

## TRIBUTE TO ROSEMARY VOSSE (KARMA DOLMA CHUZOM)

### Affectionately known as Mother Dolma

“I am doing things that are worthwhile for other people.”

On a New Moon Sunday just before 7.p.m. on the 3rd of August 1997, Rosemary Vosse passed away peacefully at her home 'Watersedge' Malton Road, Wynberg, Cape Town.

The third daughter of the Marchese Antinori, an old Umbrian noble family, with its original seat in Perugia, Italy, Rosemary is survived by her two elder sisters, Erica and Peggy, and her nephews, nieces and extended family in Turin, Milan, Pisa, Britain, Canada and elsewhere.



Rosemary was born on 17th September 1913 at Riccione, Italy on the Adriatic. After the death of her mother in 1922, Rosemary and her sisters went to live with her paternal Aunt Nora Antinori in Perugia, who had a great influence on Rosemary's life, and inspired her altruistic work at an early age.

She studied Art in Perugia and Turin, and German in Vienna in 1938.

In 1939 she moved to South Africa which became her adopted country for the rest of her life. In 1944 she married Bertus Vosse, (Picchio, as he was known to the Italian family). Their only child, Wilfred, died at an early age.

Rosemary was known to her many Tibetan friends as Karma Dolma Chuzom, a name which was given to her by H.H. the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa, Rangjung Rigpe Dorje. To many of us, she was simply known as Dolma, 'Mother.'

Over the years, Rosemary was a great inspiration to many through her selfless service to Humankind. She was deeply involved in Theosophy, with her late husband – and was a President of the Cape Town Lodge.

Inspired by an article which appeared in The Middle Way, the Journal of The Buddhist Society in London, Rosemary founded The Tibetan Friendship Group in the late 1950's and edited its Newsletter - The Tibetan Friendship Group Newsletter, for many years, which then changed into The Bodhisattva Path, and eventually transformed into eighteen issues of MAITRI under the Editorship of Karma Samten (Andre de Wet), and Sheila Fugard. Later, Rosemary produced and edited 'Koeksister' and eventually 'Co-Exister' for many years.

Deep friendships with the Tibetan Community in exile, were cemented through her various journeys to India, where she and her husband were received in audience by many of the great Rinpoches. In 1974/5, Rosemary and Karma Samten joined the Entourage of His Holiness the 16th Karmapa, Ranjung Rigpe Dorje, and in 1976 she once again toured the world, to join Sister Palmo in California, with Sheila Fugard, and Karma Samten, for extended Teachings and diplomatic work on behalf of the Tibetan Refugees.

Rosemary was certainly avante garde in spreading awareness in Cape Town of more an ecological lifestyle – “voluntary simplicity” as she used to call it – and a vegetarian diet. Through her extensive sprouting operations, money was generated exclusively for Tibetan refugees in exile, countless people were introduced to the precious Teachings of Tibetan Buddhism, and many lifelong friendships were formed.

Rosemary invited the Ven. Gelongma Karma Khechog Palmo (Mrs Freda Bedi) to Cape Town in 1972 – and through this visit – The Karma Rigdol Centres of Tibetan Buddhism were formed under the Direction of H.H. the 16th Karmapa – and the first South African President, the late Dr. Ernst Landsberg.

Rosemary was also an active member of many social organisations and maintained wide international links with enlightened groups. She was a tireless campaigner for a more noble way of life – and manifested a simplicity of living. She personally ‘adopted’ the Venerable Ato Rinpoche and assisted in his education through his early years in the West. During the last years of her life, she was deeply grateful to have received Akong Rinpoche, and Ato Rinpoche in her home, and to have attended the talk by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Cape Town in 1996. She was also a Member of the Mountain Club of South Africa, and the National Council of Women.

She will be sadly missed by her huge international family. But her example remains a living memory for us all.

**Samten de Wet. Turin, 2nd November, 1997.**

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“There is no more valuable thing possessed by any individual than an exalted ideal towards which he continually aspires, and after which he molds his thoughts and feelings, and forms, as best he may, his life.”

**H.P. Blavatsky. Practical Occultism, p. 87.**

“Thou shalt not separate thy being from BEING and the rest, but merge the Ocean in the drop, the drop within the Ocean.

So shalt thou be in full accord with all that lives, bear love to all men as though they were thy brother-pupils, disciples of One Teacher, the sons of one sweet mother.”

**The Voice of the Silence, HPB**

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**Rosemary wrote:**

From another dear “sister” away in the Eastern Transvaal, we received this prayer originally spoken by one of the North American Indians in Canada. “For me it embodies much of what is ultimately important to our spiritual lives,” she says.

