



Science meets Dharma

**Address to His Holiness the XIVth Dalai Lama
at the occasion of his visit to the Tibet Institute Rikon (TIR)
on April 8, 2010**

by

Geshe Nyima Tashi, SmD-Coordinator in India

Your Holiness,

Dear Guests !

On behalf of the Foundation Council of the Tibet-Institute, I have the honour to brief you about the present status and the future perspectives of the Project *Science meets Dharma* in India.

By the end of July 2010, the very generous support of the Government of Switzerland for the Project will come to an end. During seven years – an exceptionally long period! – Switzerland has been the main sponsor of *Science meets Dharma*, and we should like to profit of the present occasion to reiterate our sincere thanks for this.

At the same time, we are happy to inform you that new sponsors could be found, private individuals as well as institutions, whose representatives are with us today. Your own generous contribution of SFR 50'000.- for which we are so grateful, has served as an initial spark and encouragement for others. We very much hope and are confident that it will be possible to finance the project for another good number of years.

At the present turning point between the old and the new project phase, the Foundation Council of Rikon has evaluated the project's experiences of the past and has made new plans for the future.

As to the past, we believe that *Science meets Dharma* has made an efficient contribution to the historic effort – initiated by you – to acquaint monks and nuns with Western Science. The uniqueness of *Science meets Dharma* lies in the fact that this project makes science classes part of the daily routine in Tibetan monasteries. It is in the every day reality of monastic life that the focus of monks and nuns is turned towards scientific reasoning. Science classes are embedded between so many other tasks and duties a monk or a nun must fulfill. This, we believe, is a precondition for the thorough assimilation and deeper understanding of the scientific world view with all its parallels, but also with its contradictions vis-a-vis the Buddhist philosophical approach.

For this reason, the Foundation Council of the Rikon Institute is resolved to sustain the ongoing *Science meets Dharma* classes in Bylakuppe and Mundgod.

It is hoped, that these classes can serve as a model for new classes to be opened in other monasteries in the future. It is also noted with great satisfaction that a team of capable and dedicated teachers and translators of Tibetan and Indian origin has been built over the years. They work so reliably that the number of expatriate Teachers could gradually be reduced. Moreover, several Abbots have expressed their wish that science classes, in future, could be made an integral part of the Buddhist study curriculum for all monks of their monasteries. This is the result of the encouragement that the *SmD*-Project has provided to them over so many years.

Looking ahead, the Foundation Council of Rikon hopes to introduce two innovative elements into the *Science meets Dharma* Project. Like all our activities of the past, these new elements will be coordinated with the Department for Religion and Culture as well as with the Library for Tibetan Works and Archives.

The first element consists in the organization of annual study weeks for *SmD*-Students in Bylakuppe and Mundgod. During five or six consecutive days, all these students from the various local monasteries will devote their full time and energy – eight hours a day – to studying one comprehensive topic and to discuss it in the light of various disciplines. As an example, the actual world problem of „global warming“ would be highlighted in terms of its physical, chemical, biological, psychological, economic and philosophical implications. Experts of Science as well as experts of Dharma would make their respective contributions. Students would be asked to prepare themselves by carefully reading a scientific article or by doing a small research project on the internet.

All this would serve the over-all purpose of the study-week, i.e. to create a more acute awareness of the fact that the problems of humanity, today, can be solved only if Science **and** Dharma, technology **and** philosophy are brought together in the minds of individuals who then take responsible action.

The second element to be introduced in the *Science meets Dharma* Project will take place outside the monasteries. In close cooperation with (and within the premises of) the *Dalai Lama Institute for Higher Education* in Bangalore, a Block-Course of several weeks duration, designed for Geshes from various traditions and monasteries, shall be organized. The purpose of this course, again, is to bring together the teaching of Science and the teaching of Dharma. Faculty members and students of the Bangalore Institute will be invited to participate in the course as well.

The Geshes will have to assume a double role. On the one hand, they will be students of Science taught by specialist of Tibetan, Indian or Western origin. On the other hand, they will also be teachers themselves, reflecting on various topics from the point of view of Dharma. If, for instance, the scientist would speak about linear and circular processes in the cosmos, in evolution and in individual life, the Geshes' task will be to acquaint their audience with the Buddhist understanding of such processes. Both sides will learn from each other.

One last point should be mentioned: Both new elements within the *Science meets Dharma* Project, the study-weeks in the monasteries as well as the Block-Course for Geshes in Bangalore will be carefully documented. Written and illustrated reports on all the lectures and experiments and discussions will be collected. They will be presented in an easily accessible form to an interested public in India as well as in other parts of the world. With this, it is hoped, the core idea of Science meets Dharma, the dialogue between Science and Dharma, will find a wider echo.

Your Holiness, thank you so much for your attention and your kind support in all our efforts!

Geshe Nyima Tashi, SmD-Coordinator in India