



Nalanda Institute
for CONTEMPLATIVE SCIENCE

The Guru Question: The Crisis of Western Buddhism and the Global Future of the Nalanda Tradition

by

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IN RECENT MONTHS AND YEARS, the young transplant of Tibetan Buddhism in the West has suffered several shocks that have shaken sapling communities in the U.S., and troubled the larger community of Buddhist orders around the world. Given the public controversy and deeply personal introspection stirred by these shocks, including the recent statement by Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche, I believe the time is right for us as a community to seriously reflect on what they can teach us about the global future of Tibet's unique culture and its little understood Vajrayana form of Buddhism, also known as Buddhist Tantra.

The death in 2013 of a member of the *Three Jewels* Vajrayana community founded by American born Tibetan monk-scholar (or Geshe) Michael Roach is still reverberating among his students in New York and elsewhere. More recently, the Canadian Buddhist yoga teacher Michael Stone succumbed to an overdose of street drugs he reportedly used to self-medicate a chronic mental condition, leaving a wife and three children, and sending shock waves through a growing network of students and colleagues. Most recently, one of the senior Tibetan teachers in the West, the founder of the San Francisco based *Rigpa* community Sogyal Rinpoche, was once again embroiled in an ongoing scandal over allegations of sexual misconduct with students. As if these recent events were not enough, they follow a rift in the Tibetan diaspora formed a decade ago by controversy sparked by Geshe Kelsang Gyatso and his Britain based *New Kadampa* community over a lineage-specific Vajrayana practice called Shugden that His Holiness the Dalai Lama and others believe stirs sectarian tensions among Tibet's four main schools of Buddhism.

Of course every one of these misfortunes, and the many others like them, raises unique issues and challenges, each of which needs careful consideration on its own. Yet they also share points of intersection that prompt some common questions, questions which I believe are the most crucial for Western Buddhist communities to resolve going forward. In what follows I've chosen to explore what I see as the three most pressing questions, posed by the distinctive ethics, culture, and psychology of Tibetan Buddhism. First comes the guru question: are Tantric mentors subject to the ethical standards spelled out in the monastic code of conduct developed by Shakyamuni and the altruist's (*bodhisattva*)

code developed by Nalanda masters Nagarjuna, Asanga, Gunaprabha and Shakyaprabha? Second is the culture question: is Vajrayana practice compatible with the evidence-based worldview of modern science, the egalitarian ideals of Western democracy, and the pragmatic individualism of American civil society? Third and finally comes the psychological question: do the contemplative insights and methods of Tantric Buddhism intersect with the therapeutic insights and methods of contemporary psychology, psychiatry, and psychotherapy, and if so, how?

The Guru Question

MUCH HAS BEEN SAID about how the mentor-student bond in Tantric Buddhism differs from the teacher-student bond advised by Shakyamuni and preserved in later Indian Buddhist colleges and universities like Nalanda. The Buddha offered several metaphors for how his followers should relate to him. The most crucial urges us to examine and test his words as a goldsmith would test gold before buying it. In that verse he explicitly contrasts this rational relationship with the traditional Indian mentoring bond, using the Sanskrit term *guru*—meaning elder or authority—to direct his students *not* to accept teachings from him as their *guru*, on faith alone. That insistence on critical thinking and personal autonomy is echoed in the later Mahayana guidelines for how students should learn: by relying on the teaching *not the teacher*; on the meaning *not the letter*; on rational meaning *not metaphor*; and on direct experience *not inference*.

Against this backdrop, the practice of mentor devotion in Vajrayana Buddhism seems to define a very different relationship. In this practice, the teacher is consciously idealized as embodying a hero archetype (*ishtam-devata*), and the student is directed to overlook the teacher’s human limits, taking full responsibility for his or her own critical perceptions and emotional reactions to them. Two key points are less commonly known about this bond. First, it is said to grow out of a long interaction in which the mentor’s personal and professional qualifications are carefully examined and tested for up to ten years by the student before s/he accepts the teacher as a mentor. Second, this conscious idealization is circumscribed to the context of contemplative encounters—in teachings, retreats, or in one’s own personal meditation—and is not to be carried over into everyday interactions with the mentor as a teacher, role-model, senior practitioner or fellow human being. How do we reconcile this contrast, and how does it relate to the ethics of the Vajrayana?

