

Ian Green – a background

Ian, along with his wife Judy, has been a Buddhist for over 35 years and a vegetarian for around 20 years.

Ian's connection to Buddhism began when he traveled to India in 1971. During his travels he saw how spirituality touched every part of Indian culture and by contrast "how materialistic our Western society is".

Towards the end of his Indian journey Ian visited the holy city of Varanasi on the Ganges. Seeking an escape from the noise and busy-ness he was attracted to a park which was situated nearby Varanasi. The moment he walked into that park he felt a tranquility and calmness he had not felt before in India and only rarely in Australia. As he remembers it "I felt totally at peace...as if I had just come home after wandering for a very long time".

Standing in the centre of the park, Ian was confronted with by a great monolithic object. He could not work out if this was man-made or a natural phenomenon but as he says "It seemed to emanate an incredible power which nearly knocked me over." Ian was looking at the Great Stupa of Sarnath which marks the spot where the Buddha gave his first teaching. This park, which is known as Deer Park is one of the holiest pilgrimage places of Buddhism.

Ian purchased a book "What is Buddhism?" from the small shop at the park and on the plane home to Australia he read about Buddhist concepts such as karma and reincarnation. As Ian remembers it "I had the feeling that I knew all these things, even though I had not seen them written down before." Ian now accepts that in previous lifetimes he had exposure to Buddhism and that once he met with the right conditions in this life he had "no choice but to become a Buddhist."

Ian became a student at Tara House (later Tara Institute) in Melbourne and within a few months had received teachings from Nick Ribush, Geshe Loden, Zasep Tulku and Konchok Donma. By the mid 1970's Ian had his first encounter with his holy gurus Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche. In 1979 Ian completed the month long course at Kopan Monastery, in Kathmandu (Nepal) and around this time he became Chairman of the Tara House Executive Committee which was located in Miller Grove, Kew. In 1980 Ian's father, Ed Green offered 50 acres of land to Lama Yeshe to set up a Buddhist centre near Bendigo. Lama Yeshe arranged divinations on the value of the land and found out that this land would be highly beneficial. Lama then accepted Ed's offer and agreed to teach on the Bendigo land when he next visited Australia in 1981.

The original 50 acres was later added to with a further 50 acres from Ian's mother, Joyce and 60 acres offered by Ian. In total the Green family has offered over 150 acres to set up the Buddhist centre in Bendigo.

In March 1981, Ian along with his wife Judy and their three sons and Ken Hawter (later Venerable Pende Hawter) moved to Bendigo to set up Atisha Centre. At this time the only accommodation was old railway carriages with no electricity or running water.

In August 1981, Lama Thubten Yeshe came to Atisha Centre to give a major course on Mahamudra. On August 14th 1981 Lama Yeshe walked over land with Garrey Foulkes and Ian to lay out his master plan for Atisha Centre, the Monastery, an aged care facility, a lay community and as centerpiece to the plan, the Great Stupa. Lama spoke at length of his vision for the area to cater for Buddhists throughout their life. His blueprint was to set up a dharma city.

Ian and Judy continued as Directors of Atisha Centre and for the next 15 years.

In 1994 Lama Zopa Rinpoche indicated that the Great Stupa of Gyantse should be the model for the Great Stupa in Bendigo. And in 1996 Ian resigned from the Atisha Centre directorship to focus on his

life's work of building the Great Stupa of Universal Compassion. Ian has continued in the role of Chairman of the Great Stupa of Universal Compassion Ltd until the present day.

Ian was also a board member of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition from 2000 to 2006 and Chairman of DLIA from 2007 until 2010.

During most of this time Ian gained an income from advertising. Following a career with multi-national advertising agencies in Melbourne, Ian was a partner in two Bendigo-based advertising agencies; Cook Green and Moore, and Challenges Accepted.

Ian's official Buddhist positions have included:

- Chairman The Great Stupa of Universal Compassion Ltd. (current)
- Chairman Jade Buddha for Universal peace Project (current)
- Board member Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition Inc (USA) (Past)
- Chairman of DLIA Ltd. (Past)
- Board member of FPMT-Australia (Past)
- Board member of Tibetan Arts Foundation (USA) (Past)
- Chairman of Tara House Buddhist Centre (Past)
- Director of Atisha Centre Ltd (Past)

He has received awards for:

- Meritorious Award for Excellence in multicultural affairs. Government of Victoria. 26 November 2009
- Special recognition honoring leadership in promoting peace. Phap Vuong Monastery, San Diego 7 February 2009
- Special recognition for efforts in promoting peace from Office of Assistant Chief of Police, San Diego 7 February 2009
- Outstanding contribution to World Peace and Tranquility from the International Buddhist meditation Association, Hawaii November 28 2010