

Vajrayana Quarterly

VAJRAYANA BUDDHISM ASSOCIATION OF TORONTO

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Editor's Letter

There is so much good happening lately at the centre. The senior students together with Ed facilitated the Introduction to Meditation workshops for the first time. They did a wonderful job leading lively discussion and sharing personal stories and experience with the new students, putting them at ease. The students enjoyed facilitating the classes and wanted to carry on this role so Ed and I took off for a month to tour China. We relived the historical periods of Terra Cotta warriors in Xian, scaled almost vertical Huashan mountain, also known as the most dangerous hiking trail in the world, visited the fantasy world of Avatar at Zhangjiajie and was awed by the Hallelujah mountain, hiking at the Great Wall of China in Beijing and shopping and eating in metropolitan Shanghai.

In this issue, read about Master Tam's lecture circuit in China, the Chinese New year celebration, Edwin's sushi delight and many more.

Jenny Tang
Editor.



NEEDED

- Volunteers for the social committee.
- Suggestions for social events.
- Article submissions for Vajrayana Quarterly.

If you are interested, please contact Jenny at jenny.tang@vbatoronto.org

Chinese New Year Celebration

by Barathi Kulkarni

When it was announced that Master Tam and Mrs. Tam were graciously opening their home to us all on Chinese New Year's Day I was really thrilled. Then Ed extended their invitation to ring in the New Year bang at the stroke of midnight. And I knew I would be there that wintry saturday night.

Hubby in tow and very excited, we arrived at 10pm. We followed the stream of people into a house full of familiar and soon to be familiar faces. There is something very open and welcoming about Master Tam's house. So much so that the more the people, the roomier it seemed to get!

We assembled in Master Tam's study surrounded by brush paintings in progress and myriads of neatly arranged books. Chinese New Year was a novelty for many of us and Master Tam led us into the history and some of the many traditions surrounding it. We listened to tales of his childhood new years spent in traditional China, about rituals for the various ancient gods including the well god and the kitchen god. And just in case you are curious, the kitchen god is male.



At midnight, we toasted in the Year of the Tiger and merrily lined up to wish Master Tam and receive our much awaited for `lucky money`. The dining table was laid with a host of traditional delights. Blooming flower arrangements lent to a special ambience. We all chatted and shared memories. Time flew.

New Year celebrations, I learnt, take place over several weeks. Starting with lots of cleaning up,

of course. There seems to be a place and time for everyone. From sharing stories about ancestors (five generations of them), there's a space for elders, for family & friends. What a great way to begin the New Year.

We thanked our wonderful hosts for an amazing experience. It was the wee hours of a Sunday morning and we left with our crisp red envelopes tucked away in our pockets and smiles on our faces.

Master Tam's lecture circuit in China

In March 2010, Master Tam has been invited back by several universities in China as an honorary visiting professor to talk about Tibetan Buddhism. His circuit lectures at Zhejiang University, Nanjing University have been well received by scholars. One of his highlight series of lectures was on the comparison of western philosophy, from Socrates to Kante with the Tathagatagarba doctrine, a profound and utmost Vajrayana teaching.

He also met with highly regaled monks to dialogue on Tibetan and Zen Buddhism and spent a few days at Putuo Shan giving a talk on Buddhism to the monks and nuns. Putuo Shan is one of the 4 sacred Buddhist mountains with hundreds of monasteries, temples and a Buddhist academic institute on a small island. It's attracted thousands of Buddhist pilgrims to come and study and practise Buddhism but also an ideal escape for the city people to relax in the converted monasteries.

In this whirlwind itinerary of 2 months, he has visited 15 cities for various itineraries, including squeezing in 2 successful art exhibitions. One was at Tianyige Library in Ningbo, the oldest library building built in 1561, has a big collection of rare books and documents, mostly wood-cut and



hand written copies of the Song and Ming dynasty.

The other exhibition was at Xilin Society of Seal Arts, Hangzhou, the first academic society of seal

related learnings and arts, currently the largest in China. Both of these exhibitions showcased his paintings and calligraphy to much fanfare and media coverage.



A night with Sushi

Edwin was both nervous and excited that Master Tam wanted to try his cooking because he heard that Master Tam is also a notable food critic and not easy to get a passing grade. Even though Edwin has been a sushi chef for 20 years, he still spent many hours getting ready for the big day, like planning his signature menu, experimenting new dishes, shopping at the Food terminal to select high grade food. On the big day, Chef Edwin almost brought his whole kitchen to Master Tam's house. With 4 helpers, he started to prepare the meal. The first appetizer dish was

avacado slice and cucumber skin in thin strips rolled up in thinly sliced cucumber dipped in soy sauce with a touch of salt, sugar and sake, When Master Tam takes the first bite, it's heavenly. Its sweetness is refreshing, awakening all senses. Master Tam just could not stop having more. Said it's the best Japanese food he has tasted in his 16 years in Toronto. The next appetizer was seared tuna rolled in poppy seeds accompanied by pesto sauce. Tuna was fresh and firm. The next dish was a salmon roll, lightly torched salmon on top of roll. Of course there is the traditional miso



soup- wakame based with bonito shavings. More dishes were served but we couldn't take in anymore. Edwin uses his skills and expertise to tease out the natural flavour of the food to a new height working with the freshest ingredients and a combination of marinating and dipping sauces. Everything was done to perfection and tasted heavenly. Edwin, you are the best!!

Master Tam's birthday *Winnie Yu*

One of the most exciting and progressive celebrations in our association is Master Tam's birthday. What a spectacular 2-night event, filled with delicious food and fabulous performances! It's both a birthday celebration and welcome home dinner for Master Tam, as he has been teaching in China for over 3 months. The first night took place on Sunday May 30th, in a well-known Chinese seafood restaurant. Everyone got dressed up in bright color tones like red, orange and yellow. The party kicked off with beautiful wishful Chinese lyrics for Master Tam, followed by cake cutting. Everyone enjoyed their Chinese traditional 10-course meal, while watching great shows such as lion dancing, musical performance, cooking show, Chinese dancing, singing and

much more. All performances were delivered with such enthusiasm and sincerity by his disciples. Master Tam was pleased with the shows. In the middle of the night, a special slideshow came on that brought a surprise to Master Tam. It was his granddaughter Wing's slideshow. The show was so popular that it was played again on the next day. Another great slideshow to mention was Master's Tam visit to China. The beautiful sceneries with famous hills, waterways, statues and caves were unforgettable. On the second day, the quality performance continued non-stop throughout the evening. Many youngsters showcased their talent in lion-dancing, followed by flute and clarinet concerto. The Chinese handkerchief dance was equally magnificent. The night was filled with mouth-watering food, laughter, music and comedy. The

last performance was group singing. Master Tam was excited that he joined the crowd and started to play the drum. He set the beat so that everyone can sing along. At the end of the evening, everyone lined up to take pictures with Master Tam before they make their way home. The 2-day birthday celebration was very special and memorable. We were very honoured to be a part of this event. Thank you everyone for coming and organizing this memorable dinner. We truly look forward to many more celebrations with Master Tam in the future. Once again, we wish Master Tam happiness and good health in the year 2010.

