

## **Bridging Worlds: Buddhist Words and Works**

Events Co-Sponsored by The Cornell Store, The Cornell Library, Cornell East Asia Outreach Program, Cornell South Asia Program, Cornell Southeast Asia Program & Namgyal Monastery Institute of Buddhist Studies

### **Events on Cornell Campus**

**August 31<sup>st</sup> (Fri) 2:30pm** The Cornell Store – David Gray (Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, Santa Clara University) – “**The Chakrasamvara Tantra as a Window to the Tibetan Buddhist Tradition**” – *Based on his extensive study of the Chakrasamvara (Circle of Bliss) tantric system, Professor Gray will discuss the unique features of esoteric Buddhism in Tibet. Regarded as the most powerful teachings attributed to the historical Buddha, these teachings have been regarded as secret and accessible to only the most advanced practitioners, but with the spread of Tibetan Buddhism globally these teachings have been interpreted and misinterpreted by many scholars and pseudo-scholars. Professor Gray, whose landmark study and translation of the central text has just been published, will elucidate important points and answer questions on Tibetan Buddhism generally and these important teachings specifically.*

**Sept. 6<sup>th</sup> (Thurs.) 6:30pm** 703 Olin Library – Anne Blackburn (Associate Professor of South Asian Studies and Buddhist Studies, Cornell) – “**Beauty, Power, & Protection: An Early History of Buddhism in Asia**” *In what context of philosophical and religious reflection did Buddhism first develop? How did social and political forces and desires shape the early growth and spread of Buddhism in Eurasia? How was Buddha-dharma translated and localized, repeatedly, in vastly different cultural settings?*

**Sept. 13<sup>th</sup> (Thurs) 2:30pm** The Cornell Store – Glenn Wallis (Professor of Applied Meditation, Won Institute of Graduate Studies) – “**Basic Teachings of the Buddha: Gotama the Philosopher**” – *With this new translation of Pali suttas, Glenn Wallis brings to the contemporary reader the core truths expounded by Gotama the Buddha on ethical, psychological, and philosophical matters. These present a coherent vision of existence that spread across Asia in the following centuries, becoming enmeshed in local traditions and cultures. In what way did these alter these ‘basic’ teachings, and how are we to understand the continuity of thought across time and place? Following on the success of his translation of the Dhammapada, Wallis will bring to life the clarity and power of Gotama’s timeless teachings.*

**Sept 17th (Mon) noon** location tba/South Asia Program event – Vesna Wallace (Religious Studies, UC Santa Barbara) – “**The Conception of the Absolute Body in the Kalachakratantra Tradition**” - *Drawing on the conception of the Gnostic Body elaborated in the anuttara-yoga-tantras, and specifically in the Kalachakratantra and its commentary, the Vimalaprabha, Professor Wallace will discuss how, though depicted as the immaterial and formless ultimate reality, this can still be considered a body. In the fourfold classification of the bodies of a Buddha, the Gnostic Body is the ultimate body which manifests as an Emanation Body, an Enjoyment Body, and a Dharma Body which*

*can be understood as the bases of imputation for collections of qualities or as perceptible forms. The Gnostic Body, also called the Innate Body, is a non-embodied body and a gnosis of supreme, imperishable bliss, so it is more difficult to understand how this can be considered a body. The Indian Buddhist tradition, however, has a broader conception of this category which extends to the formless mind due to its being a process of a particular experience. Drawing on her previous work, Professor Wallace, the leading English-language scholar of the Kalachakra tradition, will elucidate this subtle and difficult material.*

**Special Event** (Co-sponsored by The Cornell Store, The Johnson Museum and Namgyal Monastery Institute of Buddhist Studies)

