

# Get to Know Us

A very personal interview  
with

Geshe Michael Roach  
& Lama Christie McNally



Dear Friends:

The two of us have started to reach this level of being semi-famous, where we see quotes from us plastered on the sides of Chinese buses; or get approached for autographs on planes or in restaurants, from Brazil to Mongolia; or find ourselves being chased

by fans through a juice bar in Manhattan or into elevators in Taipei.



This is of course both flattering and sometimes a pain in the bottom, because at the same time we've started to attract the attention of papparazi type of people (looking for a

photo like Harrison Ford splitting out the bottom of his pants on a visit to Walmart), and admirers too, making wild claims about us—both good and bad—in places like the TV or internet.

And so we've put together this fact sheet about us, especially for people who might not know our background very well. We hope it helps. We've arranged it in the form of questions that we're frequently asked in interviews and so on.

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**What is a geshe degree? How did Michael earn it?**

The geshe degree has been around for about 500 years; it's like a PhD that is awarded in Tibetan monasteries. It requires mastering five different ancient subjects. There are six different steps to becoming a geshe.

First you need to spend about 20 years in study in the monastery. Geshe Michael began his formal studies in 1974 under Geshe Ngawang Darghye at the Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, at the seat of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, India. These studies were done as a foreign-exchange student of Princeton University, and under the sponsorship of the prestigious Woodrow Wilson School of International Affairs.

In an emotional private audience with His Holiness and his mother (who was dying of cancer), Michael was then encouraged by His Holiness to continue his studies under Geshe Lobsang Tharchin at Rashi Gempil Ling, a small Mongolian-Tibetan monastery in New Jersey, USA. Geshe Tharchin was later appointed by His Holiness as Khen Rinpoche, Chief Abbot, of Sera Mey Tibetan Monastic University: one of the six highest positions in the Gelukpa tradition of Tibetan Buddhism.

Michael spent the 20 years from 1975 to 1995 in studies with Khen Rinpoche at this monastery, the first 8 years as a candidate for ordination. In 1983 he was granted full ordination, in a ceremony attended by his step-mother, at Sera Mey Monastery in south India. For the next 12 years he continued studies at both Rashi Gempil Ling and Sera Mey. (*Below: Panoramic shot of Sera Mey Monastery.*)



The second geshe requirement is to pass the "cut" or pre-geshe examination known as the *rikchung*. A normal class (similar to "freshman" or "sophomore" classes) in a large monastery like Sera Mey has about 50 students. Only twelve of these qualify for the *rikchung* examination. Michael made the cut and in 1993 gave his oral defense in Tibetan on a subject called "The Identity of Maitreya," in a public debate before more than one thousand monks in the assembly hall of Sera Mey.

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The third requirement is to give an oral defense before each of the 12 classes of the monastery. Michael finished this in 1995, in lively and challenging debates, again in Tibetan, with each class of the 500 geshe students of the monastery.

The fourth requirement is to give a *damcha* or oral defense before all the 500 geshe students assembled together. At this time, any student in the monastery is welcome to rise and debate the candidate publicly. Michael passed this test (it was a lot harder!) also in 1995.

The fifth requirement is to prepare a written debate thesis. This thesis is shorter than the thesis in a Western university, but more difficult since it must be recited from memory by the candidate before the entire assembled monks of the monastery, and not just the geshe students. Michael was assigned a topic called "The Seventh Bodhisattva Level," and composed his debate thesis by himself in Tibetan. He then gained a perfect score in chanting it before over 1,000 monks in the Sera Mey assembly hall in 1995.



The sixth requirement is to give an oral defense before all the assembled monks; this is a public debate where senior teachers and geshe of the monastery are allowed to rise and debate the candidate. In a ceremony in December 1995 which was also attended by his step-mother, Michael completed this requirement and was awarded the geshe's cap by the monastery's Abbot. (At left is a photo from the big day.)