According to the great Tibetan historian Taranatha, two Sanskrit classics stand out as “the sun and moon” in the sky of Indian Buddhism, both of which Tibetans attribute to the obscure 7th century Nalanda master Chandrakirti. The first of these, *Clear Words (Prasannapada)*, is a commentary on Nagarjuna’s profound philosophy of emptiness, the rational basis for Mahayana and Vajrayana practice. The second, *The Extremely Brilliant Lamp (Pradipoddyotana)*, is a nearly unknown work on Vajrayana Buddhism that became the Nalanda manual for training Tantric masters. Why was the latter book so important? Because it defined the delicate balance that allowed Nalanda to synthesize the three great vehicles of Buddhist teaching and practice—Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana—into one curriculum, one gradual path. How did it do that? It precisely circumscribed the way a Tantric master—who was typically also a Theravada monk by ordination and a Mahayana altruist by

training—should teach and behave so as not to contradict or undermine the moral and intellectual fabric of the entire Buddhist community.

As the Nalanda tradition made its way into Tibet, spread by triply-trained Nalanda abbots among a lay population who were not just non-monastic but largely illiterate, the colorful symbolism, dramatic ritual, and intimate personal guidance of the Vajrayana lead the way. As Tibet's society grew increasingly organized around Indian Buddhist culture and institutions, its two later schools of Buddhism turned back to the complex synthesis of Nalanda in order to restore that delicate balance between pure monasticism, lay altruism, and the Vajrayana's mentoring arts. So when the architect of the Tibetan renaissance Tsong Khapa set out in the 15th century to print the systematically translated Indian Buddhist canon as texts for his new Nalandas, the public universities of Tibet, the first book he printed was his commentary on *The Extremely Brilliant Lamp*.

What does this synthetic tradition say about our present day guru question? It insists that the Tantric master conform to all three ethical codes of conduct that provide the moral foundation for the Nalanda Buddhism of Tibet. Given that Shakyamuni made sexual misconduct one of only four transgressions prompting automatic expulsion from his community, and that Nalanda's masters codified an altruistic ethos of radical non-harming and compassionate care, it is incredible that any Buddhist would defend the abuse, misuse, or insensitive wielding of a Tantric mentor's power as some sort of secret teaching or "crazy wisdom." In fact, far from easing the moral standards shared with other forms of Buddhism, the special moral code of the Vajrayana raises the bar even higher. Why else would even so much as inwardly disrespecting a woman be considered a serious moral downfall, one of fourteen grave infractions that breach one's Tantric vows?

Given this, it should be clear that His Holiness the Dalai Lama's unequivocal condemnation of sexual misconduct by Vajra Masters in the West is not a case of catering to the Western mindset, or of imposing some sort of modern progressive reform on traditional Buddhism. It is simply upholding the lineage of moral conduct handed down to him by his Tibetan mentors, from Nalanda's masters, and from Shakyamuni and his direct heirs. And it goes without saying that the same condemnation must apply to inappropriate conduct by any Western Tantric mentor. From the standpoint of the Tibetan Buddhist school to which Michael Roach belongs, allegations that he took a sexual partner while still an ordained monk would mean he breached this triple ethos. Although sexual intimacy is a key Tantric practice for non-monastic Buddhists, Tsong Khapa—the school's founder—barred monks from engaging in such practices in order to restore the three-vehicle ethos on which the Nalanda tradition depends. If these allegations are true, Geshe Roach's defiance of that standard would have been the first step on the slippery slope that led to his reported mistreatment of two students on a long retreat in Arizona, including the one who eventually died of exposure.