**Sept. 18<sup>th</sup> (Tues) 2:00-5:00pm** Johnson Museum Lecture Room 2L

**“Seeing Kalachakra, Being Kalachakra”**

*Vesna Wallace (Religious Studies, UC Santa Barbara), William Bushell (Surgery, Columbia), Neil Theise (Pathology & Medicine, Albert Einstein College of Medicine), Ted Arnold (Namgyal Monastery), and Kavita Bala (Computer Science, Cornell) explore the role of creativity, cognition, and embodiment in contemporary sciences and Tibetan Buddhist tantric practice. These sessions will focus on the divergent understanding of the body in contemporary biology and medicine and in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism. Wallace will present an amazing analysis of esoteric Buddhist theory and practice in which the body and mind are considered innately capable of radical transformation at their most subtle level. Bushell and Theise, collaborators on groundbreaking studies of the relationship between yoga and meditation and bodily self-regeneration, will present evidence from contemporary medicine that the body is capable of just such radical transformation through an array of psychophysical interventions. As Buddhist esoteric practice is also a highly creative, embodied process based on fundamental cognitive restructuring, Arnold will introduce these three speakers with an overview of these relationships and a focus on Indo-Tibetan cognitive theory. Bala will present the results of a unique collaboration between her and the Namgyal monks: a computer-generated, three-dimensional mandala of the Kalachakra (Wheel of Time) system. Since Buddhist esoteric practice aims at restructuring cognitive processes (seeing) whereby one finally transforms completely, mentally and physically (being), into a fully enlightened deity such as Kalachakra, this is the perfect symbol of the panel.*

**Sept. 20<sup>th</sup> (Thurs) 6:30pm** 703 Olin Library – David Patt (Cornell East Asia Outreach Program director) – **“Tibetan Buddhism: The Union of Sutra and Tantra”** - David Patt, who received his PhD in Buddhist Studies under the legendary Geshe Sopa, will offer an introduction to the Buddhism of Tibet, describing its roots in the late Indian Mahayana tradition and tracing some of the central themes that characterize the practice of Buddhism in Tibet.

**Sept. 25<sup>th</sup> (Tues) 2:30pm** The Cornell Store – Kamala Tiyavanich (Cornell PhD, independent scholar) – **“Sons of the Buddha: The Early Lives of Three Extraordinary Thai Masters”** - A preacher must have common sense, knowing how to turn everyday life experience into lessons and to assess an audience to maximize communication with them. Sons of the Buddha shows how three boys evolved into

*remarkable exponents of this ideal. Filled with lively anecdotes and illustrations and brimming with local color, this brand new book succeeds as Tiyavanich's other books (Forest Recollections, The Buddha in the Jungle) have in bringing to life a complex religious tradition. A Cornell alum and local favorite, Kamala Tiyavanich is certain to delight with stories of practical importance.*

**Sept. 27<sup>th</sup> (Thurs) 2:30pm The Cornell Store** – Vic Mansfield (Professor of Physics and Astronomy, Colgate University) – **“Emptiness and Quantum Nonlocality”**

*The Dalai Lama, the foremost exponent of a Buddhism and science dialogue, believes that despite the many differences between the two traditions, interaction benefits both. Mahayana Buddhism is built upon the two pillars of emptiness and universal compassion. The present talk will explore the extraordinarily deep connections between emptiness and quantum nonlocality. This most puzzling feature of quantum mechanics has a precise and detailed connection to emptiness, the philosophic heart of Tibetan Buddhism. Although there is no attempt at using science to “prove” the validity of emptiness, this connection affords opportunities for a deeper understanding of both modern physics and Buddhism. Surprisingly, because of the intimate association between emptiness and compassion, this connection also has significant moral implications. This talk assumes no technical background in either Buddhism or physics.*

**Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup> (Tues) 2:30pm The Cornell Store** – Thomas Laird (author of *The Story of Tibet*) & Allen Carlson (Associate Professor of Government, Cornell) – **“The Story of Tibet: The Dalai Lama’s Perspective and The Chinese Perspective”** *In this presentation of material from his landmark volume The Story of Tibet, journalist Thomas Laird will discuss the fundamental issues of the Sino-Tibetan conflict in this second trip to Cornell. Laird gained unprecedented access to the Dalai Lama to compile this unique understanding of the conflict from its most significant participant. Carlson, a specialist in Chinese politics, will provide the perspective of the Chinese government, and together they will consider why this conflict has gone without resolution for nearly five decades and what the future might hold. Laird will be available to sign copies of the book after the lecture.*

**Oct 4<sup>th</sup> (Thurs) 12:30-1:30pm The Cornell Store** - Elizabeth Kelly – **“Tibetan Cooking: Recipes for Daily Living, Celebration, and Ceremony”** – *The first cook at Woodstock’s Dharma Chakra Triyana, Elizabeth Kelly will share a remarkable array of easy-to-follow recipes using ingredients readily available locally. There will be serving suggestions, meal planning, traditional foods, and numerous vegetarian dishes: everything needed to make a complete Tibetan dinner or just to try something different. Brand new from Ithaca’s Snow Lion Publications, Tibetan Cooking will make an excellent gift! Elizabeth will have samples to try and copies of the book she will be happy to sign.*