Michael thus became the first westerner in the 600-year history of Sera Mey to gain a geshe degree. This was a *lingse* rank of geshe; there are also higher ranks at various monasteries (comparable to post-graduate PhD work) called the *rikchen*, *ngakrampa*, *hlarampa*, or *angi dangpo* degrees. Notable lamas who have earned this same *lingse* rank include Kyabje Pabongka Rinpoche, the heart teacher of the tutor of His Holiness the present Dalai Lama, and teacher of our own teacher.

Michael's expertise in the ancient scriptures was further recognized by the monastery when he was assigned as Chief Editor of the printing of the monastery's textbook series. He was responsible for all final Tibetan editing of

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five important textbooks used at the monastery, and his English introductions to these works are preserved in the Asian Classics Archive ([asianclassics.org](http://asianclassics.org))

**How did Christie become a lama? Are women allowed to become lamas?**

The Tibetan word "lama," for over a thousand years, has referred to any senior spiritual teacher, whether they are a man or woman, ordained or not ordained. Christie has completed studies under a number of major Buddhist teachers at Kopan Monastery in Nepal; Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery; and the Asian Classics Institute of New York—as well as obtaining a western degree in literature and philosophy at New York University.

She is one of the founders of Diamond Mountain University in the United States, and a professor of ancient literature and philosophy. She has written a number



of popular books on Buddhist philosophy and yoga, including *How Yoga Works* and a new translation of the ancient Sanskrit classic, *The Yoga Sutra* (Doubleday/Random House, 2005).

Christie's popular translations from ancient Sanskrit and Tibetan include other important

works by luminaries such as Master Nagarjuna (200 AD); Master Kamalashila (700 AD); and His Holiness the First Panchen Lama (1567-1662). She teaches thousands of people around the world every year during her speaking tours. *(Above, Lama Christie delivers a talk on spiritual partners to an audience of 1,000 at City Hall, Taipei.)*

Christie has over 150 regular senior students at Diamond Mountain. In September 2006, a large group of them completed a special multi-year course of traditional Tibetan training under her guidance, and began training in what is called the "Diamond Way," the highest level of Buddhist studies. At this point, by Tibetan custom, the teacher earns the title of "lama"; and she thus became one of the first women to be awarded this title.

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Lama Christie has made an immense contribution towards the training of over 100 senior female teachers within the WorldView umbrella of spiritual, educational, and service organizations. Their achievement is especially significant when we consider the historical position of women in Buddhist societies.

In the five centuries of the geshe degree, no woman in Tibet was ever allowed to undertake these studies; in fact, very few women were even taught to read or write. Nuns, by monastic requirement, were considered inferior to all monks. Of the 4,500 classical works of the Buddhist canon, less than 10 were written by women; and among the many thousands of major lamas produced in Tibet, less than 10 have been women.

The very word for "woman" in Tibetan is *kye-men*, or "inferior person." Lama Christie and her WorldView colleagues have helped break down this barrier, as have a good number of Tibetan monks and geshees who have come to the West to teach, and been exposed to the idea of gender equality.

**How authentic are the teachings that you two give?**

Every one of the teachings that we give is directly based upon authentic ancient manuscripts, almost all of them translated into English for the first time. In order to locate and preserve such texts, we founded the Asian Classics Input Project (ACIP), which just celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> birthday. The many global initiatives of the project, and its database of texts, can be viewed at [www.asianclassics.org](http://www.asianclassics.org).



Over 5,000 ancient works have been input by the project, and more than 100,000 manuscripts have been cataloged—for example through the St Petersburg Catalog Project, a joint effort by ACIP and the Russian Academy of Sciences. Almost all of the work is done by Tibetan refugees who are trained, paid, and equipped by the project. ACIP has been one of the largest sources of economic opportunity for these refugees, employing hundreds and helping keep Tibetan families and culture intact. (Above, a refugee inputs an ancient woodblock manuscript at an ACIP center.)

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Through ten years of intensive work, we have translated over 2,000 pages of these manuscripts into the 18 courses of the Asian Classics Institute, which for the first time gives Westerners the chance to study the geshe course that monks follow in a Tibetan monastery. These can be viewed on line at [www.world-view.org](http://www.world-view.org). These materials are viewed by 1800 visitors to the site daily, for a total of half a million visits per year. They are taught in centers all over the world, and there are special correspondence-courses provided free to inmates in prisons.

