

A NEW *Kinda* MAGAZINE 2016

KECHARA





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•
CONTENTS
•
•
•

3 THE TEAM

4 CEO'S MESSAGE

5 HIGHLIGHTS

BLOOMS Enriched by Kechara

- 6** Nestle's Annual Raya Event
- 8** Amelia & Pin Hoong's Wedding

KECHARA FOREST RETREAT

- 10** The Aviary
- 13** The Butterlamp Project

KECHARA HOUSE

- 14** Qing Ming
- 15** Wesak Day
- 16** First Dorje Shugden Procession in Malaysia
- 18** Ullambana Puja
- 19** The Mid Autumn Festival
- 20** Tsongkhapa Retreat
- 22** A Special Thanksgiving Event at Kechara Forest Retreat
- 24** Tsem Rinpoche's Birthday
- 26** Lama Tsongkhapa Day

KECHARA IN MOTION

- 28** Dorje Shugden's Mantra in Music

KECHARA MEDIA & PUBLICATIONS

- 30** The Paranormal Zone - Season 4
- 32** Unleashing Buddhature
- 33** **KECHARA OASIS**
- 35** **KECHARA PARADISE**
- 36** **KECHARA SOUP KITCHEN**
- 41** **TSEM RINPOCHE FOUNDATION**
- 43** **YAYASAN KECHARA INDONESIA**

47 FEATURES

AVIARY

- 48** Break the Chain, Make the Change

KSK FOOD BANK

- 52** Providing Food, Providing Hope

NEPAL PILGRIMAGE

- 56** A Visit to Nepal's Sacred Power Places

PASTOR ORDINATION

- 65** Kechara's New Pastor - Pastor Albert

67 LIFE

68 HOW TO BE VEGAN

74 VOLUNTEERING AND ITS SURPRISING BENEFITS

77 MIRACLES DO HAPPEN



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CEO's Message

Twenty sixteen was a challenging year to say the least. From the truck crash in Nice that killed 84 people to the New Year's Eve nightclub massacre that left 39 revellers dead in Turkey, the world has had to battle with a lot of pain and grief. But as Buddha teaches us, everything is impermanent, just like our lives and similarly, our hardships and sorrows.

At Kechara, the year 2016 saw us going out with full force in reaching out to the communities around us. Establishing the Tsem Rinpoche Foundation was a personal milestone as we had been working tirelessly to get the foundation up and running. And with its fruition, we kicked off our Back to School and Bag Projects, where we were able to provide underprivileged students around in the Klang Valley with school supplies, allowing them to start the school year on a positive note.

I am also very privileged to be part of the Bite No More Project, which kicked off its first phase last year. We distributed mosquito nets, mosquito coils and educational pamphlets to those who are especially vulnerable to mosquito attacks –

impoverished families. It was very heart breaking to see the living conditions of many of these people and I am glad to be a part of an organisation that is helping to better their lives.

On a personal note, 2016 was a year that took a toll on me in terms of time, energy and efforts. I learnt some personal lessons that if given a choice I would have preferred not to have experienced. But instead of being frustrated, I turned my focus to the teachings of H. E. Tsem Rinpoche and the protection of Dorje Shugden.

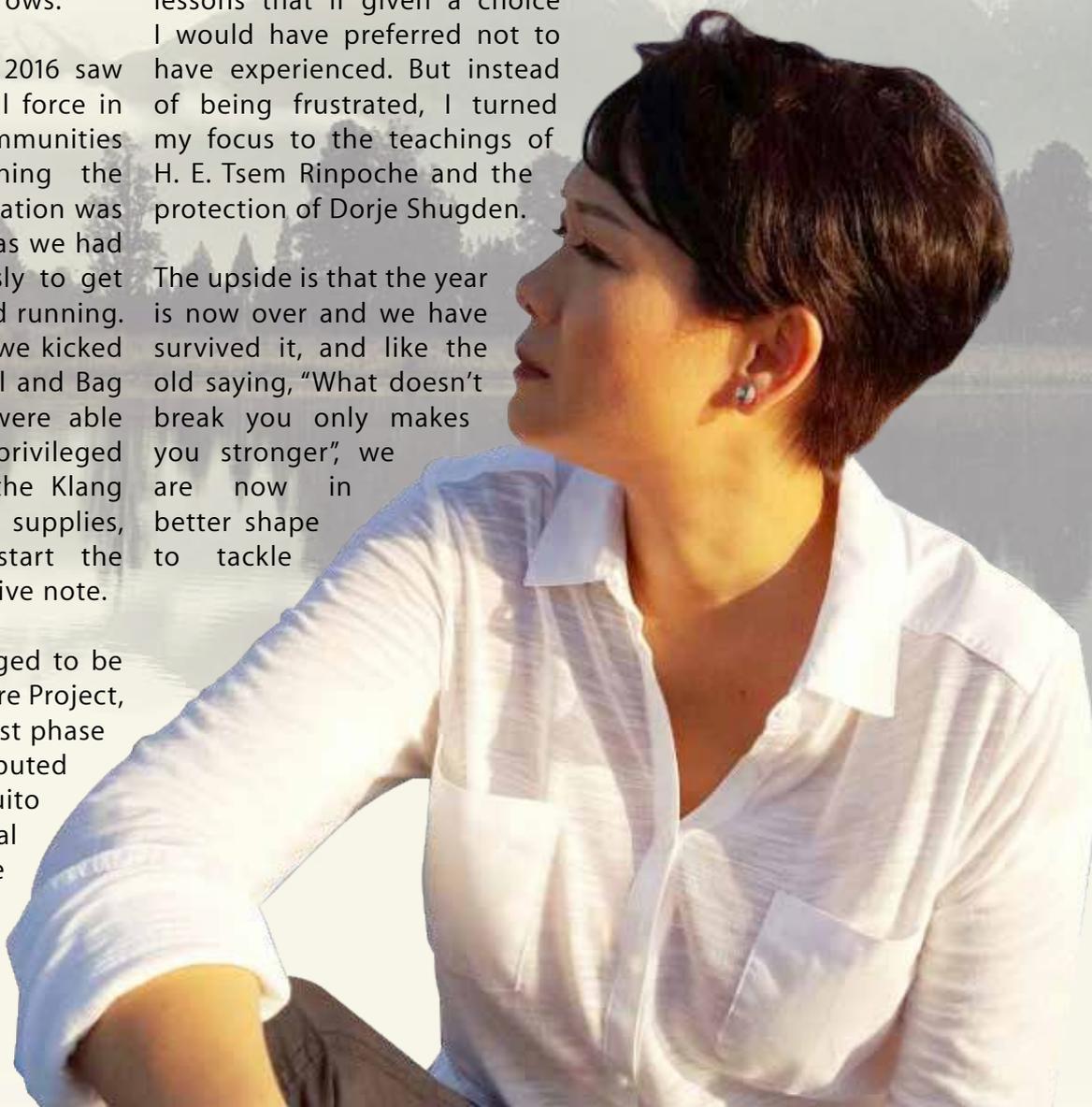
The upside is that the year is now over and we have survived it, and like the old saying, "What doesn't break you only makes you stronger", we are now in better shape to tackle

whatever challenges that may come our way.

Here's to a wonderful 2017 and let us continue our spiritual journey in this new year!

Li Kim

**CEO, Kechara Media
& Publications**



⋮
HIGHLIGHTS
⋮





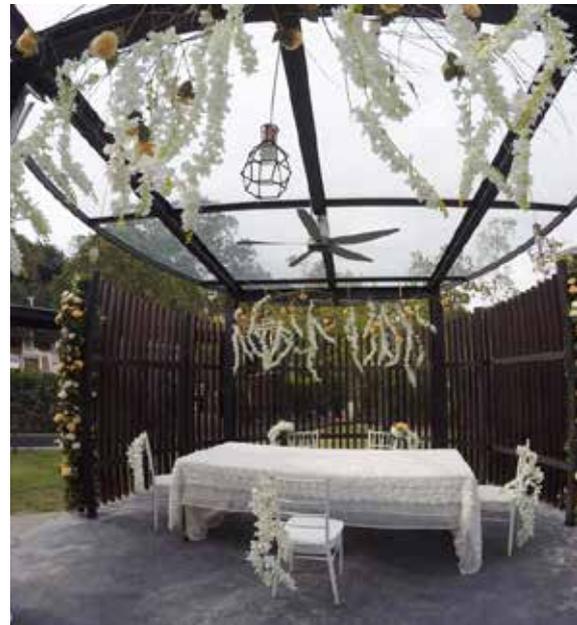
Kechara Blooms

was asked to prepare the floral arrangements for Nestle's annual Raya event. It was held on **6 August 2016** at **Nestle's headquarters in Surian Tower, Petaling Jaya**. The theme for the event was **Nestle Royal Raya** and we used a combination of white phalaenopsis, white roses, champagne roses & green hydrangeas.

The floral decorations were a great hit with both the client and also the guests as everyone could not stop taking pictures of the beautiful flower arrangements and also selfies with them to post on social media.

7 HIGHLIGHTS | BLOOMS Enriched by Kechara





Amelia and Pin Hoong chose Kechara Blooms to do the decorations for their registration of marriage ceremony and party, which took place on 25 September 2016 at their home in Shah Alam. The theme for the wedding was Rustic Classy Garden Wedding and the flowers used were white roses, champagne roses, pink hydrangeas and green hydrangeas.

Flowers were strategically placed on the canopies, dessert bar and guest tables for a stunning effect. Kechara Blooms also prepared Amelia's bridal bouquet and did part of the decorations for the registration of marriage ceremony.

The guests were awed by the beautiful set-up while the newlyweds and their families were delighted with the floral decorations and arrangements that Kechara Blooms prepared especially for them.



9 HIGHLIGHTS | BLOOMS Enriched by Kechara



THE AVIARY

Inspired by Rinpoche's compassion for all sentient beings, The Aviary was set up at Kechara Forest Retreat. Over the years, various species of birds that have been mistreated or abandoned have been taken in and rehabilitated at the aviary. Here are some of these beautiful creatures that call the aviary their home:



Drolkar

Dechog



Species : Sulphur Crested Cockatoo
Type : Triton (Greater)
Gender : Female
Favorite Food : Red Grapes

Drolkar was the first rescue in 2008 by His Eminence the 25th Tsem Rinpoche, which marked the start of a tireless effort in setting up an animal sanctuary that has now become a haven for unwanted, abused and abandoned animals.

This beautiful cockatoo was slapped and abused by her previous owner and had developed a phobia to humans. Now, she spreads her wings freely and flies around the aviary without any fear of people. When Rinpoche rescued her, he made a promise to give her a new and beautiful life, which he has fulfilled.

Species : Sulphur Crested Cockatoo
Type : Eleonora (Medium)
Gender : Male
Favorite Food : Pellets

Once cockatoos find their partners, they remain faithful to their partner. A few months after rescuing Drolkar, we scoured pet shops looking for a suitable mate for her. We hoped that by having a partner, Drolkar would open up and feel happy again.

Dechog is a young male cockatoo slightly smaller than Drolkar. Since we introduced Dechog to Drolkar, both have been living together happily. They're a loving pair and are always seen flying around together, scratching each other and kissing each other.

Dechog is playful, inquisitive and likes to mimic people. If someone whistles, he'll whistle back. He likes to be touched, but may bite if you're a stranger!



Species : African Grey
Type : Congo
Gender : Male
Favorite Food : Sunflower seeds

In mid-2012, Rinpoche came across an old and shy African Grey. He was 45 years old and had been abandoned. His previous owner had left the bird outside in a small cage for four years. The bird's poor living condition broke Rinpoche's heart and he decided to adopt him. Rinpoche named him Aki and gave him a new home in a nice environment with fresh air, friends and greens.

When Aki was brought to the aviary, he would stay in his cage even if the cage was left open in the aviary. Rinpoche had the idea of integrating Aki to the bigger space by specially making a wooden table on which Aki's cage was laid. To lure him out food and water was placed on the wooden table together with some Buddha statues to give him blessings. Eventually Aki came out of his cage and began walking around the wooden table. Soon after he started flying around the aviary and has not gone back into his cage since. He seems to be healed from his bad memories and now flies and sings on the branches.