**Oct. 4<sup>th</sup> (Thurs) 6:30pm Cornell Library exhibition opening** – Geshe Dawa, abbot of Namgyal Monastery, the personal monastery of His Holiness the Dalai Lama – **“The Tibetan Tradition of Mind Training”**

*In this introduction to the mind training (lojong) tradition which includes The Eight Verses on Mind Training which the Dalai Lama will teach on Oct. 11<sup>th</sup>, Geshe Dawa will explicate briefly the history and practice of mental transformation. Coming from early Indian Buddhist masters, this important, practical tradition became central to all the traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. The most sophisticated and rigorous system of positive psychology ever devised, the mind training teachings uphold phenomenological existence while denying any underlying essence, thereby providing a powerful tool for both simple and profound change.*

**Oct. 11<sup>th</sup> (Thurs) 6:30pm** Olin Library's Libe Café – David Patt (Cornell East Asia Outreach Program director, Robert Frank (Henrietta Johnson Louis Professor of Management and Professor of Economics, Cornell), A monk from Namgyal Monastery of Ithaca – **“Questions and Answers on The Dalai Lama’s Visit”** *The historic visit of His Holiness the Dalai Lama concludes with his departure from Ithaca on October 11<sup>th</sup>. Come to the Libe Café to ask questions and share stories with these special hosts. What might The Dalai Lama have meant by a particular turn of phrase? What are the further implications of a point of Buddhist doctrine, or the economic consequences of a line of thinking? How does religious plurality matter in the scientific age? Come and talk through the issues raised by the three events led by His Holiness the Dalai Lama.*

**Oct. 16<sup>th</sup> (Tues) 2:30pm** The Cornell Store - Craig Preston (Founder, Nagarjuna Language Institute) – **“Buddhist Philosophy: Tenets and Advice”** – *Popular local teacher and translator Craig Preston brings an impassioned immediacy to the Tibetan genre of tenets, those philosophical points which are held to be true for a given meditator. But are those tenets final truths or merely provisional steps along the path to greater and greater insight? Central to Buddhist hermeneutics is the understanding that the Buddha presented an array of teachings suitable for diverse dispositions, and therefore what is true for one is not so for another. Tibetans inherited this complex issue and debated it for centuries – to the present day. As such, the study of tenets is central to understanding the depth of Tibetan philosophical genius. Preston will also answer any general questions raised by the Dalai Lama’s teachings the previous week and sign copies of Buddhist Philosophy, his translation of a Tibetan tenets text prepared especially for the Dalai Lama’s teachings on this topic.*

**Oct. 18<sup>th</sup> (Thurs) 6:30pm** 703 Olin Library – C.W. Huntington (Associate Professor of Religious Studies, Hartwick College – **“History, Tradition, and Truth: Buddhist Studies and Its Recurring Pattern of Demythologizing Buddhism”** - *The academic study of Buddhism is two centuries old, but even as progress is made in understanding the texts and practices of this ancient tradition, in its many varieties, a recurrent appeal to an essentialized Buddhism persists. In this discussion of his recent History of Religions article History, Tradition, and Truth, Madhyamaka scholar C.W. Huntington, author of numerous scholarly articles and The Emptiness of Emptiness, considers just how much progress has been made. Specifically focusing on modern figures such as Gombrich and Schopen, Huntington lays bare critical ethnocentric assumptions and errors made in disregarding normative Buddhist ideals in the search for historical ‘truth’ amidst other sources. Rather than substantial progress, we have seen different forms of a few basic*

*assumptions directing research. This important assessment of the divergence of Buddhist Studies from the Buddhist tradition is not to be missed by scholar or practitioner alike.*