This high standard of authenticity carries over also to our yoga teachings. We have helped found the Yoga Studies Institute, for the serious study of ancient yoga literature and techniques. Each one of YSI's courses is based upon an original translation of an ancient yoga text, from either classical Sanskrit or Tibetan. Michael was trained in ancient Sanskrit for five years privately by Prof. Samuel Atkins, then Chairman of the Department of Classics of Princeton University, and was bequeathed his substantial library of rare texts when Prof. Atkins passed away at the age of 91; these have provided the basis for much of this work. Information about these YSI courses can be viewed on line at [www.yogastudiesinstitute.org](http://www.yogastudiesinstitute.org).

We have also produced a set of courses for Christians who are interested in applying ancient Asian meditation techniques to their regular Bible study and worship. These courses have culminated in a book on the subject called *The Eastern Path to Heaven: The Teachings of Jesus in Tibet*. In order to prepare for this book, we undertook fresh translations of important quotations by Jesus in the New Testament, by studying these sections in ancient Greek from Rev. John Dobson in classes at an institute near Oxford University, which was the Father's alma mater.

We are working presently on a book based upon Chinese Buddhist and Taoist wisdom materials, which we have again studied in the original Chinese with several modern masters. We have just begun preparation for another book based on the Koran, and this summer began studies of it.

In short, all our teachings and writings are based directly upon original ancient texts, and we truly believe that this is the best approach.

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**The two of you are in a spiritual partnership. Can you explain what this is?**

In the Diamond Way teachings of the Mahayana Buddhist tradition, for over two thousand years, it has been taught that we should seek enlightenment in order to help remove the suffering of the world—and that the fastest way to reach enlightenment is for a man and woman to work together as spiritual partners.

Spiritual partners make a lifetime commitment to stay together and to help each other in their study, meditation, retreats, and every aspect of their daily personal life, in order to develop wisdom and compassion, and reach enlightenment together.

**Are Buddhist monks allowed to have a spiritual partner?**

Buddhist monks who have received permission from their immediate teacher in the teachings of the Diamond Way are encouraged to have a spiritual partner. This permission is granted in a ceremony known as "The Empowerment of Wisdom and Knowledge." Normally a monk must have proven themselves over many years of study, meditation, and service to be considered mature enough to enter a spiritual partnership. The two of us were granted this empowerment by a number of the highest Lamas in the world, over nine years ago.

The Diamond Way (or Vajrayana in Sanskrit) is an advanced form of Buddhist practice which was taught by Lord Buddha and which has been followed for many centuries in countries such as India, Nepal, Tibet, and China. In the immediate lineage that we were trained in, which is the Gelukpa tradition of the Dalai Lamas, the practice of a spiritual partner is described beautifully in many books, especially in a text called *The Book of Three Beliefs*, written by a lama called Je Tsongkapa (pictured above). He was the teacher of His Holiness the First Dalai Lama, and himself had a spiritual partner who was given the name Tangsha Marmo: the Lady in the Red Hat.



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**If this is an important practice, why don't we see more monks who have spiritual partners?**

Buddhist tradition over the last two millennia has been that spiritual partnerships should be kept strictly secret. This was to prevent people from thinking that monks were engaged in worldly relationships.

**If monks are supposed to keep their spiritual partnership secret, why have you two chosen to "go public"?**

We had several reasons for making our spiritual partnership public. Since the day we committed to our partnership, we have not left each other's presence, even for a few minutes. This would naturally lead people to wonder what we were up to, and possibly hurt people's faith. The days of the internet are not like ancient times. A rumor about an ordained person can be spread throughout the world in a few minutes by a person who lacks training and understanding in the tradition and motivation for a spiritual partnership.

Secondly, there has again been in Buddhism for many centuries a tradition of refusing women an equal role in this partnership: of putting the female partner in the closet, out of sight. This problem of course is common throughout the entire world: there has never been a woman Dalai Lama, but there has never been a woman Pope or American President either.