Both the missteps of Geshe Roach and Sogyal Rinpoche also reflect the added risk to Vajra masters and students in the West, practicing outside the matrix of strong monastic and lay Buddhist communities that help keep Vajrayana practice ethically grounded and spiritually balanced. In my view, this extra risk means that, for Tantra to be safely and effectively practiced in the West, it is even more vital than it was in Tsong Khapa's Tibet that it be practiced with a profound understanding and

rigorous observance of the extraordinary discipline of the triple ethos.

The Culture Question

AMONG THE MANY UNIQUE FEATURES of Vajrayana Buddhism cited as evidence that it cannot be fully understood or mastered by “the Western mind” is that its wisdom and methods are shrouded in a multi-layered matrix of culture-specific symbols and rituals. Of course, literally speaking this is true. But what is easy to miss or forget about the “magic and mystery” surrounding the Buddhism of Tibet is that its opacity and complexity are not intrinsic and essential but extrinsic and intentional. As *The Extremely Brilliant Lamp* explains, Vajrayana teachings were encoded in many layers of symbolism *intentionally*, in order to conceal their actual meaning and methods from those who might misunderstand or misuse them. The text goes on to say that one main reason for putting a close mentoring bond at the heart of this vehicle is so that a master trained in its meaning and methods could decode them for the student prepared to understand and practice the Tantras, in the crucible of a confidential supervisory relationship.

Yet as all skilled Buddhist teaching is said to be tailored to the evolving needs of individuals and communities over time, several centuries after the Vajrayana was mainstreamed into the Nalanda curriculum, common knowledge and acceptance of its methods spread, and the need for camouflaging them declined. Somewhere along the way—probably between the 8th and 10th centuries—a new standard form of Vajrayana teaching called the *Wheel of Time (Kalachakra)* emerged, with a special focus on the form the teachings would take going forward, and the impact they would have on the global future of contemplative science and civilization.

Contrary to the strategy of shrouding meaning in coded symbols and method in complex rituals, this modern form of Vajrayana was explicitly and intentionally *transparent* in its teaching and practice. Instead of protecting the novice and community from misunderstanding or misuse by secrecy, the strategy of this tradition was and is to protect them by scientific education. This education was designed to make the medical, psychological, social, and cultural benefits of the Vajrayana overt as public knowledge and available as professional training. Based on this approach, Vajrayana insights and skills were fully integrated into Tibetan medicine and psychiatry, as well as the training of senior scholars, contemplatives, teachers, artists, architects, public servants and religious and political leaders.

So while the classical form of Vajrayana culture is seemingly at odds with the explanatory worldview of modern science, this modern form offers scientific explanations of Vajrayana teachings and methods based on disciplines that have recognized similarities with quantum physics, systems biology, current neuroscience, positive psychology, and cultural anthropology. This scientific approach to the Tantras, accepted by all Tibetan schools, also reveals the deep structural ties linking the underpinnings of classical Vajrayana with the well known science-friendly aspects of early and middle Buddhism. These include: rejecting creationism and revelation; a scientific method of reason and evidence; a Socratic approach to education; insisting on causal explanation; an evolutionary

approach to life; a naturalistic view of mind; a developmental model of character; a quantum atomic theory; and a Big Bang cosmology. Again, in this light the Dalai Lama's much publicized interest in modern science appears not as catering to Western worldview or as attempting a modern reform of Buddhism, but as faithfully expressing the scientific logic basic to the Buddhist tradition throughout its history.