Aki

Species : African Grey
Type : Congo
Gender : Male
Favorite Food : Sugarcane

A few months after Aki was rescued, Rinpoche found another African Grey chained to a perch in a pet shop in the basement of a shopping mall. He was a lively bird but didn't have much moving space. It broke Rinpoche's heart to see him contained in such a claustrophobic environment without any sunlight or proper ventilation. The African Grey was brought back to the aviary and named Jamyang, after the Tibetan name of Bodhisattva Manjushri. Jamyang gets along well with Aki and all other birds in the aviary. Jamyang is a very sociable and gentle bird and everyone likes playing with him.

Jamyang





Gongkar



Boy

Species : Sulphur Crested Cockatoo
Type : Lesser
Gender : Male
Favorite Food : Sunflower seeds

Gongkar came to the aviary with a bald chest and the doctor diagnosed him with a behavioural issue. As parrots are highly intelligent animals, they need plenty of stimulation to keep them entertained. He said that Gongkar was plucking his feathers because he was bored.

After two years of living in the aviary, there was very little improvement with Gongkar in spite of providing him with toys to play with and a wide space to fly around. He was taken to the vet once more and this time was diagnosed with feather mites. It was due to the itchiness that he had been plucking his feathers. Gongkar was then prescribed with medication and soon baby feathers were seen growing on his chest. There was also a significant change in Gongkar's behaviour; while he was previously aggressive, he has now become gentler.

Species : Sulphur Crested Cockatoo
Type : Triton (Greater)
Gender : Male
Favorite Food : Oat Flakes

Boy was owned by a family in Kuala Lumpur, who used to live near Rinpoche's city residence. Rinpoche found that the bird was kept in a small cage outdoors, which was exposed to direct sunlight and rain. By the constant loud noises he made, Rinpoche could tell he was unhappy so Rinpoche offered to give Boy a better living environment. The family rejected the offer at first but realising how serious we were about animal welfare, they decided to let us adopt Boy.

Boy is an attention seeker and he is a territorial bird. He has to be the first one to be fed and pet when the caretakers go into the aviary, otherwise he would misbehave to show his jealousy. He is, however, afraid of Jamyang, the African Grey.

Other birds

Whenever Rinpoche sees birds living in bad conditions, no matter how big or small, he would always do everything he can to rescue them. In addition to the big birds that we have introduced to you, there are 22 cockatiels, 20 budgies and one zebra dove in the aviary.





THE BUTTERLAMP PROJECT

A Lifetime of Lights Offered in Your Name

The act of offering light to the Three Jewels is believed to increase our wisdom, wealth and creates causes for a strong and healthy body. In essence, the goodness that we receive in samsara and nirvana is a result of making light offerings to the Three Jewels.

The fourth of the thousand Buddhas, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, whose mind was enriched with 10 powers, proclaimed in the Tune of

Brahma Sutra Clarifying Karma that making light offerings affords us the following benefits:

- We become like a light in the world.
- If we take rebirth as humans, we achieve clairvoyance of the pure flesh eye.
- We achieve the devas' eye.
- We gain perfect wisdom, which allows us to discriminate between actions that are virtuous and non-virtuous.
- We eliminate the darkness of ignorance.
- We receive the illumination of wisdom and even when we are in samsara, we will not experience darkness.
- We increase in wealth, and our body and mind will be free and liberated.
- We will not take rebirth in any one of the three lower realms.
- We will attain enlightenment sooner.

When you make a one-off sponsorship for a personalised butterlamp holder at Kechara Forest Retreat, you are offering a lifetime of light offerings in

your name. In addition, you are contributing to the building of a monastery, which is a meritorious act, as taught by the Buddha and many ancient masters before him. As the Buddha described the benefits of building monasteries to King Sangyal, he taught that people who build monasteries will always have incredible wealth and power in future lives and will eventually attain enlightenment.

The great Indian yogi, Nagden Pawo also said that those who contribute, no matter how small the contribution, to the building of a Buddhist institution, continuously attain tremendous merits even as they go about their daily lives.

You now have the opportunity to attain tremendous merits. Sponsor your everlasting flame now by contacting Kechara Forest Retreat at:

03-7803 3908

or email

care@kechara.com

for details of the programme.



QING MING

28 MAR 2016 (ENG) &
30 MAR 2016 (CHI)



Qing Ming Remembrance Day holds a deep significance for the Chinese as it is the day we pay tribute to our dearly departed. This is why we should generate as much merits as possible, especially during the Remembrance Day Puja by making various offerings to the Three Jewels to help our dearly departed ones take a better rebirth in their future lives.

There were two Protector Pujas this year, one in English and one in Chinese. For the Remembrance Day Puja, Kechara House offered 1,000 light offerings at the Tsongkhapa Shrine in Kechara Forest Retreat to illuminate our spiritual path as such offerings are known to be effective in increasing our wisdom and dispelling the darkness of our ignorance. Both puja sessions received an overwhelming response with a total of 96 people attending them.



WESAK DAY

21 MAY 2016

In conjunction with Wesak day, Kechara House carried out a number of activities. In the morning, Kechara members performed acts of compassion with animal liberations as well as an Adopt-a-Bird event, which took place afterwards. This was followed by the Children Baptismal, which saw 63 young ones between the ages of eight months and 16 years old receiving their baptism. In the afternoon there was a vegetarian vow-taking ceremony. The day ended on a high note with Lama Chopa puja.





FIRST
DORJE SHUGDEN
PROCESSION
IN MALAYSIA
9 Aug 2016





Kechara had the privilege of being a part of Bentong's yearly Hungry Ghost Festival Procession under the invitation of the Bentong Chai Shen Temple. This annual event took place in Bentong during the Hungry Ghost Festival for the locals to propitiate and make offerings to the Chinese Wealth Gods. The procession began at the Chai Shen Temple in Kampung Ulu Perting at 6pm and went through the main streets of Bentong before ending at 10:30pm.



More than 50 Kecharians participated in this historical procession where an estimated 5,000 people filled the streets to catch a glimpse of Dorje Shugden, also known as Chai Wang to the locals, leading the procession preceding the other Chinese wealth deities such as Kuan Kong, Chai Shen and Wu Chai Shen. During the procession, mediums took trance of Chinese wealth deities to bless the Bentong folk. Kecharians distributed Dorje Shugden cards, leaflets, pendants, posters and photos to connect the good people of Bentong with World Peace Protector, Dorje Shugden. It was heart-warming to witness acceptance and religious harmony during the procession, where Buddhist and Taoist practices co-existed side by side with the sole aim of bringing blessings to all.





ULLAMBANA PUJA

15 Aug 2016 (Eng)



17 Aug 2016 (Chi)

Last year's Ullambana prayers were held on 15 August (English) and 17 August (Chinese) at Kechara House. This annual event allows Kecharians and friends to perform prayers for the good rebirth of their dearly departed as well as to relieve wandering spirits of their sufferings. During this period, it is auspicious for relatives of the deceased to make as much offerings as possible to temples, Dharma institutions and the Sangha to gain vast amounts of merits for their dearly departed.

A total of 172 people attended the Ullambana event. The activities commemorating this day included Protector Pujas, the offering of lights, flowers and special dedication tablets. Among these offerings, the most popular was the offering of lights. Many participants made dedications to their loved ones by sponsoring lights and pujas for various purposes such as health, protection and general blessings for the whole family. As a token of appreciation to the sponsors, Kechara House also offered complimentary light offerings.



THE MID-AUTUMN FESTIVAL

— 3 Sept 2016 —

On 3 September, Kechara's Sunday Dharma School (KSDS), kind sponsors and members from all walks of life came together for a noble purpose – to give back to the community through the Lantern Festival Charity Bazaar. Many people put in valuable time, effort and energy into this event that involved the Kechara organisation, friends and families, the local community, orphanages, charity organisations and entertainers. This event was open to the public and many responded positively.

The Lantern Festival Charity Bazaar was held outside Kechara House at SunwayMas Commercial Centre in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia. There were 43 stalls of goodies that were either subsidised or fully funded by local businesses and the community. In support of the charity event, they contributed a variety of goodies, ranging from sizzling local hawker food to branded children's fashion gear. Besides having the kind sponsors, over 40 volunteers proactively offered their time to make the event a success. Some of the external volunteers were of different faiths but supported this good cause anyway as they acknowledged that there are no boundaries in doing good work.





TSONGKHAPA RETREAT

12 Sep – 14 Sep

&

15 Sep – 17 Sep

2016



During the September school holidays, 33 Kecharians spent the week engaging in Lama Tsongkhapa Retreats. Organised by Kechara House, the retreats were conducted in Wisdom Hall at Kechara Forest Retreat.

The retreatants were divided into two groups; the first group consisted of eight retreatants, who were Kechara House and Puja House staff whose retreat took place from 12 to 14 September 2016.

From 15 to 17 September 2016, a bigger group of 26 participants engaged in their group retreat. They comprised volunteers, members and staff of Kechara. Children of volunteers and staff also took part in this second group, where the youngest retreatant, Marici, was just 6 years old.

It was indeed a holiday well spent as retreatants were able to collect tremendous merits to purify their karma and increase their wisdom. This powerful retreat is suitable for modern day practitioners as it is easy to carry out and can help reduce stress and depression.





A SPECIAL THANKSGIVING
EVENT AT KECHARA FOREST RETREAT



— 15 Oct 2016 —





This was a special day at Wisdom Hall, Kechara Forest Retreat. It was the day when sponsors of the highly beneficial 'LAMPS FOR LIFE' programme sealed their merits from having successfully made one million light offerings to Lama Tsongkhapa and the Buddhas at Kechara Forest Retreat's (KFR) prayer hall.

All those present were treated to a penetrative Dharma Teaching

by Kechara's Dharma teacher, Pastor David Lai. After that, the Kechara Puja Team led by Pastor Tat-Ming commenced the melodious chant of the holy Lama Chopa, followed by the recitation of the King of Prayers to seal the merits from the making of these light offerings to the participants of 'LAMPS FOR LIFE'.

At the conclusion of the prayers, all those present were invited to Dukkar Apartments for a vegetarian buffet and refreshments from Kechara Oasis Vegetarian Restaurant. Many lingered to catch up with friends and renew their connection with KFR. For first timers at KFR, it was a treat to soak in the energy of this holy land embraced by nature.





TSEM RINPOCHE'S BIRTHDAY

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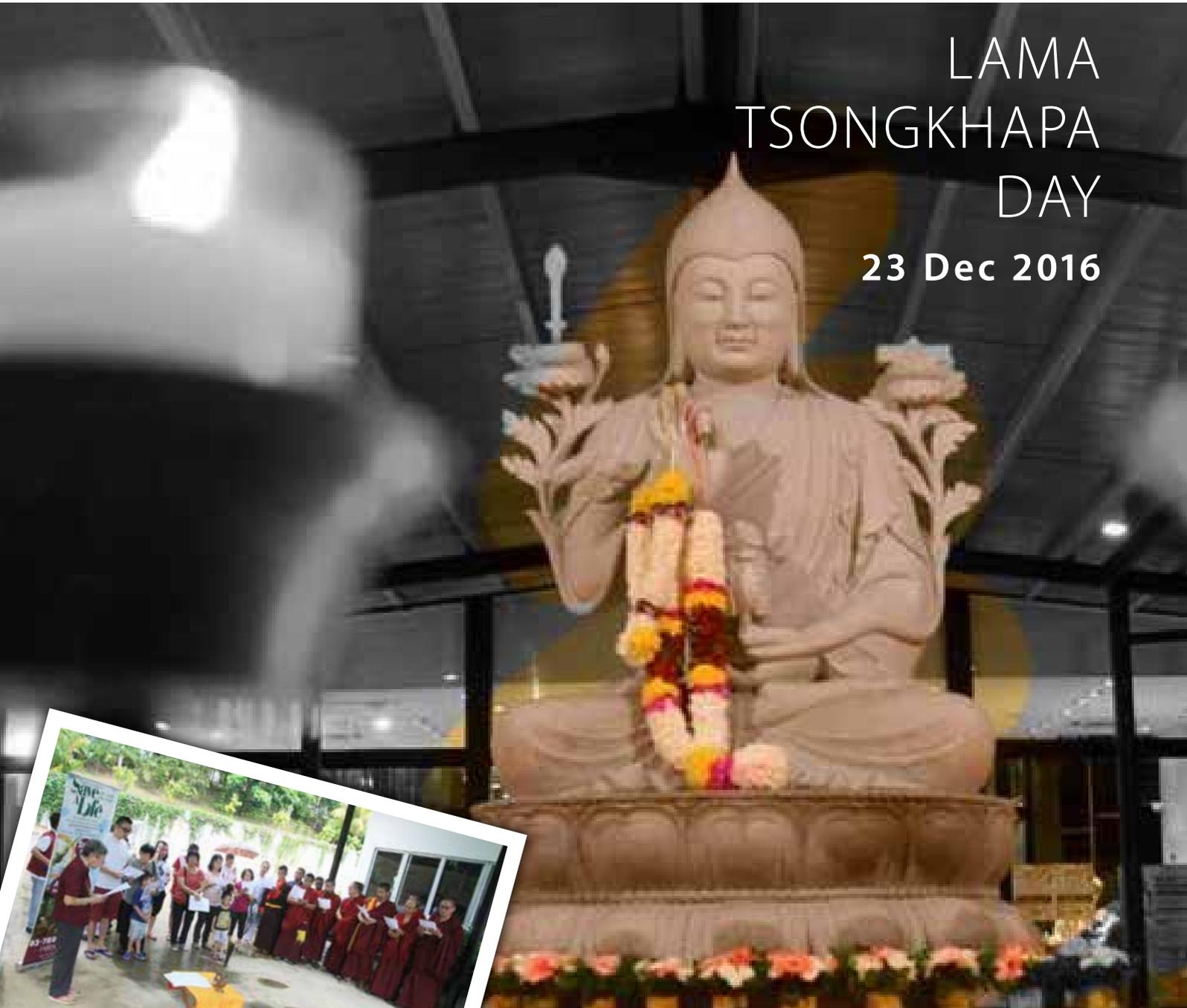
24 Oct 2016