We want to do our part to help end this prejudice. We practice together, we work together, we teach together, we do everything together; and we want to be an example of how a truly mutual spiritual partnership can help change the whole world for the better.

**How have people, especially the Tibetan Buddhist establishment, reacted to your open partnership?**

From 2000 to 2003, after several years of advance training from our teachers, we did a very intense, silent 3-year meditation retreat together in a small hut in the Arizona desert.

When we completed the retreat, we sent a letter to about 15 of our own Tibetan lamas, and to major Buddhist teachers throughout the world—both western and



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Tibetan—explaining that we thought it would be beneficial if we made our partnership public, and if we began to teach others about spiritual partnerships. This is because we feel that couples of any religious background could learn from the ancient Buddhist teachings on spiritual partners to make their relationships more meaningful.

We received a lot of encouraging feedback, and have used this in the years since. Naturally what we're doing is a big shift from the previous patriarchal tradition, but Tibetan lamas are almost without exception flexible and cheerful souls who work hard to see what might be helpful in changing times.

**Is it true that your partnership has been criticized by the office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama?**

One of the lamas that we sent our 2003 "coming out" letter was of course His Holiness the Dalai Lama, whom we infinitely love and respect. We received no objections to our plan or other comments either from His Holiness personally, or from his office, but we felt that they were very busy people with more important concerns than the two of us.

We spend a good part of the year touring and speaking throughout the world. In the summer of 2006, we undertook our first speaking tour of mainland China. Tensions between the Chinese and Tibetan people go back over a thousand years, with unfortunate misunderstandings, and sometimes violence, from both sides. It's a little like the problem between the Israelis and Palestinians.

On the day before our arrival in China we received an email from a senior staff member of His Holiness' office expressing this staff member's doubts about our viewpoints and asking us not to attend a previously scheduled program, immediately following our China tour, in the Indian town of Dharamsala, where His Holiness resides.

We of course respected this request, and then within the same month a different senior staff member made an unannounced appearance at one of our teachings. He publicly presented both of us with the offering of the mandala before our lecture, a great honor for us as Western teachers. We believe that all this reflects a natural concern about the changes we represent, balanced by a respect for our many years of hard work to help Tibetan people and culture.

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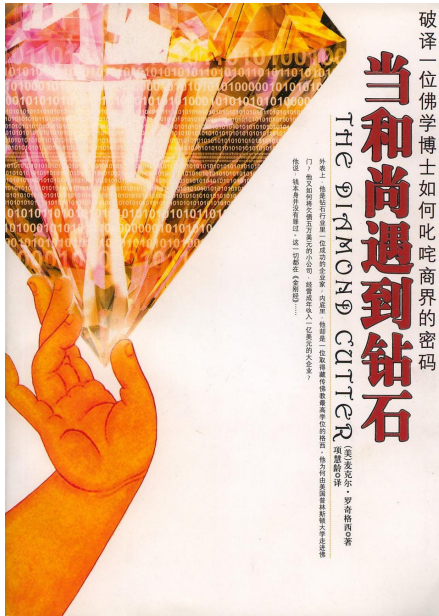
Although none of our various organizations or projects falls under the jurisdiction of any Tibetan institution (most of the large ones are registered non-profit educational or religious organizations in the US, with their own independent boards); nonetheless we are very grateful to our "roots."

And so we continue to send regular updates about our activities, including requests for their advice, to His Holiness himself and to all our Tibetan lamas around the world. High lamas continually visit to give teachings; we continue with our initiatives to aid Tibetan refugee monks and laypeople; and efforts like the Diamond Mountain Overseas Studies Program provide our students with regular visits for study in Tibetan monasteries.

**Does this mean that your speaking tours in China are meant to help heal the rift between Tibetans and Chinese?**

Whenever we go to teach in China, or any other country, we try to do our best to respect the wishes and customs of both the host government and people. And so first of all in China we never give any religious teachings; we restrict our talks to the subjects of ethical business; health; and personal relationships. We do not wear religious robes, and we have no intention of trying to convince anyone that they should follow one religion or another; we just want to present helpful ideas

that we think will make people's lives more happy and successful. (This approach has been very successful; the Chinese publication of our best-selling business book, *The Diamond Cutter*, was approved by the Chinese government, and the Chinese-language edition is one of the most popular business books in Asia.)