Beyond the obvious relevance of this new form of Buddhist Tantra to science, the *Wheel of Time* also has visionary projections about the future of global civilization and human development that clearly align Vajrayana culture with the egalitarian and individualist values basic to Buddhism from the start. Despite the common Western misconception that Buddha's theory of selflessness reflects the collectivist mindset of the Indian caste system or Confucian China, the opposite is true. Shakyamuni meant this teaching to challenge the conservative social theory that we have a fixed self given by family, society, nature or god. Instead, he insisted that each human being (and animal) is a self-creating individual with equal rights to freedom and happiness, and a natural responsibility for self-determination. This explains the socially subversive nature of his teaching and community, which he opened to people regardless of race, class, religion or gender, so that they could have the counter-cultural support to study their own potential and to choose their own path to freedom and happiness.

Although Vajrayana Buddhism seems to glorify hierarchy—with symbols of royal wealth and power and rituals of deference and devotion—the fact is that these symbols and rituals are used in a transgressive way, with clear countercultural intent. The highest ritual of Tantric empowerment that seals the mentor-student bond and brings the student into the mentor's inner world of practice is modeled on the Hindu rite for consecrating future queens and kings. It idealizes the mentor, yes, but with the explicit agenda of pronouncing the student a future Vajra Mentor and Vajrayana Buddha, right down to giving her the garb of royal ease and signs of royal power. The modern tradition of the *Wheel of Time* makes this egalitarian social agenda and radical individualism even more overt. It does so with the prediction that scientific education and universal training in Tantric methods will so empower people of all walks all around the world that social structures like kingship will be everywhere replaced by consensual government, ushering in a radical form of global democracy. And as for human individualism, it teaches that each individual is a microcosm of the universe, nature, and society, and predicts that human civilization on earth will only be sustainable when people of all colors, genders, religions, and talents join together to embody their full potential for passionate altruism and open leadership.

While this vision of human history and development may be far more optimistic than any familiar to us in the West, and clearly aspires to a standard of egalitarianism and individualism as yet unmet by any human community, Asian or Western, there is no denying that it resonates with our progressive values. So this thousand year old teaching, far from being incompatible with modern culture, challenges us all to aim wider and higher, and stands ready to meet us socially and politically more than half way.

This big picture brings us to arcane culture-wars like the struggle that led to a rift between adherents of sectarian Shugden practice and the mainstream of the Tibetan diaspora. There is in Vajrayana

Buddhism as in any human legacy a devotion to preserving tradition that can often stand in the way of the progressive values at the heart of Buddhism, values that are plainly expressed in the *Wheel of Time* system. When Shakyamuni handed down his wisdom teachings to his beloved disciple Shariputra, he urged him not just to preserve them but to develop them for the better, creating a new and improved teaching (*abhi-dharma*). On his deathbed, Buddha refused to appoint a successor but rather exhorted each of his followers, “be a lamp unto yourself, a refuge unto yourself.” This progressive, egalitarian, and individualist spirit is easily forgotten when symbol, ritual, and tradition are mistaken for the essence.

The *Wheel of Time* approach to Tantra clearly shows that Buddha’s progressive values apply to all forms of Buddhism, including Vajrayana. And it also resonates powerfully with the Dalai Lama’s challenging stance that Buddhists should renounce theories disproved by modern science, and that “Buddhism should help by not being Buddhism,” that is: by relinquishing culture-bound forms and culture-specific rituals in favor of the healing, liberating heart of Buddha’s teaching.

The Psychology Question

THE RECENT DEATH OF MICHAEL STONE raises another much debated question: what is or should be the relationship between spiritual practice, especially of the Tantric kind, and modern psychology. Most of the talk surrounding the syndrome of spiritual teachers with unresolved mental problems nowadays references Buddhist psychologist John Welwood’s concept of “spiritual bypassing.” The idea that spirituality enables people to deny or gloss over destructive emotions, character flaws, or underlying mental illnesses that hide within their psychic blind spots or unconscious “shadow” goes back to the roots of psychotherapy. Freud adopted a suspicion of spiritual traditions from the modern critique of Catholic Christianity, and presented spirituality in general as a quasi-delusional system of wishful fantasy and obsessive ritual to be exposed and cured by his new science. This attitude was applied to Buddhism by transpersonal psychologist Jack Engler, whose phrase, “You have to be somebody before you can be nobody,” claims that Western psychology works to build ego strength while Buddhist psychology helps to transcend it.