On 24 October 2016, Kechara celebrated H.E. the 25th Tsem Rinpoche's birthday. The celebrations began in the morning with the 8th Pastor Ordination held at the Wisdom Hall in Kechara Forest Retreat, which saw Albert Ratchaga becoming the latest member of Kechara's pastoral team. This was followed by Animal Liberation in the afternoon outside Kechara House. In the evening, a group of 30 people, including teenagers and children, took vegetarian vows in dedication to Tsem Rinpoche's long life, good health and for the success of his Dharma work. To encourage more people to take and hold vegetarian vows, the flexibility of holding vows for a shorter duration was introduced. Taking their vegetarian vows via Skype and phone were eight Kecharians from Ipoh and Singapore. A highly meritorious Lama Chopa, led by 12 Pastors and Puja Team members, was performed after the vegetarian vows ceremony.

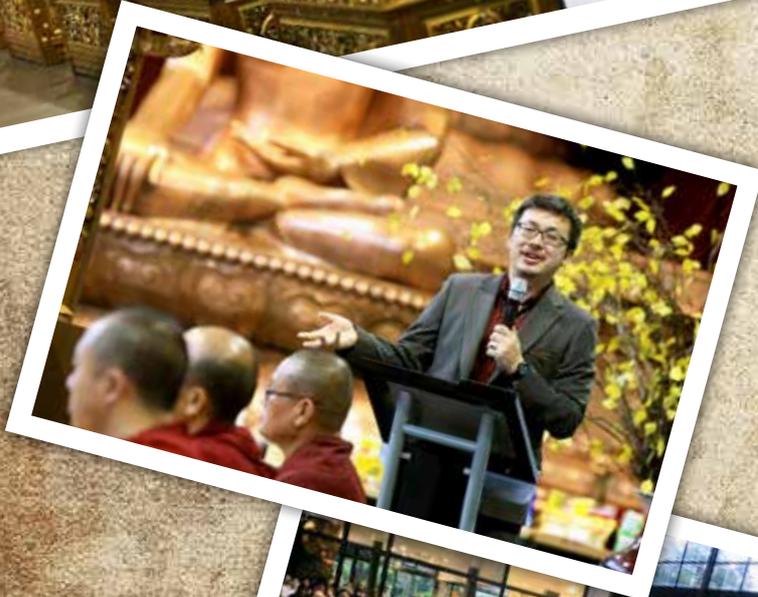


LAMA
TSONGKHAPA
DAY
23 Dec 2016



Lama Tsongkhapa Day or Ganden Ngamchoe

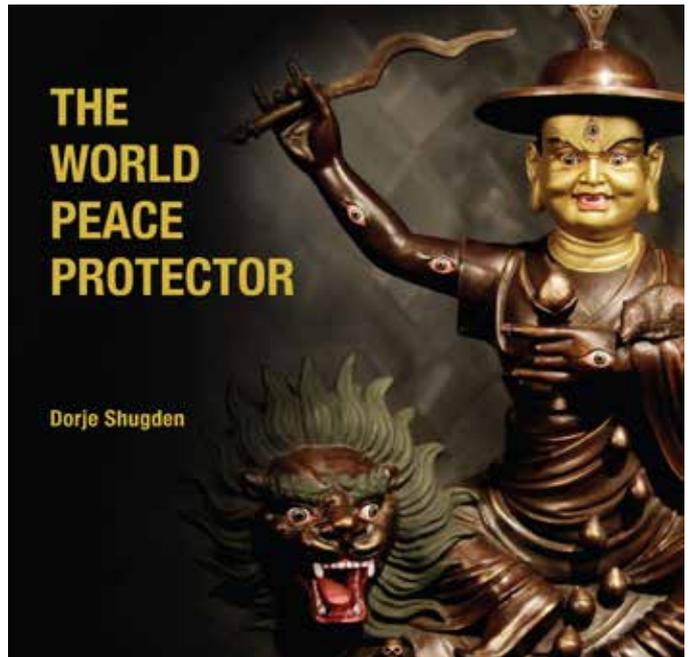
is celebrated to commemorate the parinirvana and Enlightenment of Lama Tsongkhapa, the founder of the Gelugpa school of Tibetan Buddhism. This year's Lama Tsongkhapa Day kicked off in the evening with an auspicious prayer and fellowship at Kechara Forest Retreat. It was an excellent day to engage in virtuous activities as all merit accumulated on this day was multiplied 100,000 times. To help practitioners gain vast merits and purify vast amounts of negative karma, Kechara gave out 1,000 sets of traceable Arya Sanghata Sutra books in English and Chinese, gold ink pens and ink refills after the highly auspicious Lama Chopa prayers.



DORJE SHUGDEN'S MANTRA IN MUSIC

Mantra is the sound form of an enlightened energy of a particular Buddha or deity. Dorje Shugden's mantra is a mantra that brings miraculous results and benefits to practitioners. Reciting the mantra has also saved many lives.

To encourage more people to learn and be blessed by the sacred mantra, Kechara In Motion (KIM) produced two songs on the Dorje Shugden's mantra. This project kicked off in August 2015 with the assistance of two passionate Kecharians – Mitra Poudel and Eric Siow.



While KIM was raising funds to make this project a reality, Pok Chee Hong, a music composer had been composing a number of melodies to match the feel of the mantra in music form. It was not an easy process as there was a lot of considerations and coordination to be taken into account.

Mitra, who is a famous singer in Nepal, composed the melody for one of the songs and during the recording he sang with his heart and soul. We are quite certain that everyone who listens to the songs will be touched by his beautiful voice and his strong faith and love for his protector, Dorje Shugden.

In the course of the production of the CD, we came across Evelyn Toh, a professional singer who is famous for her role as Princess Wen Cheng in the musical *Princess Wen Cheng*.

She recalled that a pastor from Kechara visited her grandmother in the hospital before she passed on. The pastor wrote a Dorje Shugden mantra on a piece of paper and asked the family to recite the mantra to the grandmother as many times as possible.

As the mantra reminded Evelyn of her late grandmother, she agreed to sing for the recording. She dedicated the recording to her late grandmother, so that she may be well wherever she is.

In addition to the track *The World Peace Protector*, KIM also produced a second song called *A Friend Indeed*. The melody for this track was composed by Chee Hong and this song was intended to be a lighter version of the mantra to enable everyone to learn it easily.

Dave Pei Jie is a popular Malaysian singer for Buddhist songs and when contacted, he agreed to sing for KIM. He was honoured to be part of the project especially if he could touch someone's heart and change their life through his song.

There are two versions of this DS Mantra CD, one is sung by Mitra Poudel and the other is a combination of songs by Evelyn and Dave. Both CDs have the same third track, which is the Dorje Shugden's mantra recited by His Eminence the 25th Tsem Rinpoche. The third track can be repeated to bless the environment or anything in need.

The CDs were launched on 5 May 2016 in Kechara House and complimentary copies of the CDs are available at all Kechara outlets. In June, the songs were launched online and are now available in iTunes, Spotify, Amazon, KKBox, RedMp3 and many other online stores under the title *The World Peace Protector*.

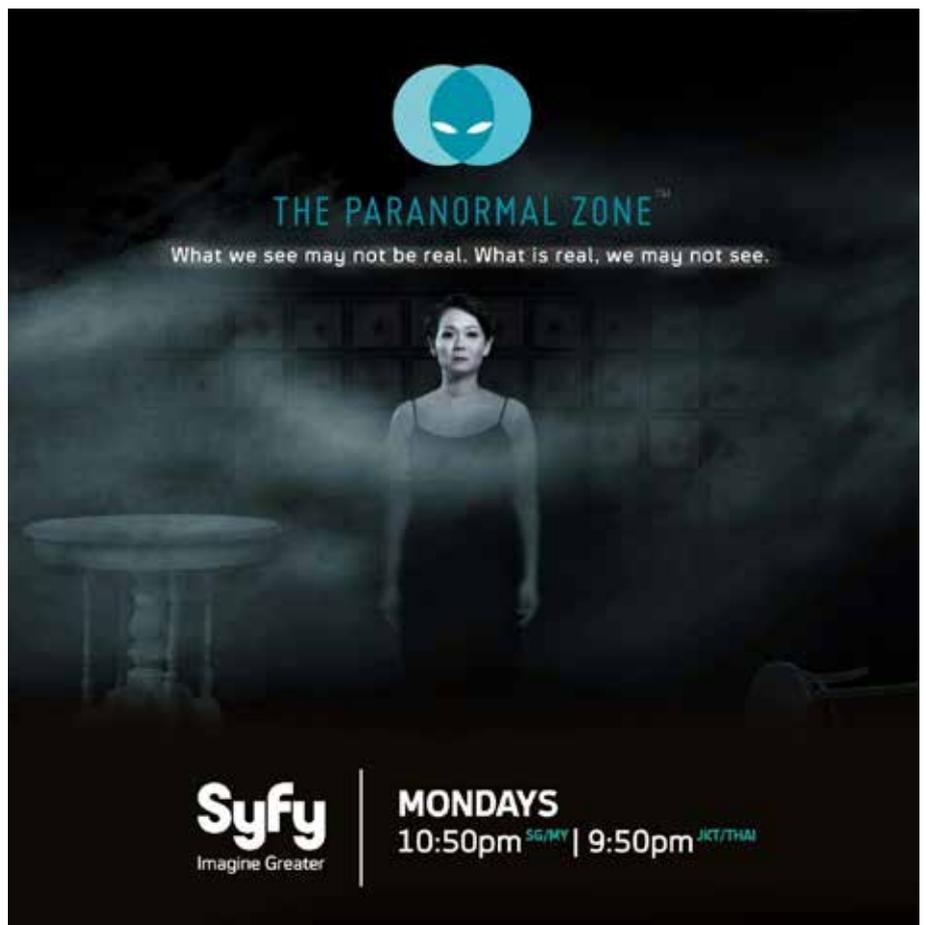
We encourage people to make a small contribution when taking a copy of the CD. All funds collected will go towards Kechara House.



THE PARANORMAL ZONE

— season 4

In 2016, Kechara Media & Publications (KMP) saw the production of season 4 of the highly acclaimed TV show, *The Paranormal Zone*. In this fourth season, celebrity host and also CEO of KMP, Li Kim travelled to various Asian cities including Kuala Lumpur, Taipei, Jakarta and Malacca where she delved into the mysteries surrounding out-of-body-experiences, supernatural dolls, black magic and even female ghosts. The new season premiered on NBC's Syfy channel on 8 August, much to the delight of her die-hard paranormal fans.