And we also want to learn from the Chinese people. Both the Tibetan and Chinese cultures are extraordinarily rich and wise, full of knowledge that can really help the younger Western countries. When we go to China we are trying to learn as much as we can that will help ourselves and our own country.

But the main reason that we visit China is because we are concerned about the growing tension between our own country, America, and China. These two are

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shaping up as the two economic and political powers of this century, and we want to see them both grow as friends, and not competitors in another Cold War.

The language, cultures, and beliefs of these two countries are very different, but we believe if individual citizens of each country get to know each other face-to-face—if we Americans take the time to learn some Chinese language and literature, for example, and visit China—then our future world can become a very peaceful and harmonious place.

And so we are trying to do our own small part to bring this about. We feel a little strange lecturing people in other countries about harmony when our own government has descended into responding to violence with violence, bringing financial ruin and international shame upon our own beloved country. We are trying to espouse and live ideals that will prevent violence on a personal level, and we believe that this will then naturally carry over to an international level.

**If Geshe Michael is a monk, why does he wear long hair and jewelry?**

During our 3-year silent retreat, Michael (who has a big bald spot which, he claims, came from worrying about how to feed all the Tibetan refugees) let the rest of his hair grow long, and began to wear specific pieces of jewelry. There are a number of reasons for this.

The first is that we wanted to always have a constant reminder in front of us of the tremendous efforts and sweet experiences we had during our long retreat. This is reflected in the hair and personal appearance of a Buddhist yogi, or someone who dedicates themselves in deep practice and retreat to the Diamond Way. One famous yogi monk is the Indian master Naropa (1016-1100 AD), who is pictured at right in a carving from the Potala Palace of the Dalai Lama.

Naropa was, in his time, the greatest scholar and monk of all of India. He was the esteemed abbot of Nalanda Monastery, which is still considered the greatest monastery in Buddhist history. Later in his life, Naropa became a yogi monk and dedicated himself to six special practices, including that of a spiritual partnership.



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Naropa's teachings form the basis of a great deal of advanced Buddhist practice among Tibetan lamas of all traditions—for example, with the Kalachakra teachings given by His Holiness the current Dalai Lama—and are the principal teachings in which we were trained as partners.

Secondly, anyone who has entered the Diamond Way is required to keep close to them a diamond of some sort. Tibetan monks traditionally do this by putting a small *vajra* or diamond symbol on their prayer beads, or by keeping a hand-vajra with their sacred bell. We keep a diamond in the rings we wear to mark our commitment to our spiritual partnership, and we wear a diamond as an earring.

Third, we keep a diamond upon our bodies to remind ourselves of the Buddhist concept of emptiness, which simply refers to the fact that there is nothing in the world that hasn't come from how well we take care of others. It is said that, if a person can perceive this emptiness directly in this life, then they will quickly become enlightened. It was in fact to maintain an awareness of this "diamond experience" that Geshe Michael spent many years in the diamond business.

Finally, we are trying to follow a Buddhist tradition over a thousand years old which is called "Angel Clothes." This is where we wear for example a special bracelet that resembles, according to Buddhists, the bracelet that an actual angel would always wear. Buddhism, like many other traditions, believes that there are actually angels walking around in the world, near us all the time, oftentimes posing as ordinary people. When we wear an "angel bracelet," we are sending them a message that we believe in them, and that we are open and available for their assistance in our life.

When we do wear a piece of "angel clothing" for a long time during our life in this world, it naturally plants seeds inside us: the jewelry or clothing becomes very familiar and normal to us. When we die, say the Buddhists, our spirit goes on a journey through many realms, seeking a new life.

If we've been wearing a business suit our whole life, then our spirit might see some business people and stop in that realm, to be born into a family there and grow up to be an Enron executive, or something like that!