**Oct. 22<sup>nd</sup> (Mon) noon** location tba/South Asia Program event – Miranda Shaw (Associate Professor of Religion) – **“Tantric Buddhist Dance of Nepal: A Yogic Art of Transformation”** *The Tantric Buddhist priests of Nepal include a sacred dance form among their esoteric yogic and ritual practices. Until Professor Shaw discovered the existence of this dance tradition fifteen years ago, it was virtually unknown outside the circles of initiates who perform it. Her talk presents her research findings on the movement style, costuming, repertoire, and performative contexts of this dance form, which is known as Charya Nirtya, meaning “dance as a spiritual discipline.” Accompanied by slides, the lecture also relates the dance form to Newar Buddhist art, architecture, and origin legendry. The religious purposes of the dance include its roles as a vehicle of ethical refinement, deity meditation, ritual performance, and yogic practice. At the heart of this distinctive dance genre is the Newar philosophical understanding of how bodily movements can generate religious insights and accomplish spiritual transformation. Author of the award-winning *Passionate Enlightenment and the new Buddhist Goddesses of India*, Professor Shaw is known as a dynamic and provocative speaker.*

**Oct. 25<sup>th</sup> (Thurs) 2:30pm** The Cornell Store – Robert Frank (Henrietta Johnson Louis Professor of Management and Professor of Economics, Cornell) - **"Tibetan Buddhism and the Prisoner's Dilemma"** *In game theory, the prisoner’s dilemma is a game in which players may cooperate with or compete against one another to maximize their own benefit, and typically the expectation is that the successful player will betray others in order to maximize personal benefit. This, however, is at odds with what is considered rational behavior in Tibetan Buddhism, in which the interdependent relationship of the players is upheld as the correct frame from which to make decisions. That is, true self-interest is also other-interest as well. Robert Frank, popular Economics professor and author of the new books *Economic Naturalist* and *Falling Behind*, spent four days at the fifth *Mind and Life* conference with the Dalai Lama and is uniquely qualified to examine this quandary.*

**Nov. 1<sup>st</sup> (Thurs) 6:30pm** 703 Olin Library – Bronwen Bledsoe (South Asia Collections curator, Cornell Library) – **“Being Buddhist in the Kathmandu Valley”** - *In an urbane Himalayan culture, the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley have preserved and inflected Indo-Tibetan Buddhist traditions through the millenia. This talk deals briefly with the Newars' balancing act through history, ever-poised between India and Tibet. It uses works on show in the main Library exhibition to situate Newar Buddhists in the pan-Asian--and now global--world.*

**Nov. 9<sup>th</sup> (Fri) 2:30pm** The Cornell Store - Glenn Mullin (independent scholar) – **"Tibetan Buddhism: Female Buddhas, Flying Mystics, and Other Esoteric Topics."** *World famous Tibetologist, art curator, translator, and Dalai Lama expert Glenn Mullin joins us for an exciting look into the esoteric aspects of Tibetan Buddhist culture he has chronicled for three decades. Drawing on vast experience with the great teachers of the*

*tradition, Mullin will draw us into the farthest reaches of human experience with flying mystics and the deepest potentials with female buddhas. These are common to Tibetan culture but frequently considered beyond belief to the modern mind, so we will try to understand how the eminently rational and magically mystical aspects connect under the tutelage of one of the great translators of the tradition.*

**Nov 15<sup>th</sup> (Thurs) 2:30pm** The Cornell Store – Sidney Piburn (Founder of Namgyal Monastery Institute of Buddhist Studies and Snow Lion Publications) – **“Reflections on the Dalai Lama’s Visits, 1991 and 2007”** – *Sidney Piburn, long-time friend of the Dalai Lama and the principle organizer of the historic 1991 visit to Cornell will look back on these two visits. Considering the Dalai Lama’s continuing concerns, such as social justice and compassion, as well as seemingly recent interests, such as the role of science in society, Piburn will reflect on the consistent vision that the Dalai Lama elaborates as he travels the globe. This final event, for which there could be no more appropriate guest, will allow the audience to discuss their own perceptions of the 2007 visit. Piburn will end the event with a signing of his best-seller, A Policy of Kindness: An Anthology of Writings by and about the Dalai Lama.*

**Nov. 15th (Thurs) 6:30pm** 703 Olin Library – Vic Mansfield (Professor of Physics and Astronomy, Colgate University) – **“Identity and Indistinguishability: A Buddhism & Science Dialogue”**

*Objects in nature usually have a unique identity, but elementary particles are completely indistinguishable. The mathematical operation of exchanging particle properties both defines and exploits this indistinguishability. While Tibetan Buddhism fully appreciates the unique identity of each person, it never fails to remind us of our indistinguishability because we all want happiness and freedom from suffering. This level of indistinguishability, so central to Tibetan Buddhism and its doctrine of universal compassion, is both established and exploited by a revered exchange exercise. However, this exchange is not mathematical but done in a meditation exercise that teaches in precisely what way we are indistinguishable and how this realization makes moral demands upon us. Exploring these parallels between Buddhism and physics raises some difficult moral questions. This talk assumes no technical background in either Buddhism or physics*