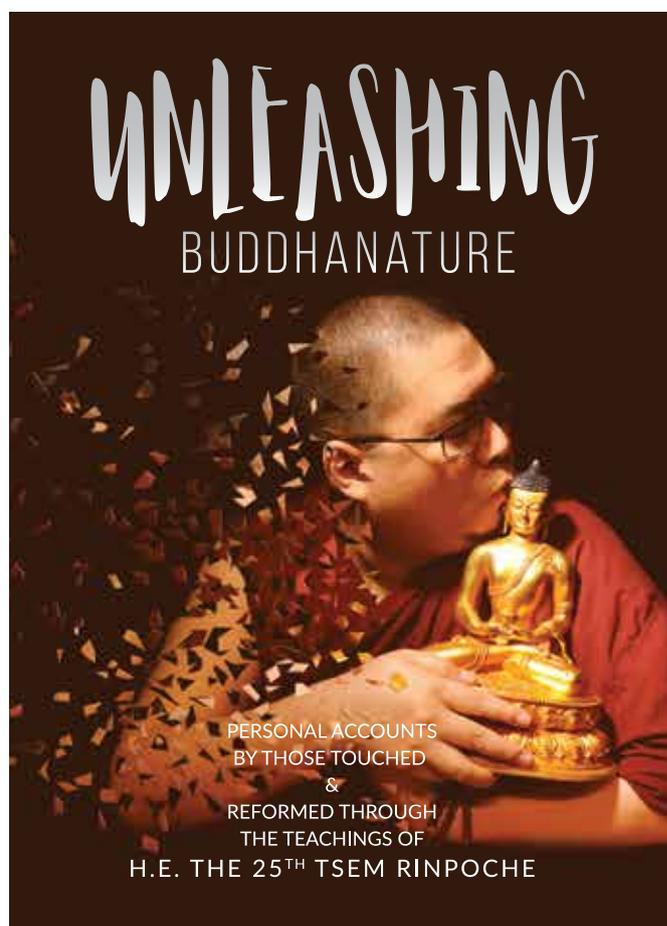


UNLEASHING BUDDHANATURE

Kechara Media & Publications' new book, *Unleashing Buddhanature* is a collection of personal accounts by members of Kechara, who have been touched and reformed through the teachings of Tsem Rinpoche.

If you are feeling lost or unclear about the path ahead, fear not as many people have traversed this same path of uncertainty. Read about their similar experiences, the heart-warming stories about how they came to meet with Rinpoche and how he transformed their lives through his teachings.

The book is now available by donation. Please contact Kechara Media & Publications for your copy.



At Kechara Oasis, our food mantra is simple. We believe in supporting our local producers as much as we can. We believe in providing top quality, delicious vegetarian cuisine at great value, and we believe in promoting vegetarian cuisine for all occasions.



In 2016, Kechara Oasis saw more wedding receptions and special events being held at its outlets. Many couples, both vegetarians and non-vegetarians, opted for vegetarian banquets for their special day as animal-free meals would allow them to collect more merits, contribute to their parents' longevity and health while promoting vegetarianism to their friends and relatives.



34 HIGHLIGHTS | KECHARA OASIS

There were also a number of corporate events held at Kechara Oasis last year as many employers found the restaurant to be an excellent choice as the food served is suitable for people of all faiths.

Although the cooking style is primarily Chinese, many non-Chinese couples have opted to hold their wedding reception here as well because of the sumptuous vegetarian cuisine, top-notch service and pleasant environment.

Kechara Oasis was also selected to be included in *Malaysia Tatler Best Restaurants 2017*, an annual publication that highlights some of the best fine and casual dining establishments in the country.





KECHARA PARADISE

Kechara Paradise's new outlet opened in Bentong on 9 April 2016. The new outlet, located on the main street, also has a Dorje Shugden Chapel for devotees to make offerings. The outlet carries a wide range of holy items and also items for offerings such as Buddha statues, Buddha pendants, protection amulets, Buddhist scriptures, wealth vases, incense sticks and candles. With these religious items now readily available in Bentong, the local Buddhists can now carry out their practice with ease.



'BITE NO MORE' PROJECT

by KECHARA SOUP KITCHEN

Kechara Soup Kitchen (KSK), with the support of the Tsem Rinpoche Foundation, launched the 'Bite No More' Project to distribute sets of much-needed mosquito nets and coils to the vulnerable underprivileged community in various locations around the Klang Valley. Distribution of the nets and coils will soon follow in other locations across Malaysia.

All of us are at risk of getting bitten by mosquitoes but these groups of marginalised Malaysians – the homeless and urban poor – are especially vulnerable because of their exposed and harsh living conditions. Having to live rough on the streets, under bridges and shanties is bad enough but it gets even worse when one is a living buffet for mosquitoes, and that is something the homeless and urban poor have to endure daily.

"One of the most often requested items we get from our clients is mosquito coils as they usually can't afford them, even though it offers them the protection they need," says Henry Ooi, President of Kechara Soup Kitchen.





Kechara Soup Kitchen and Tsem Rinpoche Foundation representatives distribute the anti-mosquito care packages to Pusat Jagaan Al-Fikrah Malaysia.



Distribution to underprivileged children at Pertubuhan Kebajikan Anak Yatim Mary KL.

To alleviate the situation, KSK distributed mosquito coils, mosquito nets and educational pamphlets to the homeless and urban poor during the first phase of the 'Bite No More' Project, which kicked off with sponsorship from the Tsem Rinpoche Foundation (TRF), a charitable foundation.

For phase one, the target is to distribute 2,000 sets of mosquito coils and nets to shelter homes, poor families and various organisations around the Klang Valley. These include Pusat Jagaan Al Fikrah in Kajang, Rumah Stepping Stones in Taman Seputeh, Metta Home and Sanctuary Care Centre in Setapak, as well as a number

of impoverished families in Desa Tun Razak, Kampung Bellamy and Kampung Kerinchi. If there is sufficient funding, KSK also plans to distribute these items to Pusat Jagaan Mahmudah Malaysia in Semenyih, PJ Caring home and to additional poor families from public housing and squatter houses in Cheras, Lembah Pantai, Old Klang Road, Setapak, Kepong and Bentong.

But as a box of mosquito coils doesn't last very long and mosquito nets are expensive, Kechara is appealing for donations from the public to help it cast the safety net much wider. We urge the public to help us expand this campaign to more areas and we are hoping that during



KSK President Henry Ooi explains mosquito prevention methods.



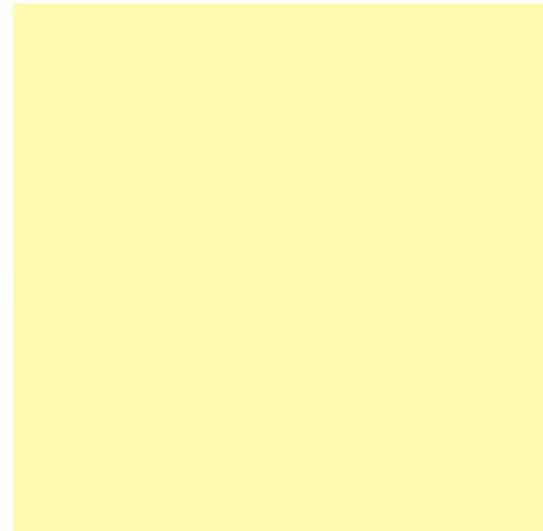
Project Director Justin Cheah installs mosquito nets for residents at Pusat Jagaan Al Fikrah.

the second phase we will be able to reach out to other parts of Malaysia. Please help us protect the homeless and the urban poor from these deadly creatures. **To contribute to the 'Bite No More' Project, please contact Justin Cheah, Project Director of Kechara Soup Kitchen Society at 010 333 3260 or email justinryo@gmail.com**

We wish to extend our deep appreciation to our kind sponsors from the Tsem Rinpoche Foundation represented by Datuk May Phng and Dato' Colin Tan and also to Dr Valarmathy Vaiyavari for her knowledge, expertise and time in assisting this cause. Dr Vala has been a consistent volunteer at Kechara Soup Kitchen and, for this project, will be spending time with our clients to counsel them on the prevention and care methods with regards to mosquito-borne diseases. We are also excited to have celebrities Phng Li Kim, Sarimah Ibrahim and Tong Bing Yu on board this project. They too have been on rounds to hand out and put up mosquito nets for the urban poor.



Phng Li Kim sharing a light moment with our recipients.





Datuk Nur Jazlan speaking to the volunteers before the food distribution.

In mid-June, we welcomed three new full-timers. Bernard joined KSK us as a driver, Vivian joined the food bank division and Saymond joined the soup kitchen division. Khor, meanwhile, resigned after eight years at KSK and we would like to thank him for his service and wish him all the best. The additional manpower is necessary in view of the growth in operation that KSK has experienced over the years. We are no longer just a soup kitchen but now we are also a welfare centre for the poor and homeless, a food bank and a hub for citizens to come and volunteer their time.

40 HIGHLIGHTS | KECHARA SOUP KITCHEN

As part of its corporate social responsibility, the Malaysian Resources Corporation Berhad (MRCB), a leading property developer, under the directive of the Federal Territories Ministry and the Kuala Lumpur City Council, built the Pusat Gelandangan Kuala Lumpur. KSK was consulted in determining the structure of this shelter home, which was officially launched on 27 February 2016. It is a positive move that more and more NGOs are now working together with government agencies in helping the homeless. KSK also works closely with the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development and the National Welfare Foundation in a bid to reduce the rate of homelessness in the capital city as well as in Penang and Johor Bahru.

Yang Berbahagia Datuk Nur Jazlan Mohamed, Deputy Home Minister 1 joined KSK in JB for a round of food distribution in January this year. To show his concern and care for the urban poor and the homeless in JB, which is where his constituency – Pulai – is, Datuk Nur Jazlan helped distribute 150 sets of food packages to the underprivileged.

Over the years, we have seen tremendous growth in our food bank beneficiaries and also in the clients we have helped. Our medical team

has also grown by leaps and bounds. Today, on average, we treat at least 70 patients on the street nationwide.

We consistently have new registrations of clients every week, averaging at 50 people per week. Our current number of clients registered stands at 5,779 and we now serve between 12,000 and 13,000 food packets across the nation in a month. Our food bank has grown from being able to serve just 150 to now being able to serve 350 families.

Below are some figures on the cases we have handled in KSK as of September 2016:

- Medical aid: 3,929
- Hospital/medical aid follow-up: 166
- Placement aids (shelter): 145
- Job placements: 109
- Welfare aid applications: 70
- MyKad replacements: 64
- Deportation: 56
- Purchased bus tickets for return home: 23
- Placement aids (rehabilitation): 17
- Repatriation of mortal remains and funeral arrangements: 7
- Skills training: 10
- Reunited with families: 17



Datuk Nur Jazlan (centre) having a word with a KSK client.



Datuk Nur Jazlan listening to the plight of the homeless from a KSK volunteer.



THE BACK TO SCHOOL AND BAG PROJECTS

The Tsem Rinpoche Foundation recently launched the Back to School project to provide school supplies to underprivileged students in a bid to give them an equal opportunity at education. The project kicked off on 16 December 2016 with a total of 190 primary school students from 11 schools across Karak, Bukit Tinggi and Bentong. The students from these various schools were given shoes and socks for the 2017 school term.





In addition to the students, Senator Dato' Hoh Khai Mun, Tsem Rinpoche Foundation spokesperson Datuk May Phng as well headmasters, teachers and parents attended the launch at Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Cina) Khai Mun Pagi in Bentong.

The Tsem Rinpoche Foundation also organised the Bag Project, which took place on 17 December 2016, at Desa Mentari 2 in Kuala Lumpur. For this project, students between the ages of six and 13 years were gifted with school bags and supplies for their next school term. Most of these children were from low-income families while some came from single-parent households. By providing these students with school supplies, the Tsem Rinpoche Foundation has allowed them to start their school year on a good note.



YAYASAN KECHARA INDONESIA

It has been six years since we started our activities and two years since we were formally established. The year 2016 has been an amazing year for Yayasan Kechara Indonesia (YKI) with plenty opportunities to help the people around us and it has been a privilege for us to be afforded the opportunity to help those in need.

In 2016, YKI focused our effort on several activities:

Food Bank and Food distribution (both main and complimentary meal) programme

True to our mission to work actively to improve the living condition of the less fortunate and develop independent individuals through the distribution of daily supplies and educational sponsorship,

YKI has been consistent with our food distribution activities. We distribute food in order to satisfy our clients' hunger, to build trusting relationships with our clients through our consistency, and to identify our clients' pressing and immediate needs.