But if we've been wearing an "angel bracelet" our whole life, then when the spirit after death passes by some kind of heavenly realm and sees a lot of people wearing the same thing, then we could well be attracted and stop there, to live with angels forever. We really believe that this is true, and we consider the

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practice of wearing "angel clothes" to be of life-or-death importance. Luckily we live in a country where all religious customs such as this are tolerated and respected.



What you see here, by the way, is an old picture from one of the colleges of our Sera Monastery in Tibet, with all the monks practicing wearing "angel clothes." This was normally only done in secret, but again we feel that if we might get hit by a car at any moment, night or day, that it's best if we have these clothes on all the time. We all need to take death a

little more seriously, and let this awareness imbue every moment of our life.

**You've just mentioned some kind of "diamond experience." What do you have to say about reports on TV and the internet that you two can perform miracles or talk to angels; that you've had experiences that are close to Buddhahood, and so on?**

Between the two of us, we have accumulated 40 years of meditation practice, with almost 10 years in deep silent retreats. Hopefully, we should have had some special experiences during this time.

Buddhist tradition and our own instincts though tell us that it's not very useful to talk a lot about our private religious experiences. They can be inspiring to others in the short run, but ultimately no one can *prove* to another person what they've seen in their deepest spiritual moments; and so it can become sort of a religious bragging competition that doesn't really help others.

And so we feel that it's better to stick with teaching authentic, tried and true spiritual practices like kindness to others, meditating, doing retreat. Then people can have their own experiences. Naturally when you teach almost every day, like we do, you tend to speak about your own personal experiences, especially to long-time students and friends: people who can judge what you say in light of many years of acquaintance. Sometimes these private moments get spread beyond where they were meant to be.

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**Let's talk about Diamond Mountain University. Two charismatic teachers in exotic dress help start a place out in the middle of the desert for spiritual development, and hundreds of people show up. Don't you think it could sound like a cult?**

Diamond Mountain is anything but a cult: it's an extraordinarily demanding, authentic university with two important sides to it: academic and spiritual.

You first need to look at the quality of the academic work that went behind the forming of Diamond Mountain: Geshe Michael is an honors graduate of Princeton University; he has received the Presidential Scholar Medal from the President of the United States at the White House; he has been awarded the McConnell Prize of the Woodrow Wilson School of International Affairs; he has been engaged by the United States Library of Congress to design their acquisition of ancient Tibetan texts in all of South Asia. And ACIP is the recipient of very rare, back-to-back federal grants from the US National Endowment for the Humanities, while its start-up funding was supplied personally by the founders of the Hewlett Packard computer company.

And so Diamond Mountain has a strong academic core. In fact, one of our reasons for helping found the University was that we felt that *modern universities have largely become businesses providing a mediocre quality of education*. Diamond Mountain is a serious attempt to invigorate the concept of Western university education by utilizing classical methods from traditional Asian universities such as Sera Mey, including very rigorous examinations and classwork.

In its first three years of operation, DMU staff and students have already made major contributions to academia worldwide. Students of the Business School this year designed a CD of 4,500 previously unreleased Asian classical texts and provided complimentary copies to over 2,000 scholars and institutions. Students and faculty in the School of Languages have already produced new translations of 15 major Asian classics.

The university's Computer Programming Team has designed new programs for the digital analysis of ancient literature. The School of Architecture has already produced several examples of new, highly sustainable housing on the campus. Students of the Medical School are working on important translations of traditional Chinese and Tibetan medical texts, in conjunction with physicians around the world.

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Students have opened a new community center for the local town; created and staffed popular programs of study, meditation, and yoga for several state prisons; forged links with the Native Americans, descendants of Geronimo, who long ago owned the campus land. DMU has to be one of the most exciting experiments in American education today.

We've put DMU out in the middle of nowhere for a very specific purpose. One of the innovations of the university is to link the study and practice of deep retreat and contemplation with academic study and public service. We have chosen the campus location in one of the quietest, simplest, and most beautiful places left in the United States: sort of a Thoreau comes to Harvard.