**Tompkins County Public Library, Borg Warner Room** (Cornell East Asia Outreach)

**Sept 16<sup>th</sup> (Sun) 1:30pm** – Allen Carlson (Associate Professor of Government, Cornell) **“The Recent Past and Possible Future of Sino-Tibetan Politics”** – *Since the exile of the Dalai Lama in 1959, the Chinese government and the Tibetan government-in-exile have remained at odds over the very nature of the Chinese presence: is it liberation or occupation; are Tibetans an ethnic minority within China or an independent people; is the Dalai Lama seeking secession or autonomy? Specialist in Chinese politics and author of Unifying China and Integrating with the World, Carlson will review the history of this intractable situation and, based on his research, the potential outcomes of this stalemate as China’s international influence grows and the Dalai Lama ages.*

**Sept 30<sup>th</sup> (Sun) 1:30pm** – C.W. Huntington (Associate Professor of Religious Studies, Hartwick College) – **“Philosophy in Buddhism: Putting Meditation to the Test of Insight”** – *For decades C.W. Huntington himself has struggled with the great Indian Buddhist texts and their subtle deconstruction of an essence to things, as reflected in his magisterial translation of Chandrakirti’s Supplement to the Middle Way in his book The Emptiness of Emptiness. Huntington will explain how philosophy is not a disembodied activity but the very act of being in the world and wrestling with the core Buddhist doctrines of no-self, impermanence, and suffering. How do these seemingly esoteric ideas relate to everyday living, if at all? Since these are not simply ‘scholarly’ concerns but the fundamental bases for happiness or its opposite, Huntington will reflect on how the central act of meditation is not merely passive sitting but a rigorous and difficult confrontation with thousands of years of brilliant analysis of the human condition.*

**Oct 7<sup>th</sup> (Sun) 1:30pm** – Ivette Vargas (Assistant Professor of Asian Religious Traditions, Austin College) - **“How Prominent are Women in Buddhism?: Leaders, Teachers, and the Future of Ordained Nuns”** *The place of women in Buddhism has been a source of contention for decades, as scholars have disagreed about how seriously to take stories of a few accomplished female practitioners and the many female deities of the Mahayana pantheon. It is maintained that gender equality is a hallmark of Buddhism, but how true is this in practice? Recently the issue of the lack of the ordination lineage for nuns in the Tibetan tradition has come forward, and the Dalai Lama has taken the lead in suggesting that Buddhists worldwide should dialogue on a resolution to this. An expert on women in the Tibetan tradition, Vargas recently attended the congress that has taken up this topic, and she will report on the results and future of this crucial issue.*

**Oct. 21<sup>st</sup> (Sun) 1:30pm** – Jeannine Chandler (PhD candidate in History, SUNY Albany) **“Tibetan Buddhism in Upstate New York: A Phenomenon of Regional Growth”** *Chandler’s research on the growth and development of Tibetan Buddhist centers in the Upstate area will provide insight into the future of Buddhism as it is transplanted into mainstream US culture. Chandler will detail the growth of Tibetan Buddhist centers in the state, including Ithaca’s Namgyal Monastery whose monks she has interviewed extensively, over the past decade and will consider the factors that have encouraged this. The state boasts major centers from all of the major Tibetan Buddhist traditions, and the new monastery in Ithaca will make it an important international location for Tibetan Buddhist scholars and practitioners. This fascinating look at a contemporary phenomenon will place the Dalai Lama’s visit in an entirely new light.*

**Nov 4<sup>th</sup> (Sun) 1:30pm** - Buddhism and Science Panel **“The Present and Future of the Dalai Lama’s Buddhism and Science Dialogue”** *Featuring local scientists and Buddhism specialists, this panel will discuss key features of the Dalai Lama’s ongoing interest in the sciences, as elaborated in his The Universe in a Single Atom. The panel will consider areas of divergence and the potential for areas of greater convergence between these two powerful traditions of rigorous analysis of the phenomenal world. Also considering the differing aims and values of these traditions, the panel will consider the benefits of such a dialogue for each tradition and how each can contribute to the health and happiness of humanity.*