

PRESS RELEASE

Subject: International Conference on Regulating and Transforming Emotions (Cosmology and Consciousness V), Sherabling Monastery, Bir, 11-13 November, 2016

The three-day meeting, titled ‘Cosmology and Consciousness V – Regulating and Transforming Emotions’, will see presentations and panel discussions from top Indian and Western scientists and senior Tibetan Buddhist scholars. The event is an initiative of the Science for Monks program under the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (LTWA). LTWA has been teaching science to Tibetan nuns and monks under the inspiration of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama since 2000.

“Regulating and Transforming Emotions” will explore the world of emotional experience from a range of scientific and Buddhist perspectives. Each of us in our pursuit of happiness seek to cultivate experiences where we derive pleasure and avoid those that lead to suffering. Western clinical psychiatry, and psychology, have a rich history of understanding and addressing mental pain and suffering. Buddhist philosophy has detailed descriptions and characterizations of negative, afflictive, and destructive emotions. These are emotions that destroy peace of mind and lead to many types of suffering. Foundational teachings within Buddhism focus on the existence, causes, and antidotes to suffering. Accordingly, much of our suffering is unnecessary suffering, out of ignorance or shortsightedness — not understanding the reality of interdependence of mental phenomena.

Despite understandings from both the East and West, increasingly we live in a world where people look to unsustainable antidotes; material pleasures, prescribed pharmaceutical, and self-medication through drugs and alcohol. Conference presentations and panels will explore depression, social psychology and social-emotional development, emotion regulation, personal growth, positive psychology, and well-being.

In addition to the presenters, 35 Tibetan religious and educational leaders from over 20 monasteries and nunneries are guiding the development of the panel discussions and will be engaged in the dialogue with scientist for the first time. The conference is preceded by a four-week introductory science course aimed at engaging these 35 Tibetan monastic scholars with modern science and preparing to take-on this dialogue.

“Regulating and Transforming Emotions” is the fifth conference in a series that convenes Buddhist scholars, and Western and Indian scientists in dialogue. The first conference, “Cosmology and Consciousness – a Dialogue between Buddhist Scholars and Scientists on Mind and Matter” was held in Dharamsala, in December, 2011, and was inaugurated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Our second conference on “Knowing and Action” was held at the Songtsen Library in Dehradun in 2013, our third conference on “Harmony and Happiness” was held in Dharamsala in 2014, and our fourth “Quantum Mechanics and Emptiness” was held at Namdroling Monastery in Bylakuppe in 2015.

The public conference will be held in the main hall of the the shedra at Sherabling Monastery, from November 11th to 13th, 9am to 5pm. This is conference is organized by the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (in Dharamsala, India), and made possible from a grant from the John Templeton Foundation (Philadelphia, USA) and the ongoing generous support of the Sager Family Foundation (Boston, USA).

Conference presenters and panelists–

- Western: Dr. Matthew Boden, Dr. Robyn Walser, and Dr. Sasha Gala
- Indian: Dr. Meenakshi Thapam, Dr. K.G. Chandy, Dr. Sudhir Kakar, and Dr. Shivarama Varambally
- Tibetan: Geshe Ngawang Norbu, Lama Ngodup Dorji, and Geshe Lhakdor, and 35 Tibetan monastic graduates, representing all four Buddhist schools plus Bon, will join in panel discussions

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