



Sarnath International Nyingma Institute

Building Bridges of Goodness Between the East & West
Founded by Tarthang Tulku

THE MONSOON NEWS – SINI'S SUMMER NEWSLETTER

Dear Friend,

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about our programs in Sarnath. In December, we happily celebrated the Institute's second anniversary. While we still have much to learn, 2016 has already been rich with growth.

Like a healthy young tree, SINI's tender branches are expanding up and outward, with meaningful programs and seminars that connect us to neighboring institutions and visitors from within India and internationally. At the same time, our core programs—such as our English for Dharma Purposes program—continue to settle and take firm root within our fertile, cross-cultural learning environment. Our founding class of ten resident khenpos (abbots) has grown into a dynamic group of 16 residents, shifting the Institute into a more formal place of study and contemplation. In 2017, SINI will add another four residents, keeping to our plan of steady, even growth.

I look forward to working with our wonderful team of faculty—including our Principal Khenpo Choephel, and English teachers, Patricia Farland, Andy Francis, Todd Shaw, and Tenzin Ghegay, and our entire team of volunteers returning and new. I also look forward to SINI's fruitful collaborations and ongoing work with visiting scholars and guests as we develop next year's roster of seminars. SINI continues to develop institutional linkages globally as part of its mission to build bridges.

Please enjoy our first newsletter as we share with you some highlights from last year's accomplishments as well as a preview of next year's plans. Thank you for supporting the Institute and its mission. It is an honor to serve this community.

-Tsering Palmo Gellek, SINI Director



SINI's Mission & Home

The Sarnath Institute aims to build a bridge of goodness between cultures and people in a wide-range of disciplines. Its learning focus is the study and dissemination of the Buddhist teachings upheld in the classical languages of Pali, Sanskrit, and Tibetan. But like a blossoming lotus flower, other petals will unfold over time, including the development of traditional Buddhist arts, medicine, culture, and positive engagement in society. The Institute is located in Sarnath outside of the bustling city of Varanasi. As one of the four most sacred places of the Buddha, it is recognized internationally as a place of study and contemplation. With roots in the ancient traditions and languages close at hand, the confluence of both the Hindu and Sanskrit traditions dating back to the time of the Vedas along side a growing international Buddhist community make it a vibrant place of study.



Oxford University Buddhist Studies Program Collaboration

In May, SINI was awarded the distinguished So-WIDE Scholarship from the Oxford University's Tibetan & Himalayan Department, sponsoring one of our resident Khenpo's at the University for a semester in 2017. This scholarship will allow the Khenpo to share his knowledge of traditional Buddhist education in the context of modern Buddhist studies and help to establish institutional ties between SINI and Oxford University.

O.P. Jindal University

Recently, O.P. Jindal Dean Kathleen Modrowski and SINI Director, Tsering Gellek signed an MOU to create short-courses in Buddhist studies and learning-exchange programs.



Monastic Teacher Training

From October 15-24th the Sarnath Institute organized a ten-day international teacher-training seminar for over 30 monastic teachers from all major Tibetan Buddhist traditions, and included Tulkus, Khenpos, Geshe, Lopons, and Nuns, from Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Tibet.

The seminar was a response to the growing pressure for monastic teachers to meet and understand the changing educational environment. Participants explored different teaching methodologies and best-practices, cross-cultural issues, critical thinking, and examined the appropriate use of technology in and outside of the classroom, all within the monastic context.

This pilot teacher-training workshop was designed to explore broad developments in modern education methods and consider their possible applications within the monastic context. It was strongly felt that this seminar should be the catalyst for on-going teacher-training activities throughout the region and that such trainings could lead to tangible improvements in monastic teaching, as well as promote the wider transmission of the Dharma.

For more information on how you or your organization can get involved with either volunteer opportunities, study-exchanges, or participation in our seminars and retreats, please visit our newly updated website at www.sinibridge.org



English for Dharma Purposes

At the center of our curriculum is our English for Dharma Purposes program. We've established a three-year intensive English immersion program. We currently have 16 khenpos and lopons from Tibet, Nepal and Bhutan and four full-time teachers. In 2017, SINI will add another four residents, keeping to our plan of steady, even growth. The Institute continues the work of the Khen Lop Chos Sum Foundation's primary mission to support the vision of Tarthang Tulku's life-long commitment to the preservation and dissemination of the Nyingma lineage. To this end, SINI will host resident khenpos from Tibet, to produce and disseminate scholarly articles for a SINI publication, as well as present monthly public lectures on subjects related to core Nyingma subjects.

Sanskrit Intensive taught by Professor Sucheta Paranjpe

In December, the Institute hosts a Sanskrit intensive short-course program that is based on the study and reading of the Manjushrinamasanghiti, known as *Chanting the Praises of Manjushri*. This course is primarily geared towards the resident khenpos, however, it is open to outside students as well. SINI also carries out the annual Sanskrit reading of the Manjushrinamasanghiti in Bodh Gaya during the last five days of the Nyingma Monlam.

Upcoming Retreat: Four Noble Truths in Sarnath

In an effort to develop and strengthen ties with our own Nyingma organizations, SINI will host its Four Noble Truths program in January 2017. Keep posted for the final dates. This program will provide an opportunity for our resident khenpos to teach and for our Nyingma community to participate in a program that promises to contain both traditional practices as well as more personal explorations in the heart of Sarnath. See the following page for more information.

Monlams/Ceremonies

In 2015, Rinpoche initiated the Tibet Peace Ceremony which lasts for five days and is hosted entirely by SINI. This all-schools, or *rimed*, ceremony is an opportunity for all practitioners to support the people of Tibet and join in the river of blessings from all lineages and culminate with the anniversary of the Longchenpa.

This year, the Tibet Peace Ceremony will be held from February 10th-13th, 2017.





Four Noble Truths in Sarnath

Sarnath is considered one of the most important places of pilgrimage because more than 2500 years ago the Buddha delivered his first teaching, the Four Noble Truths. In this revolutionary teaching, the Buddha presented the Truth, Cause, End, and Path leading all beings out of suffering. These Four Noble Truths went beyond religion and culture to present the possibility of complete awakening. Today, we are looking for ways to appreciate and connect these insights to our own personal and professional lives. Many people today have the sense of no options, no solutions, no certainty, no control, no choice, at all social and economic levels. It is very well possible that the human race is reaching the limit of its current course. Profound change is needed, but where is the knowledge and commitment to make meaningful changes? Small groups of people who are committed to undertakings beyond their own needs present an opportunity to break through fixed personal and cultural patterns

Building Bridges

As we cultivate fruitful collaborations between the East and West, SINI's ongoing work includes the design and development of relevant and timely seminars on pressing contemporary global issues. The upcoming 2016-2017 roster includes a seminar on the Intersection of Science and Values, facilitated by leading astrophysicist, Dr. Lakshmi Saripalli. This program builds on our commitment to explore and develop new forms of pedagogy in the monastic context and explore the light of Dharma in modern settings. In addition to these kinds of programs, we will be hosting a cross-cultural religious studies program with O.P. Jindal University. In the Spring of 2017, we'll also present a program on the relationship between art, landscape and environmental stewardship. Additionally, SINI will convene a seminar on vegetarianism to address questions of nutrition in schools and monasteries.