

PRESS RELEASE

Subject: International Conference on Observation and Reality (Cosmology and Consciousness VII), Chintan Bhavan, Gangtok, Sikkim, 4-6 October, 2018

The three-day meeting, titled 'Cosmology and Consciousness VII - Observation and Reality', will see presentations and panel discussions from top scientists, philosophers, and senior Buddhist scholars. The conference series is an initiative of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, which has taught science to Tibetan nuns and monks since 2000 under the inspiration of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. This year's conference is organized in partnership with the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology.

"Observation and Reality" will explore the curious world of quantum physics and philosophical connections to and tensions with Buddhist philosophy. We all experience the physical world, and in different ways, but what is the underlying nature of the subtlest particles that make-up the physical phenomena we experience day-to-day?

"What we observe not necessarily be the subtle reality," says Geshe Lhakdor, director of the Library of Tibetan Works & Archives. "There is a big gap between appearance and reality. At the subtlest level both Buddhist view of emptiness and the scientific view of quantum mechanics seem to be saying that everything is in a constant state of change, and reality is an existent illusion."

Foundational questions in quantum mechanics, have strong resonance in debates found between different Buddhist philosophical schools. How does the experimental evidence of modern physics intersect with Buddhist conceptions of causations, the observer, and how does the act of observation influence our measurements in nature? The monastics, and scientist alike, both steward traditions that strongly encourages dialogue and the open exchange of ideas.

Form is empty. Emptiness is form. Emptiness is not other than form and form is not other than emptiness. Similarly, feelings, discriminations, compositional factors, and consciousness are also empty.

- from the Heart Sutra

In addition to the presenters, 30 Tibetan religious scholars and educational leaders from over 15 monasteries 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 30 Tibetan monastic scholars with modern science and preparing to take-on this dialogue.

"Cosmology and Consciousness VII - Observation and Reality" is the seventh conference in a series that convenes Buddhist scholars, and Western and Indian scientists in a 3-day dialogue to promote the integration of spiritual values and scientific investigations. 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, our fourth "Quantum Mechanics and Emptiness" was held at Namdroling Monastery in Bylakuppe in 2015, our fifth conference on "Regulating & Transforming Emotions" was held at Sherabling Monastery in 2016, and our sixth conference on "Compassion, Virtue and Character" was held at Norbulingka Institute in 2017.

The public conference will be held in the in Gangtok Sikkim, from 4 to 6 October, 10 am to

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5:30 pm. This conference is organized by the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (in Dharamsala, India) and Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, 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), and the Namgyal Institute for Tibetology.

Conference presenters and panelists-

- Western / Indian Scientist: Anil Ananthaswamy, Dr. Howard Wiseman, Dr. Ian Durham, Dr. Theodore Hodapp, and Areeya Chantasri.
- Tibetan Scholars: Geshe Lhakdor, Khenpo Chowang, Geshe Thabkhe, and 30 Tibetan monks from over 15 different monasteries in Sikkim and surrounding areas, representing all four Tibetan Buddhist schools, will join in panel discussions.

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