With Engler and Welwood’s help, the myth that Western psychology alone can expose unconscious problems, while Buddhist psychology only works at higher levels of human development has been enshrined as conventional wisdom among professionals and the lay public alike. In my view, this is simply a culture-bound Western prejudice; it betrays a superficial, partial knowledge of Buddhist psychology, not some deep cross-cultural truth. Buddhist science and civilization are not lost in the proverbial clouds, flying high over the ground of everyday human suffering or the underworld of the most profound psychopathology. Buddhist psychiatry may not use electroshock therapy or artificially synthesized tranquilizers, but it does diagnose the most severe mental illness, and prescribe acupuncture, moxibustion, somatic therapies, herbal medicines, diet, and lifestyle change, as well as counseling and meditation to treat them. No one can study the basic Buddhist science of human suffering—describing the hellish repetition of trauma, the ghostly drives of addiction, the chronic panic of failed attachments, or the titanic power struggles of narcissism—and seriously doubt that

this tradition is as profoundly psychological as any in the West.

So if we don't psychologize problems like Michael Stone's as a matter of bypassing mental illness with yoga and Buddhism, how else can we explain them? Since the Buddha diagnosed human suffering—ordinary and pathological—as the cumulative effect of a linked chain of adverse causes and conditions stretching back through development into our evolutionary past, it should be no surprise that Buddhist psychology sees healing as a gradual path of cumulative corrective steps, spanning the whole causal spectrum that ails us. It has no illusions about truly healing suffering without exposing and cutting out its deepest roots. Nor does it imagine that anyone can attain the highest reaches of realization without protracted work correcting weaknesses and building strengths, from the ground up—from the most primal functions of body, life, heart, and mind, to the most evolved factors of consciousness.

This systematic, gradual approach explains why each and every step of contemplative learning and healing in Buddhism requires a set of preliminary trainings. Conversely, this same approach involves a rigorous system of trouble-shooting problems that come up as obstacles on the way. Any well-trained Buddhist practitioner who runs into unexpected difficulties like Michael Stone's, sooner or later would recognize the need to go back to more basic levels to work through lingering weaknesses or limits. An experienced Buddhist doctor, master, or fellow practitioner would see a lingering struggle with addictive drug use as a consequence of a superficial, premature, or ungrounded practice. Teachers who drive themselves to extend their activities, raise their profile, or expand their responsibilities beyond their actual capacity, who fail to step back to see and heal basic ailments, build greater strengths, do more preparation, or ask for help from guides, in this context are seen as half-trained minds, who tried their wings before their time. This syndrome of grandiose over-expansion seems equally at work in both Western teachers we've discussed: Michael Stone and Michael Roach.

There are many reasons why teachers of Buddhism in the West may be especially prone to this syndrome, the two most glaring being: that they are on the front lines of transplanting Buddhism into the West, so in great demand; and that they are far removed from the traditional community and institutions which would otherwise be there to supervise, support, guide, and reality test their progress. To a lesser degree, these same vulnerabilities also affect Asian Buddhist teachers working in the West, like Sogyal Rinpoche and Geshe Kelsang Gyatso. I believe this suggests that, going forward, Buddhist teachers in the West—especially Tantric teachers—would do well to follow the lead of traditional Buddhist communities: by developing their career at an Asian rather than Western pace; by taking extra care to maintain close communication with the mentors and communities that trained them; and by pursuing avenues for group teaching and practice with colleagues who can help provide peer supervision and consultation.

To get back to the tragedy of Michael Stone, there is another complicating factor to consider that brings us back to the question of Buddhist and Western psychology. It seems that Michael was no stranger to Western psychiatry, and had been given a Western diagnosis and treatment alongside his Asian practice. So not only was he less supervised by Buddhist teachers than he may have

needed, but he was also subject to the pathologizing influence of Western psychiatry, which tends to see mental illness as a fixed brain disorder to be lived with, treated, and worked around, rather than an extra-strength case of common suffering to be actively taken on and healed by reshaping mind and nervous system.