**You have a lot of projects going. Do you make a lot of money with them? What do you do with the money?**

All the classes at Diamond Mountain University are offered completely for free. No student pays any fees at all. This idea we took from the Tibetan monastic system, where no teachers have ever been paid, and no students ever charged. You do it for the love of it, and you cover your own expenses by some kind of work between terms. The teachers at the university have sacrificed, in many cases, high salaries and important academic positions elsewhere because they believe in what the University is doing.

Students come for free, but they must demonstrate classroom performance, or else they are asked to leave. All the university's expenses are met by small, voluntary donations from a large population of people around the world who feel this experiment is important to our times.

It has taken millions of dollars to produce, over two decades, the thousands of ancient manuscripts in the Asian Classics Input Project database. All of this money has come from private, corporate, and government grants and donations that were hard-earned in a very competitive funding environment. And all of the books are offered on-line and on CD absolutely free of charge.

The thousands of pages of educational courses available through the Asian Classics Institute are all offered for download completely free. They represent thousands of hours of devoted work by people who have for decades labored in

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16-hour days, 7 days a week. They are a profound offering of love, in the hopes of elevating our entire culture.

Much of the seed money for these projects was provided from the Andin International Diamond Corporation. Geshe Michael was one of the founders of this New-York based company, in 1981. He did so at the request of his teachers, in part to help the desperate Tibetan refugees that had poured over the Tibetan border into India; in part because of a personal vision; and in part to prove that a business based on strict ethical standards, and the principles of karma, would actually be infinitely more successful.

During the 15 years of Geshe Michael's participation in the company, it grew from zero to \$100 million US dollars in sales per year, a story that has been retold in *The Diamond Cutter*, a classic on business ethics which has sold over 100,000 copies in 14 languages. Almost every penny from Geshe Michael's earnings in the business went to help the Tibetan refugees; he continued during this time to live in a single small monk's cell at Rashi Gempil Ling Monastery, and to pursue his geshe studies, often sleeping only three or four hours per night.

The traditional three-year retreat requires that we first give up everything we own; and in 1999 Geshe Michael and Lama Christie divested all their shares, earnings, and accounts and donated every cent to charitable causes. Since that time, they have subsisted on unsolicited donations offered by private individuals who believe in their work in the world. We continue to live in our old, single-room meditation hut, with no electricity or running water.

We live in an extremely simple way because we truly believe that this is better for our spiritual development. All royalties from our books are donated directly from the publishers, by contract, to charitable organizations, including some of those which we first founded. Some of these organizations help pay for the travel expenses of our speaking tours around the world, because we like to target countries (like China, Mexico, or India) where people cannot afford to come to a program unless it is free of charge. We do the tours on a shoestring and a grueling schedule, in order to serve others.

Sometimes we appear at programs offered by organizations which do charge money; and we do approve, in particular, of organizations charging a fee for programs such as business talks for companies, or yoga programs for teachers and owners of studios, who intend to use the program information for



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commercial purposes. But in no case do we require or receive any kind of salary, only unsolicited donations from people who support what we're doing.

The bottom line is that we're not at all interested in making money for ourselves. But we are interested in using any money that comes to us, in a way that will help the needy of the world, and spread the wisdom teachings that we ourselves have received for decades from our teachers, without any charge at all.

**It seems just as likely that we'll see you two at events like the Hong Kong Yoga Conference, sponsored by Hindu organizations; or St Bartholomew's Christian Church in Manhattan; or speaking at a synagogue in Tel Aviv; or covering a philosophical classic for a Tibetan Buddhist crowd in North India. So we're wondering: What religion do you two personally consider yourselves to belong to?**

Over the years we've done teachings and research in China; Taiwan; Korea; Hong Kong; Thailand; Sri Lanka; Singapore; India; Israel; France; Spain; Germany; Holland; Ireland; Scotland; Mexico; Brazil; Argentina; Canada; Australia; Russia; and Mongolia. And so we get a perspective of the world that very few other people get. (*Below: Talk on spiritual partners at a Christian church, Arizona USA*)



Over this time we have come to realize, first-hand, how the world is really a single place; how all the people in the world have exactly the same hopes and fears. The internet has begun to show us how there are really no borders between the countries of the world; and our own experience has taught us the same thing.