We distribute between 290 and 500 food packages every week, both through our regular food distribution activities in Kota Bambu Utara, Pertamburan and

Cipete and by providing food to support the various positive activities that are in line with our vision and mission.

In addition, we distributed 500 dry food packages (rice, sugar, instant noodles, cooking oil, etc) throughout year as part of our food bank project. This is part of our effort to fulfil our clients' pressing needs for basic necessities.



Student sponsorship programme

In line with our mission to provide help that will benefit our clients in the long term and to develop independent individuals, we are currently providing scholarships, from the primary to university level, to 20 active students. In addition, we have helped seven students, who had their education terminated due to lack of funds, obtain a package C diploma (a high school equivalent diploma) to enable them to find better paying jobs.

To date, 66 students that we sponsored in the past have graduated and most of them are working to support themselves and their family.



Disaster relief effort

YKI also provided aid to the communities at Pertamburan and Kota Bambu Selatan, whose houses and belongings were ravaged by fire. YKI distributed used clothes, toys and provided new school uniforms to the communities as per their request.



Green project

YKI executed a green project and provided training to the community of Kota Bambu Selatan on how to make their living environment more comfortable, sustainable and beautiful.



Other projects

This year, YKI executed an eye exam project for 200 people in the Palmerah Sub District, together with the Hary Tanoe Foundation. In the course of this project, we noted that 161 of the eye exam participants required spectacles to improve their vision, and we were more than happy to supply them with the spectacles. The distribution of these spectacles was assisted by Kecamatan Palmerah officials. When executing the eye exam project, Kecamatan Palmerah allowed us to use the Government Youth Building (Karang Taruna) at Jati Pulo, which we were very grateful for.



Later in the year, together with Kecamatan Palmerah and with the help of Nippon Paint, we embarked on a project to repaint the Karang Taruna building. We also encouraged the communities and the students we sponsored to participate in this social community project.



YKI Fundraising Challenge – Climbing Mount Kerinci October 2016

As YKI is a non-profit organisation, we are highly depended on the donations we receive from our sponsors and volunteers. This year, eight YKI volunteers decided to climb Mount Kerinci, the highest volcanic mountain in Indonesia at 3,805m above sea level, in order to show their commitment to our charity work and raise funds for YKI’s operational and governance cost. After an arduous hike, the volunteers were successful in planting the YKI flag at the summit of Mount Kerinci.



We would like to specially thank Kecamatan Palmerah, the Hari Tanoe Foundation, Organisasi Peduli Bersama, PT PIEE, Nippon Paint Indonesia and the various sponsors who came together to make our activities possible.



⋮
FEATURES
⋮

Break the
CHAIN,
Make a
CHANGE





Have you ever been in a situation where you could extend help but walked away because you were put off by the thought of responsibility? Well, you are not the only one. In fact, most people behave in the same way. This is because we do not realise how much a little bit of kindness can meaningfully impact the lives of those in need.

It is because of this that Kechara Forest Retreat (KFR) established the Break the Chain, Make a Change campaign. Birds symbolise peace and freedom. However, many people do not know the suffering of these creatures



as some of them are abused, kept in captivity and ill-treated. Therefore, with this campaign we intend to build a conscious community that makes a change by standing up for kindness, respect and gratitude for all life forms, beginning with the rescued birds at KFR's aviary, which was built to provide a safe and happy home for birds that are abused and abandoned.

The Break the Chain, Make a Change campaign was established to contribute to this effort by raising funds to purchase food for these rescued birds. While making a change in the lives of these creatures, we also get to reconnect with nature and make a positive impact on the world. The aviary presently houses wide species of birds including one pigeon, two African greys, three lovebirds, four cockatoos, five hanging parrots, 12 cockatiels and 21 budgies. In addition, the aviary houses two tortoises.



Collaborating with a group of scholars from UCSI University's Scholars Enrichment Programme and UCSI University's U-Schos, and with the sponsorship of Conquest Electronics Sdn Bhd, KFR conceptualised the Break the Chain, Make a Change campaign to give a voice to those who don't. With this campaign, we aim to remain connected and appreciate our fellow earthlings by providing them with a better quality of life in this home we share.

We also hope to increase people’s understanding about the environment and to form a greater appreciation for it and all its inhabitants as many people do not know the importance of preserving the environment, although our livelihood is strongly dependent on it. This is the first easy and convenient step in protecting and rebuilding a healthy and sustainable environment.

It is an on-going effort to raise funds to take care of these abandoned, injured and abused birds and with the Break the Chain, Make a Change campaign we intend to collect funds, which will be used to purchase:

- **Millet @ RM80/pack of 20kg**
- **Seeds (sunflower, assorted nuts) @ RM250/pack**
- **Fresh fruits & vegetables @ approximately RM600/month**
- **Maintenance of the aviary**
- **Medication and health supplements**
- **Toys and materials that help control the growth of their beaks**

Beginning 15 Oct 2016, we placed donation boxes in five partnering cafés listed below:

- **Cheras: Bookmark Café**
- **Petaling Jaya: Sugar Rush, My Burger Lab**
- **Bukit Jalil: Owl’s Café**
- **Bangsar: Grab Café**



Those who have pets know how important it is to shower them with love and affection. This is why we have also placed our donation boxes in the following stores for animal lovers who want to play a part in this project.

Pet Shops

- Pet Lovers Centre, Mid Valley
- Pet Lovers Centre, Cheras Leisure Mall
- Pet Shop at UCSI South Wing

Pet Food Manufacturers

- Pet Mart Group Sdn Bhd, Sungai Buloh
- Nutty Brainz Trading, Cheras



FLY HIGH CHARITY RUN

The Break the Chain, Make a Change campaign will work in collaboration with UCSI University to organise a charity run to raise funds. The run will take place on 28 May 2017 (Sunday) from 6am to 11am and will start and end at the main gate of the UCSI South Wing. Funds will also be raised through the sale of t-shirts that participants will wear on the day of the race.

Social media platforms and websites of participating partners as well as school bulletin boards will act as auxiliary platforms of communication to invite students, friends and family to be a part of this cause.



At the end of this campaign, we aim to raise up to RM35,000 to improve the wellness of these creatures and we appeal to members of the public to support our worthy cause and help make a difference in the lives of these birds.

Contribute now and make a change in the lives of these beautiful creatures. There are a number of ways that members of the public can donate to the Break the Chain, Make a Change campaign:

- Contribute your change when patronising our food & beverage lifestyle partners. A donation box is available at the counters in these participating cafes and restaurants. You can inquire with the friendly staff of these establishments for assistance.



- Visit the following websites:
 - <http://retreat.kechara.com/news/rm2-feeds-a-hungry-bird>
 - <http://www.kechara.com/donations/>
 - <https://www.generosity.com/animal-pet-fundraising/feed-a-hungry-bird-for-14-a-week/x/11900524>



Providing
FOOD,
Providing
HOPE

Kechara Soup Kitchen (KSK) has established a food bank programme to serve the poor and the homeless. There are many people from the urban poor and underprivileged community who are homeless and it is because of this that the Kechara food bank aims to help as many families as possible.

Food wastage is an issue that plagues modern societies and with the food bank, we aim to re-channel food items, which ultimately end up in the bins, to feed the hungry across the city. The food bank is also a good way to meet the demands for food during natural disasters and rescue missions, both locally and internationally. Besides food supplies, the food bank is also able to store other provisions like toiletries, household products, school supplies, apparels, blankets, personal use items and other essentials.

WHY A FOOD BANK?

Despite two decades of economic growth, more than 40% of the 31 million Malaysians still fall under the low economic group and half of those in this group are children. Prices of essential food items, health, education, utilities and transport have also increased tremendously in recent years. This affects not only vulnerable groups such as the homeless and children but also the aged, single parents and low-income earners.

The population of Malaysia is expected to increase by 31.2% over the next two decades, reaching over 37 million by 2030. The proportion of the population aged 60 years and above is projected to exceed that of the younger population aged between 0 and 14 years in 2049. With an aging population, we have to be prepared to meet the needs of the aged. This will also avoid a strain on the younger generation to look after the aged.

KSK has been collecting client data since 2008 and we currently have over 5,400 clients in our database. Among the list of clients we serve are:

- Poor families, consisting single mothers, families with many children, families who have problems making ends meet, families whose situations have worsened due to long-term illnesses or disabilities of the sole breadwinners, families with poor living conditions and families in urban areas with a household income of less than RM1,200.
- The less supported NGOs.
- NGOs who are working closely with in helping the homeless and the destitute.



Many urban poor are living on the brink of homelessness. From our database almost 2,000 clients are in this dire situation while more than 3,400 are already homeless. Below are some data that we have compiled over the years of the urban poor:

- 48.7% are of 46 years and above
- 25% of them did not sit for their UPSR
- 23.1% of them failed their Form 3 exams
- 20.4% of them failed their SPM and did not pursue tertiary education
- 23.8% of them dropped out midway through their secondary school
- 4% of them have never been to school

USING FOOD AID TO IMPROVE LIVES

With food aid they can use their income to keep a roof over their heads instead. It is crucial that the urban poor do not become homeless because if this happens, the situation will become even more critical and it will be difficult to take them off the streets. With food aid they are able to have a healthier diet and in the long run, this reduces their spending on medical expenses as well.

Food aid can be used as a tool to better the lives of our clients. For example, it can be used as a form of reward. When

children excel academically, they are rewarded with more food points that enable them to claim more provisions. It can also be used as an incentive for clients to attend classes or training sessions to better themselves. In addition, food points can be used as a form of payment when they participate in community work.

Currently KSK has a small food bank but we need a bigger and established one, to better serve our food bank clients, for the planning of logistics and to have ample stock to be delivered in times of need.



HIGHLIGHTS AND MILESTONES

In November 2015, Kechara Soup Kitchen became a member of the Association of Asia Food Bank. This is an annual meeting where participating members discuss and learn from each other the best practices for food banks in Asia.

KSK has grown from serving just 100 families to serving 400 families each month, involving volunteers from big corporations, who are carrying out their CSR initiatives. We have served almost eight tonnes of food to both the underprivileged and NGOs.

Segi Value Holdings Sdn Bhd donated a refrigerated truck worth RM106,000 for our food bank use. With the refrigerated truck, we are now able to expedite our food bank operations and at the same time, maintain the freshness of the food products.

Tesco partnered with Kechara's food bank in conjunction with the launch of their 'Community Food Surplus Donation Programme'. As a result of this partnership, KSK is now able to carry out a daily collection of unsold pastries, vegetables and fruits, which will be rechanneled to the poor via our food bank programme. This is a long-term partnership and we will also be able to make collections from any of their stores across the country in 2017. We are glad that partnership has finally become a reality and KSK is honoured to be working with a big brand like Tesco!

The food bank will also benefit many of KSK's charity partners while working closely with The Lost Food Project and Food Aid Foundation to help the poor.

KSK has roped in about 10 single mothers and two disabled couples to take part in a sewing project. We have also enrolled two other single mothers in a hairdressing programme provided by the L'Oreal Foundation.

We have set an example for many other organisations who are now following our footsteps in establishing their own food banks.

HELP OUT KECHARA SOUP KITCHEN

KSK is currently looking for sponsors who can donate a warehouse that can be used as our storage area and also our food bank activities.

