

The Dharma at Saraha

Dharma at Saraha. Yes, there is nightly ngondro practice with tsok offerings, Chenrezig practice, Tibetan Language class with Lama Tashi, weekend work parties, and special teachings and ceremonies offered by the three founding lamas, Lama Tharchin, Lama Gyaltzen, and Lama Sonam. But there is something more. And it is not anything we will find posted in the monthly calendar.

I began attending Saraha when it first opened its doors in the fall of 2011. I come from a different lineage, and am blessed to be able to go on retreat with and spend time with my own root lama, who is most dear to me. When I joined the sangha at Saraha, I noticed a small, teeny little concern that I may be creating a disloyalty to my own root lama and possibly a distraction from my daily at-home practice. It was, however, a small enough concern that it did not stop me from attending any events. So, I gratefully and joyfully settled in to a weekly routine at Saraha.

Last summer, I found myself with a profound need for guidance on my path. At this point, Lama Sonam was visiting and teaching regularly at Saraha. I was at a profound crossroads, with circumstances I would otherwise never share with anyone except my own root lama. However, it would be months before I could see him. I wondered, should I wait, or should I seek guidance elsewhere? I knew if I only had the chance to see my root lama, I would be given the most precious, loving, and compassionate guidance. But as the days passed and my need for help seem to grow, I contemplated asking Lama Sonam if he would meet with me, which seemed to stir up that little concern of disloyalty.

Luckily for me, the need for help and my respect for Lama Sonam weighed stronger than the concern did. I was nearly bursting with nervousness as I met Lama Sonam, sharing with him the very esoteric circumstances of my experience. Though I did not expect anything different from Lama Sonam, I was still amazed at how clearly he heard me, guided me, and blessed me.

That day my path found a new direction, one of such heartfelt joy and true compassion that I had the strong realization that the essence of Lama Sonam is not at all separate from the essence of my precious root lama, just as the very essence of true compassion can not be separate from itself. I had thought that my root lama's compassion was "his"-the epitome of the confused state of Samsara. I realized on an experiential level that it is not my compassion, or your compassion, or his, or hers, or theirs. It is Compassion. It is the essence of True Nature that pervades all beings. It emanates from my root lama, Lama Sonam, Lama Tharchin, Lama Sonam, Lama Tashi, and the Saraha sangha. It is the essence of all pure dharma activity, and it is what you will find at Saraha. But, like I said, it isn't listed in the calendar of events.