### **A RED INDIAN PRAYER**

Great Spirit, whose voice I hear in the wind,  
whose breath gives life to the world – hear me!  
I am small and weak; I need your strength and wisdom.  
May I ever walk in beauty.  
May my eyes ever hold the red and purple sunset,  
May my ears sharp to hear your voice,  
May my hands respect the things You have made,  
Make me wise, so that I may learn the lessons  
You have taught your children,  
the secrets You have hidden in every leaf and rock.  
Make me strong, not to be superior to my brother,  
but to fight my greatest enemy – myself.  
Make me ever ready to come to You with straight eyes  
so that when life fades as the fading sunset  
my soul can come to You without shame.

## **“MAKE ME KIND, GENTLE AND OBEDIENT<sup>1</sup>” -**

- were among the words that Mother, who died when we were children, taught us to address at bedtime to “God, my father in Heaven.”

For how long we continued repeating those words during later years nobody remembers, in any case, after some time things tend to lose their potency, becoming automatic repetitions – not so?

But it's interesting to remember that prayer a whole lifetime later, with gratitude to the woman who brought us into the world and who is described on her faraway tombstone as “A faithful wife and a devoted mother.”

Kindness, gentleness and obedience are qualities we can all do with in greater abundance – the last being, in our adulthood, the attitude described by one of our very good friends as a type of listening to the voice of our intimate conscience.

Through our involvement with the Tibetan Friendship Group, we have been very happy to learn that H.H. the Dalai Lama has been awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace. “My true religion is kindness”, is a phrase attributed to him.

**Rosemary**

### **A MORNING STORY**

Rosemary had the great fortune, to die peacefully in her own bed. These short pieces, edited from past issues of the Co-Exister, begin with a beautiful 'Morning Piece' – in which Rosemary demonstrates that the blankets on her bed, were woven with the relationships of those whom she loved.

**Dear Friends,**

#### **WHEN RISING IN THE MORNING -**

- on a Sunday, there are several extra jobs to do. Like changing the sheets on the bed which means that the top one goes to the bottom and the clean one comes on top. That's what we always did at home ...

There's a variety of sheets here: this morning the clean one was one of the two Pauline kindly gave me when Erika was coming from Germany. The material is very nice, but they were a little short, so Hennie kindly added on a strip at the bottom, which makes all the difference. Hennie, as you may guess from her name, comes from Holland.

Today's pillowcase is the one Monique gave me, with flowers all over it on a pale blue background. Monique, incidentally, was born in New Zealand.

After these comes the blanket we bought in Connaught Circle, New Delhi in 1965. It's surprisingly long and entitled "Beauty's Chancellor".

The next blanket is a very special one received from the Ven. Chogyal Rinpoche of Lumbini, the place where the Buddha was born in Nepal, just over the border from India. It was in 1978 that Acharya Pema Wosel accompanied me on that trip from Varanasi by bus – a whole long day till we reached the tiny hamlet near the border post, where we had to find a place to sleep in the darkness – no electric lights Pema Wosel assured me in his deep voice that he would find something for "Mother", and disappeared, leaving her on the bench at the little tea booth among the buzzing mosquitoes.

The next morning meant a long ride together on a bicycle-rickshaw over the most potholed road anyone has ever seen. By the time they got to Lumbini, your editor was beginning to

feel queasy, and after the usual hefty meal Tibetans expect you to eat, the feeling got worse – till she had to decamp hastily and bring it up again, horrors!

Anyway, in the end our good Rinpoche made her a present in recognition of the help received from the Tibetan Friendship Group, of the woven Nepali blanket off his own bed – a short one because the high teachers apparently never lie down.

The final item to go on the bed is the light-yellow nylon quilt that our dear friend Gita brought along many years ago. She was of Polish origin.

How could one not sleep peacefully on this incredible international concoction of a bed at "Watersedge"?

But one can still be restless occasionally, even when remembering all the good things one has received from kind friends. It's simply the way of life, never to be entirely satisfied. Our Buddhist friends call it "dukka", often translated as "suffering", but generally explained as "dissatisfaction".

So, every morning we repeat the words:

"Let me be led from darkness to light,  
From the unreal to the real,  
From death to immortality,  
From chaos to beauty."

**Love to all from Rosemary**

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Though Rosemary was a deeply committed Theosophist, this is not the time nor the occasion to air the Theosophical Teachings. They can be consulted in great detail and width in 'The Secret Doctrine' and 'Isis Unveiled' written by H.P. Blavatsky, a teacher much beloved by Rosemary. Instead, during the last few years of her life – Rosemary was deeply inspired by the Life and Works of Peace Pilgrim – and she constantly quoted and used the writings of Peace Pilgrim in her publications. At that stage we may not have taken much notice, as the copies of 'Co-Exister' eventually, got buried beneath the piles of newspapers in the kitchen. But now that Rosemary has left us for Other Shores, we feel that this brief summary of the Teachings of Peace Pilgrim, seems to encapsulate perfectly the many concerns and moral obligations that Rosemary demonstrated in her practical life.