We are in need of more trucks and drivers to help with our

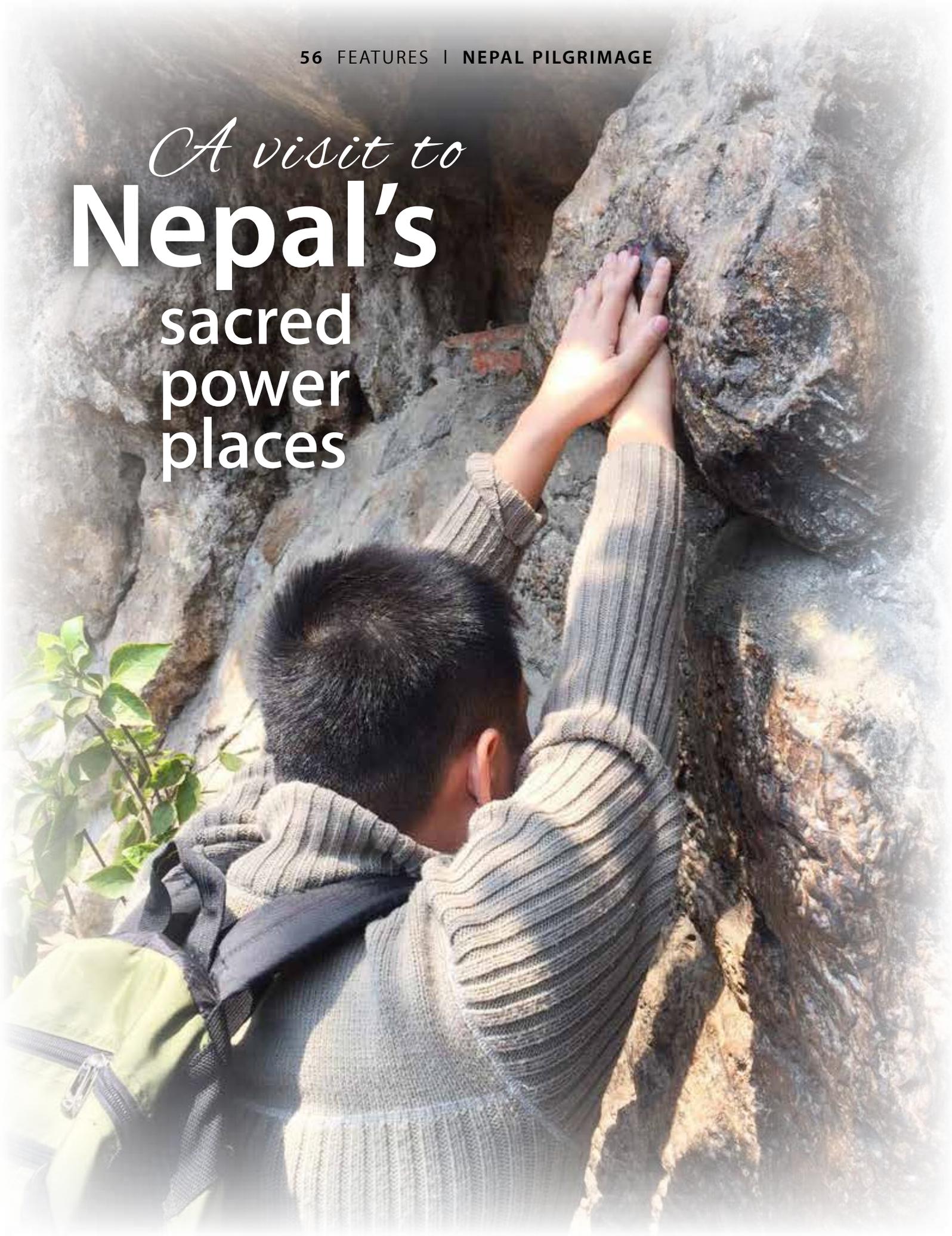


daily pick-ups. We also need volunteers to come forward and help us to make deliveries to the poor.

We also need monetary donations as the food bank uses up plenty of our resources due to petrol and maintenance costs.



A visit to
Nepal's
sacred
power
places



Kechara organised its first ever Chinese-language Nepal Pilgrimage from 20 to 25 March 2016. A total of 18 Kechara members participated in this pilgrimage and returned to Malaysia with great blessings from many sacred power places. According to H.E. the 25th Tsem Rinpoche, pilgrimages are for us to connect with the blessed energies of places where holy beings have chosen to take rebirth, gain Enlightenment, teach the Dharma or pass away. Sites like these carry the everlasting energies of the compassionate, enlightened mind, where holy beings resided, practised and benefitted countless other beings. Everything they owned or used, including the area they lived or practised in, was entirely for the benefit of other beings. When we go to these places and show reverence, make offerings or aspirational prayers, we create direct causes to attain this same state of compassion and to gain the same enlightened qualities that these beings possessed. Nancy Ng, a volunteer at Kechara and one of the pilgrims, writes about her experience.

We gathered at the airport very early as everyone was excited about the trip. Once we had checked-in we gathered at a quiet area in the airport to perform prayers and make a black tea offering.

After four-and-a-half-hour flight, we arrived in Kathmandu, anxious and excited to begin our pilgrimage. We checked-in to our hotel and rested, all set for the next day.

After a hearty breakfast at the hotel, we were ready to visit some wonderful sites. Our first stop



Group photo at KLIA before departure to Kathmandu, Nepal.

was the Chenrezig Chapel and Tara Chapel, just a 15-minute walk from our hotel through the narrow and busy streets.

The Chenrezig Chapel was an ancient chapel and it was very crowded. People seemed to be focused on their purpose of making offerings, turning the prayer wheel and offering butterlamps oblivious to the crowd. An exquisite Chenrezig statue took centre stage in this chapel. As shared by our Dharma friends, there were similar Chenrezig statues in Lhasa and Dharamsala. We made our offerings and also made big strong wishes to Chenrezig. Big wishes are wishes for all sentient beings. Later, our tour leaders guided us through the prayers and dedication at this site.



Group photo in front of the Chenrezig Chapel.



The stunning Chenrezig statue.

We moved on to the Tara Chapel, which was a stone's throw from the Chenrezig Chapel. There were three Taras at this chapel – White Tara, Yellow Tara and Green Tara. Tara is renowned for granting swift answers to our beneficial wishes. The statues were very well done; they looked almost real. We handed our offerings to a man who was sitting inside. Our leaders told us H.H. Trijang Rinpoche had once told them that the White Tara statue was from Tibet. So we all made offerings and big wishes at the shrine.



Glorious White Tara, Yellow Tara and Green Tara.

Next, we departed for Patan for the Vajrayogini Chapel and Mahabodhi Stupa. This stupa was damaged slightly during the April 2015 earthquake in Nepal and is now under repair. Fortunately the other buildings in the courtyard behind the chapel were undamaged so we could get a closer view there. On the walls were Buddha's wise words, one which I particularly liked: ***No one can save us, only we can save ourselves, we must walk the path.***

There was a shrine nearby, which housed Vajrayogini's holy statue. This was our reason for visiting Patan, to gain yet another Vajrayogini blessing.

We were all very excited on the second day as until now, we had only heard and read about the miracles at these holy places but now, we were going to see them for ourselves. It was absolutely unbelievable!

Pilgrims making light offerings to Tara.

Our first stop was at Pharphing, the site of The Self Arising Tara. As it was crowded, we waited for a while for the crowd to disperse. There were 21 Taras inside the chapel and it is said that an image of Tara appeared on the rock by itself, and the image became clearer and clearer with time. The shrine was then built to house the rock. We saw monks carrying out pujas and soon after we took turns making prostrations and other rituals.

Then we headed off to Guru Rinpoche's cave by walking through a small opening between rocks. On a rock

outside the cave we saw Guru Rinpoche's handprint and it is said that his handprint carries many blessings. So we placed our heads and hands on the imprint many times and made strong and big wishes. We also entered the cave, moving silently as some monks were inside chanting. Inside the cave, we prostrated and made donations. Outside the cave in the courtyard, we were allowed to light butterlamps. Remembering the benefits of lighting butterlamps, everyone was eager to do so.



Light offerings outside Guru Rinpoche's cave.



Pilgrims wait patiently to make offerings to Vajrayogini.



Traditional offerings to Vajrayogini.

Then we moved further on the trek and arrived at the very holy site – Vajrayogini Chapel in Pharphing. We were asked to make strong big wishes as this was a very holy site. We were also asked to take our time and take in the energy at the chapel. We sat around to say prayers, which were followed by an audience with Vajrayogini, who was in her form with one leg up. There was ample time allocated at this chapel for us to make circumambulations, prostrations, butterlamp offerings, meditate or just sit quietly. The caretaker, a nice middle-aged man, told us that the chapel was partially damaged by the earthquake.

We then made some donations for its repairs and rebuilding. We wrote our names in a book and the caretaker told us that prayers for the sponsors will be made to bless them. We felt a wonderful sense of energy as we left the Vajrayogini Chapel. I don't know how to describe the feeling but it certainly did not feel like any place else. When we were satisfied with the time spent up here, we descended to the courtyard downstairs.

On our third day, we headed to a famous holy site – the meditation caves of Naropa and his guru Tilopa. It was situated at the Pashupathi riverbank and we were told that



Dedication in the beautiful courtyard of Vajrayogini.



Wefie after our date with Vajrayogini.



our Guru H.E. the 25th Tsem Rinpoche had also meditated at this riverbank. Excited, we took many photographs hoping the photos would soak in our Guru's energy. My fellow pilgrims said that they felt a tremendous energy here. We spent a long time at this site, taking turns to enter each cave to make offerings, prostrations, big wishes, and blessing our malas and photos of loved ones, which we had brought with us. Taking private moments to contemplate and soak in the air around was calming for our minds. The sound of the waters flowing in the river was serene, tempting us to jump in to wash away our negativities. When all were satisfied with the time spent, we gathered for a powerful prayer and dedication. But not before some Dharma sharing, which left me tearing. I looked around me and noticed others with moist eyes too.

Group photo in front of Naropa and Tilopa Caves.



Sock Wan inside Naropa's Cave.



Tracy and David inside Tilopa's Cave.

Next we departed for the Boudhanath Stupa, an icon of Kathmandu. It is said that this stupa holds the relics of Buddha Shakyamuni. Every day, hundreds visit this stupa – both tourists and devotees. When we reached the entrance, we were in awe at the sight of this humongous stupa!

Before that, we stopped at Kechara Lounge to pay respects to our Guru's throne as this journey would not have been possible without his kindness. Each of us took turns offering a khata to our Guru's throne. Then we walked around the lounge, which had a beautiful life-sized Vajrayogini statue bedecked with jewels. We then headed off to the Boudhanath Stupa, which was nearby.

The tour leaders led us in circumambulating the stupa three times, advising us to chant our favourite mantra while turning the prayer wheels, which surrounded the stupa. At the end of three rounds, we said dedication prayers to seal our merits. Then each of us went off on our own to circumambulate more, as many times as we wished.



Group photo inside Kechara Lounge, Nepal.





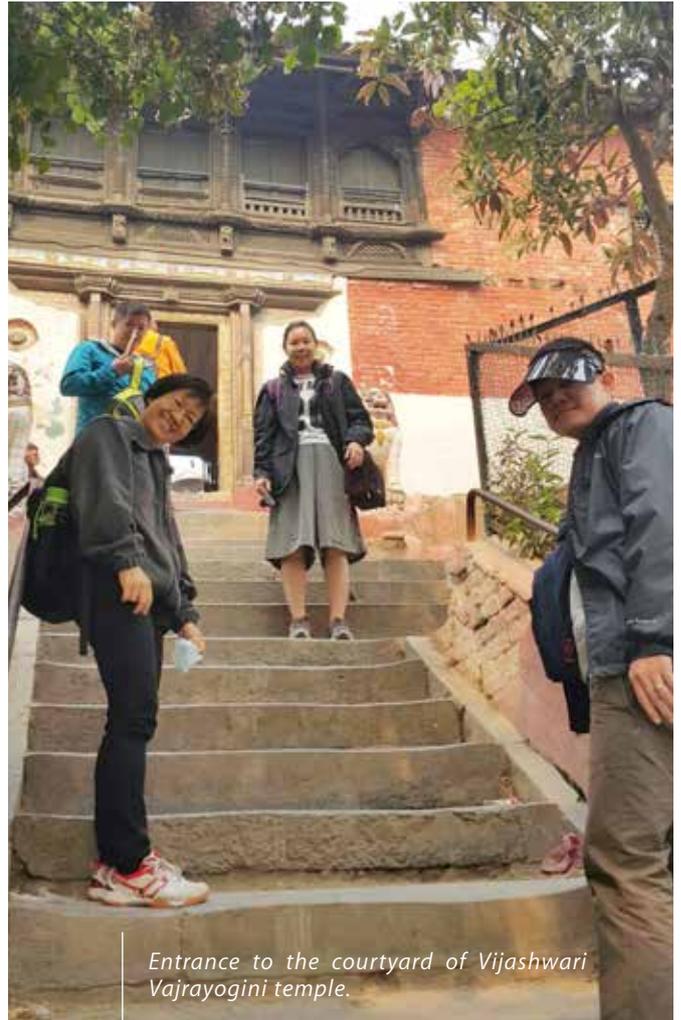
Pilgrims circumambulating the Boudhanath Stupa.

