever since to make sure no one goes hungry.

After Rinpoche left, Stan had to rush off to his next appointment, but before he left, he said, "He's amazing. What an amazing guy. He has this presence. Not what I expected at all. I felt that it was a real privilege to meet him. I don't make promises, I can't keep. If there's

anything I can do to help, I'll do it."

Stan was definitely left moved and impressed. This isn't an easy feat when you've met as many celebrities as he has! For someone of his calibre to come to visit our stand shows much of the man, and his kindness and effort was well rewarded by the rare opportunity to connect with HE Tsem Tulku Rinpoche.

KSK is very grateful to Bob Teasdale for introducing Stan to KSK and to Stan for supporting this worthy cause.

 The full story of Stan Collymore's visit can be read on [www.kecharahouse.com](http://www.kecharahouse.com)





Miguel and Graca with their Tsongkhapa statue, a gift from Rinpoche.

# The Other End of Our Computer C@ble

Our first Portuguese friends, Miguel and Graca, share their amazing adventure, from Porto to Kuala Lumpur to Kechara Heaven.

By Miguel and Graca Ribeiro

In a country like Portugal, where Christianity is the main spiritual tradition, Dharma was a word practically unknown to us. We can say that our connection to the Buddha's teachings has been happening through wonderful "accidents".

We first came across Geshe Michael Roach's teachings at Diamond Mountain University 1, where we started to learn about Dharma.

There we were navigating through the Internet, as usual. Lots of sites, lots of pages, trillions of words...

One day, we were browsing videos online on YouTube and one of them caught our attention: a teaching by HE Tsem Tulku Rinpoche. We thought it was hilarious and the magic started to happen. It is far beyond words trying to explain what we have experienced while watching Tsem Rinpoche's YouTube videos, but we'll try!

Through Tsem Rinpoche's sensitive way of reaching us, we were taken into an adventure of self-discovery. He made us cry by laughing; he made us cry by revealing our shame and he made us reach inside and look into ourselves.

One night, we were watching another video and Miguel said, "We could go there!", to which I replied: "We? Go there? When? And the money?" A few days later I realised that, in fact, this would be a journey of a lifetime, well worth the money I had worked so hard and been saving up for these past years. It was an opportunity to put into practice some of the teachings that we had been listening to.

So, we decided to go in October last year, for it was Tsem Rinpoche's birthday month. The first email contact was made to Kechara House and from then onwards, we were immediately embraced by all, and helped in every possible way with such great kindness and love.

In a blink of an eye we were at Kuala Lumpur International Airport. We took a taxi, and few minutes later, we really were at the other end of our computer cable!

## REALITY OR FICTION?!

Some friends welcomed us at the new Kechara House Guest House, and since we were the first guests there, all of them had done a lot of work in very little time, to make everything perfect for our stay! Finally, we could feel and touch those familiar faces. We knew them through the tube for so long that it was a lot of fun to finally meet them!

We quickly found out that Malaysians have a special care about providing food for others, which was music to our ears, because Portuguese love to eat!! So, you can imagine how instantly we felt at home! In another blink of an eye, there we were all together at the dinner table.

Each single day at Kechara House was unique. Everybody made a great effort to give us their best. Some friends took us to visit historical places, to taste the best Malaysian foods, and to visit their own homes and cultures.

We participated in the daily pujas at Kechara House 2, we visited Saraswasti's Art Department and the other three Dharma outlets, where we learned about how Dharma can reach people through a language that we recognise better.

In the Kechara Soup Kitchen we had the great opportunity to see the other side of the "touristy" scene. We also visited the new retreat land, just outside of the city.

We also had the blessing of being in the presence of HE Tsem Tulku Rinpoche himself, to hear his teachings, his advice and to receive his gifts, especially a complete traditional altar with statues of Je Tsongkhapa, Kedrup Je, and Gyaltsab Je, from His Eminence's personal collection, among many other wonderful presents. We felt very blessed!

Then, with the blessings and advice of His Eminence, our house here in Portugal has been blessed and named "Tsongkhapa House." Since then, we have learned what a living sangha is, a sangha in action.

*"May I think of every living being  
As more precious than a wish-giving gem  
For reaching the ultimate goal,  
And so always hold them dear."*

*Thank You,  
In deep gratitude,  
Om Mani Peme Hung*

**Miguel and Graca**

**i** Miguel and Graca have kept in close contact with Kechara House since their return to Portugal. As advised by Tsem Rinpoche, Miguel and Graca have also put their creativity and love of Dharma into action by creating their own webpage: [tsongkhapa.wikidot.com](http://tsongkhapa.wikidot.com) Have a look at what Dharma looks like in Portuguese!

The Ribeiro's beautiful new altar in Tsongkhapa House.