Slowly, without really being aware of it, the two of us have realized that we have no home. We are citizens of the globe, and we truly believe that there will come a time when—as has happened for example with the European Community—there *will be no need or purpose* for the borders between countries and people.

The same thing has happened to us, unexpectedly, with our religious allegiance. We both grew up as Christians, Christians who had a wonderful experience with

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the church, and we went further into other traditions, such as Tibetan Buddhism, and learned to appreciate our upbringing even more. During the last ten years we've almost accidentally come to appreciate and practice quite deeply the inspiring teachings and yoga of the Hindu tradition, with wonderful and inspiring teachers. And along the way we've had tremendous experiences with Taoist, Jewish, and Islamic teachers.

And so we have honestly come to experience, directly, that all the religious faiths of the world—when practiced sincerely—bring a person the same happiness and peace. We feel like children who have outgrown any single set of clothes, any single label. We will continue to wear our crosses; Michael will keep his Buddhist monk's robes for life; we will do our Hindu yoga devotedly every morning; and we will do so as spiritual partners, global citizens.

**Any comments on your personal future plans?**

People all over the world are wildly interested in our spiritual partner talks. We've just finished a new book on this subject, and will be teaching it a lot in the next few years. We've got upcoming speaking tours planned for the Far East and, for the first time, Eastern Europe.

We've completed writing nine new courses on advanced Buddhism (Diamond Way), and are working on nine more, for a total of 18 advanced courses. Each one involves several hundred pages of new translations.

Christie's halfway through another 18-course series of advanced meditation courses, which are extremely popular at Diamond Mountain. She's also just about finished with a new book on meditation for Doubleday/Random House. It's meant for general audiences. We're in various stages of writing new books about how science works; Islamic teachings; Asian art; Christian classics; and ethical business.

We're all gearing up for another 3-year retreat, scheduled to start in 2010. It looks like there will be over a hundred people participating this time. Up till then we plan to continue with our personal policy of spending four months of every year in deep retreat.

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We're really enjoying Diamond Mountain, and plan to continue to put most of our effort here. We're in the fourth year of classes now, and the students are really thriving, which is what makes us happiest of all.

**Any final comments to people who've been asking what brand of underwear you wear; critiquing the movies you see and the magazines you read; wondering about your past relationships, your sex life, and other such crucial subjects?**

Just before our 3-year retreat, we were asked by CNN to come to their editing facility in Manhattan for a few days to translate Tibetan-language segments of a documentary they had filmed about His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In one of the segments, the cameraman pushed his way into the bathroom while His Holiness was brushing his teeth.

His Holiness looked a little fierce and said that some things should stay private. Then he laughed and went ahead and did his morning exercises, with only a towel around his waist, and let the people film whatever they wanted.

We feel that this is a wonderful example to follow with our own papparazi. We are all so incredibly lucky to live in a time and place where we are completely free to say what we want without fear. We wholeheartedly support the right of people to poke fun at us, and we support our own right to poke fun back at them. It's such a short life, with so much suffering in it. We might as well have some fun while we're here!

**Some authorized websites  
(please beware of papparazi websites posing as ours)**

[www.world-view.org](http://www.world-view.org)  
[www.asianclassics.org](http://www.asianclassics.org)  
[www.diamondmtn.org](http://www.diamondmtn.org)  
[www.yogastudiesinstitute.org](http://www.yogastudiesinstitute.org)  
[www.starintheeast.org](http://www.starintheeast.org)

**Some of our publications (available online through Amazon or Barnes & Noble):**

**An Interview With  
Geshe Michael & Lama Christie**

**The Diamond Cutter (Doubleday 2000)**

**The Garden (Doubleday 2000)**

**The Tibetan Book of Yoga (Random House 2003)**

**How Yoga Works (Diamond Cutter Press 2004)**

**The Essential Yoga Sutra (Random House 2005)**