Of course, without having known Michael personally I can't say much about his real challenges. But from what I've seen firsthand of the limits of Western psychology and psychiatry, I would say that he may have been encouraged to compartmentalize his deeper problems and seek a chemical fix for them, because his doctor was unaware of how yoga and meditation could help him heal more fully and deeply. That is not to say that Western psychopharmacology is never indicated or helpful, but that from the Buddhist perspective it should be seen as a temporary measure to prepare the individual for healthy learning and contemplative self-healing.

In over forty years' experience with modern medicine and psychotherapy, I believe practitioners of these Western disciplines are at risk of "pathological cave-dwelling." We needlessly tolerate mental pathology because we were taught it is fixed by biology or development. Without bypassing the deep roots of mental suffering, Buddhist psychology it turns out was prescient about the role of present mental activity on our well-being, and more realistic about the transformability of mind, body, and self than Freud and his heirs. This is an argument that needs no proof, given the mounting evidence of our own cognitive and affective neuroscience, positive psychology, mindfulness-based therapies, and trauma-informed transformational therapies.

After decades of studying and practicing Buddhist and Western psychology together, I don't see their relationship as one of opposition or even complementarity, but rather one of kinship. These two culturally and historically diverse traditions to me are siblings under the skin, two sister streams of humanity's quest for civilizing self-knowledge and self-mastery. Although they flowed in opposite directions from their neighboring sources in Greece and India, they have finally come to converge in our age, here on the far side of the world. It is no accident that psychotherapy has been the most fertile ground for the transplant of Asian Buddhism. And it is no accident that Buddhist psychology has finally helped heal the split between science and spirituality that left modern psychology of two minds for centuries.

Surprising as it may seem, the Tantric form of Buddhist psychology bears the closest family resemblance to its Western sister tradition. There is no better analogue in the West for the intimate mentoring bond of Vajrayana than the idealizing transference bond of modern psychotherapy. And there is no better analogue in Buddhism for the neuropsychological model of mind at the heart of psychotherapy than the Vajrayana model of mind based on energies, chemistry, channels and circuits of the central nervous system, known to Tantric science as "the subtle body." While Tantric techniques of imagery and sublimation have only a few analogues in modern therapies, both the Vajrayana and psychotherapy traditions define themselves by the art of reshaping the embodied mind and nervous system by means of an alchemical mentoring bond.

The unlikely kinship between these traditions means a shock to the system for both sides. Tibetan

mentors will have to accept that the Western mind can in fact understand and master the Vajrayana. Western psychologists will have to accept that we are a thousand or more years behind the Buddhist tradition of depth psychology. But if both sides are willing to face this culture-shock, the benefits for both will be immeasurable. First comes the real possibility of a form of psychotherapy that can help Westerners safely and effectively practice Tantra. Second Tantric Buddhists can count on a cross-cultural ally in the difficult work of transplanting so exotic and esoteric a cultural practice into the West. That is why I believe the safest way for Vajrayana communities to take root in America is to cultivate this natural kinship and build neuropsychological insights and methods into their teaching and practice. The existence of such an integrated approach may well help prevent more tragic outcomes like those experienced by Michael Stone and the Three Jewels community.

Future Visions and Recommendations

AS WE LOOK TO THE FUTURE, the prospects for a robust and fruitful flowering of Vajrayana Buddhism in the West seem to me truly promising. There are ample grounds to expect that we can replicate Nalanda's uncommon moral standards of Tantric mentoring here in the West, given a focus on rigorous education and training in its triple ethos. The transparent vision of Tantric science and civilization reflected in the *Wheel of Time* offers a template for another renaissance of Vajrayana methods, helping to meld the scientific, egalitarian, individualist spirits of East and West into a progressive culture of contemplative learning, democratization, and optimal human development that circles the globe. The kinship between Tantric depth psychology and modern psychotherapy promises a cross-cultural alliance of psychological practice that could help enrich both traditions and ensure the safe and effective transmission of Vajrayana methods around the world.

