

Meditation And Healing Define Tibetan Buddhism

By Kate Gilderdale
Stouffville Free Press

Stouffville resident Charlene Jones is a full time physiotherapist who has practised Tibetan meditation for 35 years, and who has been teaching the discipline for 20 years.

When she was 18, Charlene met her root guru, Karma Tensing Dorje Namgyal Rinpoche, and accompanied him to India, where she met the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa, who at the time was leader of the Karmapa sect of Tibetan Buddhism. Charlene became

the first woman to serve as chairperson at the Dharma Centre of Canada and in this capacity, she hosted His Holiness the Karmapa on his visit to Canada in 1977.

As a trained practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism, she was taken aback last fall when she read that an American woman claiming to be a reincarnated Tibetan lama and doctor of Tibetan medicine, Madi Nolan, was offering healing workshops in the community. "In Tibetan Buddhism, when you are recognized as a lama, everyone looks at you as a living god," explained Charlene. Yet she had never heard of Madi

Nolan.

Charlene and her husband, Harold, a former police officer and Canadian federal intelligence agent, decided to investigate, and last October they consulted the office of the Dalai Lama to find out whether they could provide any information on Ms Nolan, but they had no knowledge of her.

When they contacted His Holiness Dagchen Rinpoche, one of the highest Tibetan masters in the world, who has lived in Seattle since 1960, and asked if he knew of Ms Nolan, who lives in the same city, he replied, "I am not familiar with her." However, a white woman of the status she claimed would definitely have been known by him, Charlene said.

On Ms Nolan's website, which has since been taken down, she claimed to be an official representative of the White Cloud Monastery. "The only White Cloud Monastery that exists in Beijing, and is Taoist," said Charlene. And when Harold checked with the Chinese Consulate in Toronto, they told him her claim was impossible.

The threat to the integrity of Tibetan Buddhism posed by non-licensed practitioners is of great concern, she noted, especially at a time of heightened turmoil in the Tibetan community. "The most recent of buzz phrases, Tibetan Buddhism, rings across North America, bringing to mind a smiling Dalai Lama and the plight of Tibetans forced to leave their beloved country."

To avoid being taken in by people who are not licensed, Charlene has this advice. "A valid teacher will speak to questions about where he or she gained their knowledge. Just as in the western cultures, people who have legitimately 'graduated' from eastern schools of learning can respond to who their teacher was and where their school is located."

And people should be wary of anyone who focuses his or her teachings on acquisitions, be it a new car or the partner of your dreams, she warned. "Tibetan Buddhism is about meditation and healing. Period." For more information visit www.infinitenetworks.com.



Appointment with Pohlman

Well Versed

By Ralph Pohlman

I have always been a poetry lover, and, as luck would have it, I was born with a terrific memory so I have, tucked away in my noggin, all sorts of poems. Everything from Robert Service's *Cremation of Sam McGee* to those slightly risqué verses of *That Was a Cute Little Rhyme*.

When I was a kid back in Saskatchewan, CKCK Regina had a 15-minute program late on Sunday afternoon called *The Poet of the Airwaves*. I loved it. Every week this gravelly voiced guy would read a poem. It always began with him reciting:

*Isn't it strange that princes and kings
And clowns that caper in sawdust rings
And common folk like you and me
Are makers of eternity.*

*To each is given a book of rules
A shapeless mass and a bag of tools
And each must fashion ere life has flown,
A stumbling block or a stepping-stone.*

Just as the poem ended, the background music would swell up dramatically and he would deliver today's poem.

Of course I didn't tell anyone that I liked this program. For a boy growing up in a railroad town it was important to be able to shoot a decent game of snooker and to stand up for yourself. Being a poetry fan was not likely to add to your charisma.

A lot of the poetry we all remember isn't very sophisticated. That is to say it is not Keats or Wordsworth but is more "doggerel", meaning it is sentimental stuff.

One of these, that has stuck with me all these years, was in a newsletter put out by the local Rotary Club, of which my dad was a member all those many years ago; *The Calf Path* by Sam Walter Foss (1858 - 1911)

*One day, through the primeval wood,
A calf walked home, as good calves should,
But made a trail all bent askew,
A crooked trail, as all calves do.*

*Since then three hundred years have fled,
And, I expect, the calf is dead.
But still he left behind his trail,
And thereby hangs my moral tale.*

*The trail was taken up next day
By a lone dog that passed that way;
And then a wise bellwether sheep,
Pursued the trail o'er vale and steep.*

*And from that day, o'er hill and glade,
Through these old woods a path was made,
And many men wound in and out,
And dodged and turned and bent about,
And uttered words of righteous wrath
Because 'twas such a crooked path.*

*This forest path became a lane,
That bent, and turned, and turned again.
This crooked lane became a road,
Where many a poor horse with his load
Toiled on beneath the burning sun,
And travelled some three miles in one.
And thus a century and a half
They trod the footsteps of that calf.*

*The years passed on in swiftness fleet.
The road became a village street.
And this, before men were aware,
A city's crowded thoroughfare,
And soon the central street was this
Of a renowned metropolis.*

*And o'er this crooked journey went
The traffic of a continent.
A hundred thousand men were led
By one calf near three centuries dead.*

*For men are prone to go it blind
Along the calf-paths of the mind,
And work away from sun to sun
To do what other men have done.
They follow in the beaten track,
And out and in, and forth and back,
And still their devious course pursue,
To keep the path that others do.*

*They keep the path a sacred grove,
Along which all their lives they move;
But how the wise old wood-gods laugh,
Who saw the first primeval calf.*

It's funny how these two poems, and the next, have stuck with me all these years and, in a way become sort of a philosophy of life.

This last of the three poems was a big help to me back in high-school when I had very warm feelings for a girl who didn't know I existed. Well, didn't care, anyway. I was feeling very hurt by this when I happened to read the following bit of wisdom, written back in the 1600's by George Wither. I read it and a light went on in my brain and I think I said to myself, "Of course!"

*Shall I, wasting in despair,
Die because another's fair,
Or make pale my cheeks with care,
Because another's rose are?*

*Be she fairer than the day,
Or the flowering meads in May,
If she think not well of me,
What care I how fair she be?*

So here is my suggestion. Put a book of poetry on your bedside table and read a poem before you go to sleep. Read it and if you can, or maybe in a whisper to catch the sound of the words. It has travelled a long distance and waited a long time, just for you.

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