## **SUMMARY<sup>2</sup>**

### **-FOUR PREPARATIONS -**

**1.     *Assume right attitudes towards life.***

Stop being an escapist or a surface-liver as these attitudes can only cause disharmony in your life. Face life squarely and get down below the froth on its surface to discover its verities and realities. Solve the problems that life sets before you, and you will find that solving them contributes to your inner growth. Helping to solve collective problems contributes also to your growth, and these problems should never be avoided.

**2.     *Live good beliefs.***

The laws governing human contact apply as rigidly as the laws of gravity. Obedience to these laws pushes us towards harmony; disobedience pushes us towards disharmony. Since many of these laws are already common belief, you can begin by putting into practice all the good things you believe. No life can be in harmony unless belief and practice are in harmony.

3. *Find your place in the Life Pattern.*

You have a part in the scheme of things. What that part is you can only know from within yourself. You can seek it in receptive silence. You can begin to live in accordance with it by doing all the good things you are motivated toward and giving these things priority in your life over all the superficial things that customarily occupy human lives.

4. *Simplify life to bring inner and outer well-being into harmony.*

Unnecessary possessions are unnecessary burdens. Many lives are cluttered not only with unnecessary possessions but also with meaningless activities. Cluttered lives are out-of-harmony lives and require simplification. Wants and needs can become the same in a human life and, when this is accomplished, there will be a sense of harmony between inner and outer well-being. Such harmony is needful not only in the individual life but in the collective life too.

**-FOUR PURIFICATIONS-**

1. *Purification of the body temple.*

Are you free from all bad habits? In your diet do you stress the vital foods – the fruits, whole grains, vegetables and nuts? Do you get to bed early and get enough sleep? Do you get plenty of fresh air, sunshine, exercise, and contact with nature? If you can answer "Yes" to all of these questions, you have gone a long way toward purification of the bodily temple.

2. *Purification of the thoughts.*

It is not enough to do right things and say right things. You must also think right things. Positive thoughts can be powerful influences for good. Negative thoughts can make you physically ill. Be sure there is no unpeaceful situation between yourself and any other human being, for only when you have ceased to harbor unkind thoughts can you attain inner harmony.

3. *Purification of the desires.*

Since you are here to get yourself into harmony with the laws that govern human conduct and with your part in the scheme of things, your desires should be focused in this direction.

4. *Purification of motives.*

Obviously, your motive should never be greed or self-seeking, or the wish for self-glorification. You shouldn't even have the selfish motive of attaining inner peace for yourself. To be of service to your fellow humans must be your motive before your life can come into harmony.

**-FOUR RELINQUISHMENTS-**

1. *Relinquishment of self-will.*

You have, or it's as though you have, two selves; the lower self that usually governs you selfishly, and the higher self which stands ready to use you gloriously. You must subordinate the lower self by refraining from doing the not-good things you are motivated toward, not suppressing them but transforming them so that the higher self can take over your life.

2. *Relinquishment of the feeling of separateness.*

All of us, all over the world, are cells in the body of humanity. You are not separate from your fellow humans, and you cannot find harmony for yourself alone. You can only find harmony when you realise the oneness of all and work for the good of all.

3. *Relinquishment of attachments.*

Only when you have relinquished all attachments can you be really free. Material things are here for use, and anything you cannot relinquish when it has outlived its usefulness possesses you. You can only live in harmony with your fellow human beings if you have no feeling that you possess them, and therefore do not try to run their lives.

4. *Relinquishment of all negative feelings.*

Work on relinquishing negative feelings. If you live in the present moment, which is really the only moment you have to live, you will be less apt to worry. If you realise that those who do mean things are psychologically ill, your feelings of anger will turn to feelings of pity. If you recognize that all of your inner hurts are caused by your own wrong actions or your own wrong reactions or your own wrong inaction, then you will stop hurting yourself.

### A FINAL THOUGHT

It is many years since childhood days when we first saw a picture of (the) Potala (Palace) of Lhasa, that incredible building rising out of a hill as if it were a part of it. Little did we dream then, way back in Italy, that life would get us involved with Tibet and all that has come out of it.

The experience of meeting some of the high entities from that region and learning about their inspiring teachings, has surely been the most rewarding thing in this long life. As it gradually draws toward its close, we feel confident that, seeing that life is an ongoing process of alternating activity and rest, we shall return to the earthly scene in due course, to carry on the big work of encouraging our flagging brethren.

In this Year of Tibet, we remember the words coming from those high places addressed to the ones embarking upon the path of life:- "To live to benefit mankind is the first step".

**Rosemary**

**N.B.** "We", of course, is that delightful editorial plural in which some of us are privileged to indulge<sup>3</sup>.

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**NOTE:** This small Memorial Page was, prepared by the Family Faraggiana of Turin, Italy, and edited by Samten de Wet.

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1 From the Editorial to CO-EXISTER, No. 15, "Watersedge", February 1990.  
2 Friends of Peace Pilgrim, 43480 Cedar Avenue, Hemet, California 92544.  
3 From CO-EXISTER, No. 23, "Watersedge", February 1992.