In his recent statement, Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche identified Trungpa Rinpoche, around whom allegations of sexual misconduct also swirled, as his paradigm of an effective Vajrayana master in the West. Although there is no denying the imposing footprint of the community and institutions Trungpa left behind in the U.S., I don't see the "crazy wisdom" style of mentoring he embodied as the right fit for America or the West going forward. Instead, I draw your attention to the transparent, progressive style embodied by his longtime peer and close friend, the late Gelek Rinpoche, who when Trungpa died of alcoholic liver disease "inherited" some of his most discerning students, including beat poet Allen Ginsberg.

A man as humble and unfailingly kind as your wisest uncle at a family gathering, when Gelek mounted the Vajra teacher's throne, he could channel the most awesome Tantric archetypes, so vividly that your heart would race, your eyes well, and your neck hairs stand at attention. Rightly nicknamed by his peers "the American Lama," he was as comfortable wearing a kitschy stars-and-stripes top hat as the traditional gold peaked pundit's cap of the Dalai Lama's school. A Westerner among Westerners, and the most Tibetan of Tibetans, he asked his American "friends" not to bow around him, but wouldn't dream of barring his Malaysian students from full prostrations. Most importantly, he clearly upheld the triple ethos of the Nalanda tradition: he gave back his monk's vows when he chose to marry, but kept faithfully observing the five lay precepts; treated each student and

person he met with impeccable, unwavering care; and painstakingly prepared his Western students for the Vajra vehicle, guiding and supervising each one, while protecting their non-Tantric peers from premature exposure to Vajrayana ideas and methods.

Of course, the contrast between narcissistic and selfless styles of leadership is everywhere. Compare Kelsang Gyatso with Lama Yeshe, or our last pope Benedict to our current pope Francis. Nor is narcissistic “bypassing” in any way unique to the spiritual realm: contrast former president Clinton with Obama, or Trump as a business leader with Warren Buffet. The contrast is everywhere because it is in every one of us, in the common human struggle between defensive clinging to privilege and pride, and humble vulnerability to empathy and shame. Without any illusion that the real struggle of civilization is between good and bad people, the Buddha joined our community of human guides—including Socrates and Confucius, Mohammed and Jesus, Mary and Sappho—by renouncing kingship to become a homeless teacher. Today, as the journey of civilization goes global, the main struggle we face has not changed, although the science and methods we can now bring to it have evolved miraculously over the centuries, reaching a new global watershed with the merging of Buddhist and Western streams of self-transformation.

I count myself supremely lucky to have known Gelek Rinpoche for almost forty years. His progressive teaching style helped me found the Nalanda Institute for Contemplative Science, and inspired me to try striking the delicate balance between transplanting Vajrayana science and grafting it onto current neuropsychology. Perhaps more importantly, his transparent example helped me, my family, and my colleagues and students at Nalanda Institute to taste the future promise of a marriage of two worlds, the confluence of two great streams of civilizing know-how. That taste of the potential we all have for pure freedom and passionate altruism gives us the hope we need to weather the storms of today’s countless crises—spiritual, social, economic, and political—and stay the course towards the future envisioned by the *Wheel of Time*: a bright future of global inner peace, socioeconomic justice and equality, and psychological integration for all.

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Dr. Loizzo is the Founder and Director of the **Nalanda Institute for Contemplative Science**, an educational non-profit that sees an interdependent world where everyone flourishes by learning to tame self-defeating thoughts and emotions. Its mission is to train people from all walks of life in the timeless contemplative skills informed by practical neuropsychology to empower themselves and others to cultivate a wise mind, compassionate heart, and altruistic way of being in our interdependent world.

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