Our tour leaders then guided us to a lower section of the stupa. Here, we performed prostrations, made offerings and donated prayer flags. We were also given packets of the stupa building materials, which were collected after the earthquake, and advised to take them home to fill up our statues, place on our shrines or in wealth vases. After that, we browsed the many shops around the stupa and gathered back at Kechara Lounge before leaving for our hotel.

On our fourth day, we visited the Vijashwari Vajrayogini Chapel. We had to climb a flight of really steep stairs to get to the chapel but it was worth it as in the courtyard, there were many stupas with Buddha statues and carvings. It was very crowded and we had to patiently wait in queue to enter the chapel.

Our guide explained that there were four forms of Vajrayogini in this chapel – Vajravarahi, Naro Kacho, Maitri Kacho Vajrayogini (with one leg up) and Flying Vajrayogini. Naro Kacho is the

form we see in Kechara. It was very cool inside the chapel and we were all engulfed by a sense of peace. We offered butterlamps and we were returned with an oil-like substance, which we applied to our foreheads. We then stepped outside and took more photos for contemplation in our quiet times later on.



Entrance to the courtyard of Vijashwari Vajrayogini temple.

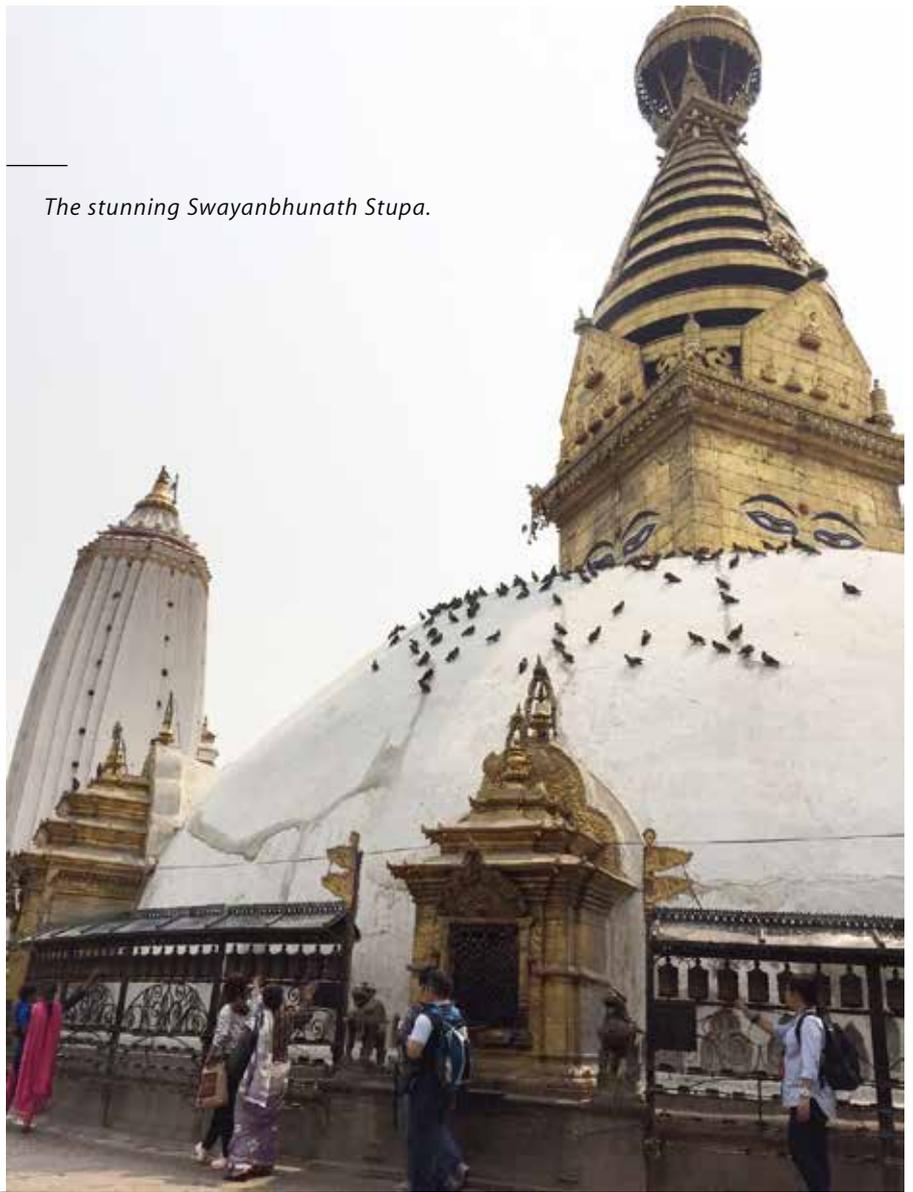


Briefing at the Temple of Doors.

Next, we went to Swayambhunath Stupa and the Temple of Doors. There were 375 steps to Swayambhunath Stupa if we were to take the more difficult route. Fearing that this may be challenging for some of us, our guides opted for another route, which had fewer steps. From this route, we first arrived at The Temple of Doors. We were told that inside these very doors lived 16 arhats.

After that, we went to the Swayambhunath Stupa. It was just awesome to see Buddha's eyes on this stupa. Fortunately, it was not destroyed by the earthquake. This is the second largest stupa in Nepal, after Boudhanath and we circumambulated it. There were also many stupas in the

The stunning Swayambhunath Stupa.



courtyard and many visitors were walking around them, taking photographs, shopping and enjoying the scenery. Surrounding the very stupa were images of various Buddhas and it took a trained eye to correctly identify each Buddha. Then we gathered to carry out animal liberation. The group had bought a few cages of birds. We chanted the Medicine Buddha mantra and blew on the birds before opening the cages so they could fly away to freedom. Some members bought prayer flags for hanging in the stupa area.



The long and steep stairs to Swayambhu Hill.

Soon after, we headed to Manjushri's teaching site. This was a fairly large courtyard with a shrine in the middle. Manjushri, the Buddha of Wisdom, gave teachings at this site annually. This is why the site was considered to be holy. We gathered to do our prayers and thereafter circumambulated around the shrine, turning prayer wheels. I felt so much peace and tranquillity at this place. My mind was not thinking of the usual samsaric issues, my mind was empty but not blank. When we were done, we took some time to appreciate the breathtaking scenery. It is said that one could see the whole of Kathmandu from here.

All of us recited Gangloma and Manjushri's mantra at Manjushri's teaching site.



As we had plenty of time on our last day in Kathmandu, each of us went our own way. Some of us revisited the Chenrezig and Tara Chapels that were within walking distance while other combed the streets for souvenirs.

Soon, it was time to bid Kathmandu goodbye. We arrived at KLIA the next morning exhausted but excited to share with others our wonderful experiences during our pilgrimage. I wish to thank our Guru H.E. the 25th Tsem Rinpoche for giving blessings for this pilgrimage for without which, it could not have happened. I prostrate at your feet.

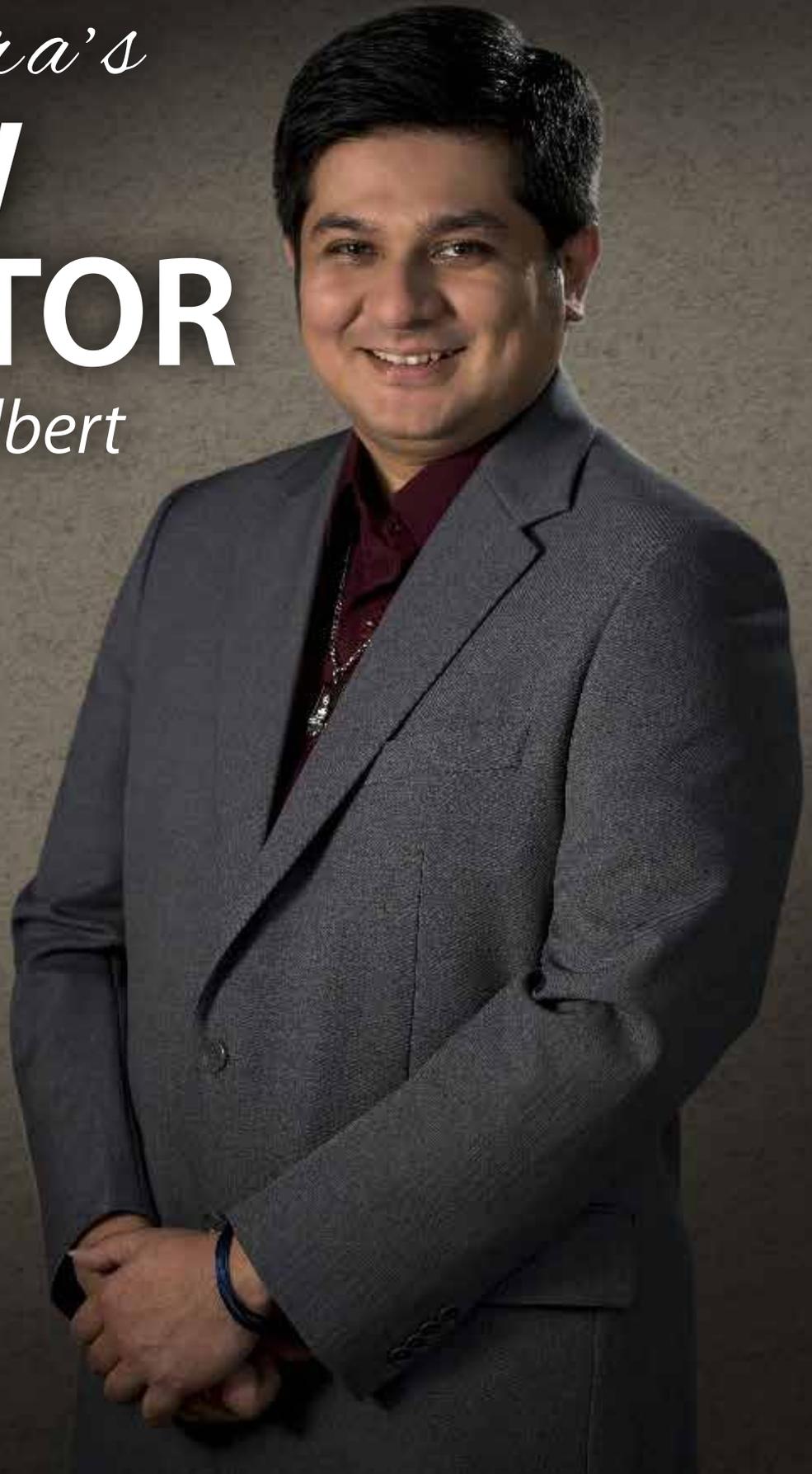


The kind caretaker blessed us with red sindhura powder on our foreheads.

Kechara's

NEW PASTOR

- Pastor Albert



In 2008, Albert Ratchaga had just resigned from his previous job and while he was looking for another job, his uncle suggested that he work part-time in Kechara Paradise.

After working in Kechara Paradise, he felt his life slowly becoming more meaningful and so he decided to stay on as a full-time staff. As a full-time staff, he attended many of Rinpoche's teachings, which helped him greatly in his personal life and also in assisting those who came into Kechara Paradise with problems.

Coming to know Rinpoche's vision and mission, Albert was intrigued to learn more about Buddhism and Dharma while also engaging in a spiritual path.

Last year, eight years since he first stepped into Kechara, Albert decided to make a big change in his life and to follow in the footsteps of his Guru. After two years of contemplating, he decided to pursue his pastorship. Touched

by Rinpoche's kindness and compassion and how Rinpoche goes about his life working for the benefit of others, Albert felt becoming a pastor would enable him to do the same and serve others.

When he broke the news to his family, they were initially sceptical of his decision but after he explained to them about Kechara and how the life of a pastor would be beneficial for many people and not just himself, they were on board with his decision and offered him their full support.

LIFE BEFORE DHARMA

Albert was born and grew up in Petaling Jaya. His father passed away when he was just a child so he was raised by his mother. He grew up as a Taoist but after a while he realised that the religion did not resonate with him so he decided to live as an atheist.

As Albert used to work in the sales line, whenever he saw an

opportunity for higher sales commissions, he would jump jobs. Money was always his prime motivation. He used to be very materialistic and calculative and every decision he made was based on how worth it it was to pursue and how much he would benefit from it in the long run.

He led a meaningless life and always took part in activities that did not benefit him or anyone around him. He was always going clubbing, drinking with friends, talking about cars, going on holidays and gossiping.

Albert has found new meaning in life since he joined Kechara. He will be taking his pastorship this year and as a pastor, he intends to continue devoting his life for the benefit of others and bringing the Dharma to as many more people as he can. Following in the footsteps of Rinpoche, who has influenced his life greatly, Albert will serve those in need and help them overcome whatever difficulties they may be face.



⋮
LIFE
⋮

HOW TO BE
VEGAN



BY STEVE PAVLINA



TRANSITION TO VEGAN FOODS

One way to get started with a vegan diet is to turn your favourite non-vegan foods into vegan ones by making simple substitutions. This isn't necessarily the healthiest way to go vegan, but it's a convenient way to get the animal ingredients out of your diet. Once you've been eating vegan for a while, you can make further improvements from there.

Finding Vegan Replacements – If you're very new to eating vegan, you could start by learning about the vegan replacements for your favourite foods. Just search on "vegan ___" where ___ is the name of a food you're used to eating. This will help you discover vegan versions of those foods and/or what vegans eat instead of those foods. So you'd learn to eat a veggie burger instead of a cow burger. Ice-cream becomes soy ice-cream or coconut ice-cream. And so on.



LEARN THE BASICS

Eating vegan can be really easy if you want it to be. While you may enjoy complex meals on occasion, it's wise to get used to the basics first. Start with simple vegan meals that are easy to prepare and that you enjoy, such as a baked potato, pasta, rice with steamed veggies, oatmeal, a veggie sandwich, or a fruit smoothie. Then you can complicate and extend those meals for greater variety if you desire. A good way to expand your horizons is to search for vegan recipes online, and you'll get tons of idea for meals to try.

If you simply dive in and learn as you go, you'll quickly gain experience, and you'll see the variety in your diet increasing as you move away from the

socially conditioned blandness and repetition that animal eaters so often succumb to.

Even after 18+ years as a vegan, I'm still amazed at the endless variety of new vegan dishes. There are always more ideas to try, way more than I could sample in a human lifetime. I can't see how anyone could feel bored or deprived eating vegan, unless they're seriously incompetent, living in a cave without Internet access, or just really ignorant about food in general.

30-DAY TRIALS

For a variety of reasons, I recommend a 30-day trial as an effective way to transition to a plant-based diet. A 30-day trial is a mini-commitment. It's long enough for you to learn

the basics of eating plant-based foods, and once you gain 30 days of experience, you'll realise that it's easy to continue. But it's also short enough that you can use the psychological trick of telling yourself that you can still eat whatever you want on day 31. Of course, you'll probably find that it's easy to keep going with the trial on day 31 and to make it a permanent lifestyle improvement if you so desire. On day 31, you won't be such a newbie anymore; you'll have 30 days of experience behind you.

For some transitions it may take multiple 30-day trials before you're able to make it stick. So if your first attempt goes a bit wonky, take some time to educate yourself about how long-term vegans actually eat, and prepare better for your next trial. It will probably go more smoothly.

INCREASING YOUR FOOD INTELLIGENCE

As a vegan you can expect to greatly increase your food intelligence. When you learn the truth about what you used to eat, you'll probably begin feeling sorry for the people who are still being duped.

If you want to buy pre-packaged foods, get used to reading nutrition labels. It takes some practice, but you'll get used to scanning for animal ingredients. As soon as you identify a



single animal ingredient such as milk powder or whey, you can put the package down.

As a quick shortcut, look at the cholesterol line on the nutrition label. If you see anything other than zero mg cholesterol, the food isn't vegan since plant-based foods never contain any cholesterol. Cholesterol only comes from animal ingredients, so if you see any cholesterol at all, it's definitely not vegan. But if the cholesterol is zero, you'll still need to check the ingredients since there may still be small amounts of animal ingredients.

If you see an ingredient you don't recognise, feel free to Google it with your phone. Gradually educate yourself on what each ingredient is. If you can't figure it out, maybe you shouldn't be eating it anyway. In general, if you're going to eat packaged foods, favour the ones with fewer ingredients and with ingredients that you recognise as real foods. If you see a list of dozens of items and lots of chemicals, even if they're all vegan, I'd advise you to leave it on the shelf. There are surely healthier options.

EAT VEGAN ON A BUDGET

Eating vegan can be very inexpensive if you want (or need) it to be. Rice, beans, pasta, potatoes, sweet potatoes, oats, bananas, millet, quinoa, and many other foods can provide plenty of calories at low cost. You can live quite comfortably off low-cost starchy foods, which have been the basis of large modern civilizations for millennia. The same goes for eating vegan on a time budget. How long does it take to eat some fruit? When I'm in a hurry, I'll make a meal out of several bananas.

Of course eating vegan is also a lot less burdensome on the environment and on our resources like water, electricity, and fuel. Instead of growing plant foods, feeding them to animals, and then eating the animals, it's much more efficient all around to eat plant foods directly.

BE UNAPOLOGETICALLY VEGAN

New vegans are often socially timid when it comes to getting their needs met. Some of them act like they should apologise for inconveniencing other people, as if it's an unfair burden to help someone who doesn't want to slaughter animals for food.

I suggest you dump that attitude. Being vegan is awesome. You need never apologise for it. By going vegan, you've made a decision that's all around better for everyone. Have no doubt about that.

Many vegans adopt the mindset that being vegan puts them on the fringes of society. The thinking is that when you go vegan, you're no longer a mainstream person. You're weird, different, and unusual. You're not like everyone else.

It's unfortunate that vegans buy into this kind of thinking too. I've certainly fallen for it at times.

By graduating to veganism, you've put yourself at the top of the human pyramid in terms of alignment with intelligence, ethics, and conscious growth. Feel good about what you've accomplished, and keep learning, growing, and improving.

This isn't a mindset that stems from arrogance or conceit. It stems from caring. Isn't it obvious that as a vegan, you're behaving in a more caring and compassionate way towards the planet? Isn't it obvious that the world would be greatly improved if more people followed suit? Let the obviousness of that sink in.

If you need to make special arrangements to get vegan food at an event, family gathering, or whatever meal situation comes up, then unapologetically ask the person in charge of the food (such as the catering manager) to hook you up with something vegan. People who work in food services are used to handling different dietary requests, although some are definitely more knowledgeable and experienced than others. Be friendly. Be polite. Ask for what you want.

EATING VEGAN IS JUST THE BEGINNING

Your animal-eating friends will probably give you the impression that going vegan is some kind of huge leap into counter-culture and that once you've taken that step, you're a fanatic and an extremist, and therefore no further steps are needed. Surely you've gone way too far already. But if you buy into that nonsense, you'll stop exploring the amazing growth that follows after you go vegan.

I understand that it may seem like a monstrous step forward in your personal growth to go vegan. How can there possibly be more to do after that? You're already so far beyond the rest of society. Shouldn't you stop there and wait for everyone else to catch up?



Try not to fall into this trap. Going vegan can be a huge step forward to be sure, but there are many more steps to take after that. Once you take this step, you'll see another... and another... and another. Take those steps as they come. Don't be held back by people who think you're already impossibly different. Also, don't be intimidated by those who seem like they're impossibly further along than you are.

For me it started with a 30-day trial. It was an experiment. I did it mainly out of curiosity and for personal growth. As I continued

were only spent exploring the shallow end of the pool. There is so much depth and wonder to experience beyond that. Don't let animal eaters slow you down. Once you go vegan, pause for a while if you need to, but please keep growing. Do not fret about the steps you have yet to take.



Going vegan is like walking through a doorway into a whole new realm of growth. Enjoy the transition through the doorway, and celebrate your passage, but be sure to explore the realm inside. I assure you that it's an incredibly beautiful realm.

Care deeply for the animals of this world. They deserve to be treated so much better.

down this path, however, I found that it gradually transformed how I felt about animals. I used to be as uncaring about animals as the next guy, but once I stopped eating animals and taking their eggs and milk, it became increasingly difficult to continue to relate to animals as consumable products. Now I look back and think it's just insane to think of animals as products to be bought and sold for their bodies. What a hideous thing to do to such beautiful creatures!

The more I embraced the vegan path, the more beauty I encountered, the more oneness I enjoyed, and the more centred I felt. I now know that at least for me, my first few years of being vegan

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VOLUNTEERING

and its Surprising

BENEFITS



VOLUNTEER



WHY VOLUNTEER?

Volunteering offers vital help to people in need, worthwhile causes, and the community, but the benefits can be even greater for you, the volunteer. Volunteering and helping others can help you reduce stress, combat depression, keep you mentally stimulated and provide a sense of purpose. While it's true that the more you volunteer, the more benefits you'll experience, volunteering doesn't have to involve a long-term commitment or take a huge amount of time out of your busy day. Giving in even simple ways can help others those in need and improve your health and happiness.

BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering connects you to others

One of the better-known benefits of volunteering is the impact on the community. Volunteering allows you to connect to your community and make it a better place. Even helping out with the smallest tasks can make a real difference to the lives of people, animals and organisations in need. And volunteering is a two-way street: It can benefit you and your family as much as the cause you choose to help. Dedicating your time as a volunteer helps you make new friends, expand your network and boost your social skills.



Volunteering is good for your mind and body

Volunteering helps counteract the effects of stress, anger and anxiety. The social contact aspect of helping and working with others can have a profound effect on your overall psychological well-being. Nothing relieves stress better than a meaningful connection to another person. Working with pets and other animals has also been shown to improve mood and reduce stress and anxiety.

By measuring hormones and brain activity, researchers have discovered that being helpful to others delivers immense pleasure. Human beings are hard-wired to give to others. The more we give, the happier we feel.



You are doing good for others and the community, which provides a natural sense of accomplishment. Your role as a volunteer can also give you a sense of pride and identity. And the better you feel about yourself, the more likely you are to have a positive view of your life and future goals.

Older adults, especially those who have retired or lost a spouse, can find new meaning and direction in their lives by helping others. Whatever your age or life situation, volunteering can help take your mind off your own worries, keep you mentally stimulated, and add more zest to your life.

Older volunteers tend to walk more, find it easier to cope with everyday tasks, are less likely to develop high blood pressure and have better thinking skills.

Volunteering brings fun and fulfilment to your life

Volunteering is a fun and easy way to explore your interests and passions. Doing volunteer work you find meaningful and interesting can be a relaxing, energising escape from your day-to-day routine of work, school or family commitments. Volunteering also provides you with renewed creativity, motivation and vision that can carry over into your personal and professional life.

This is an excerpt from HelpGuide.org. To read the full article, please go to www.helpguide.org/articles/work-career/volunteering-and-its-surprising-benefits.htm





MIRACLES

DO HAPPEN



A decorative border of thin, black line-art branches with small, oval leaves and tiny flowers, framing the text on all four sides of the page.

Not too long ago, a Kechara pastor was visited by a fellow Kecharian who needed help for her eight-month-old son. He had been 'disturbed' by some forces and had been crying incessantly night after night. This had disrupted his sleep patterns and his lack of sleep had affected his health so greatly that he had to be hospitalised. The child's bad health had caused a rift between his parents while his grandmother was constantly anxious and worried about her grandson.

Almost at their wits' end, the parents were advised to meet with a pastor from Kechara. After a consultation with the pastor, they were advised to sponsor a Lama Chopa puja, which would allow any unseen beings in or around their house to take a good rebirth, and a Dorje Shugden puja for protection. They were also advised to bring their son to Kechara House for a

special blessing during Kechara's annual baby baptismal ceremony. The parents dutifully carried out everything that the pastor recommended.

About a month later, the pastor called the mother to check on the baby. She was told that the boy had stopped his crying and was now sleeping soundly throughout the night. He had also become happier and was now constantly laughing. The parents' relationship had improved tremendously while the grandmother's demeanour had also changed; she too was a lot calmer.

The pastor was pleased to hear that the baby's health had improved so much, which in turn, had improved the relationship between the parents as well. This is just one of the many miracle stories that have happened over the years thanks to the protection of our Dharma protector, Dorje Shugden.



A Tsem Rinpoche Organisation

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