

# Buddhists see spiritual growth in contemplation

MUCH more than a relaxation technique, meditation can be a profound method of spiritual growth and freedom.

"Meditation is a journey of discovery; an inner adventure that brings immense richness to life," says Carol Verity of Plettenberg Bay, a former attorney now known by her spiritual name, Leela.

"Meditation plays an important role in Buddhism: our bodies are temporal and die, but . . . the non-physical part of ourselves is eternal," says Leela.

She studied under spiritual teachers like the Dalai Lama and today is the director of Sat Chit Anand, a Buddhist centre in Plett.

"Buddhism believes in spiritual evolution. Just like a seed will grow into a plant if it has the right conditions, and the plant will produce flowers and fruits, human beings have the seed of Buddha nature.

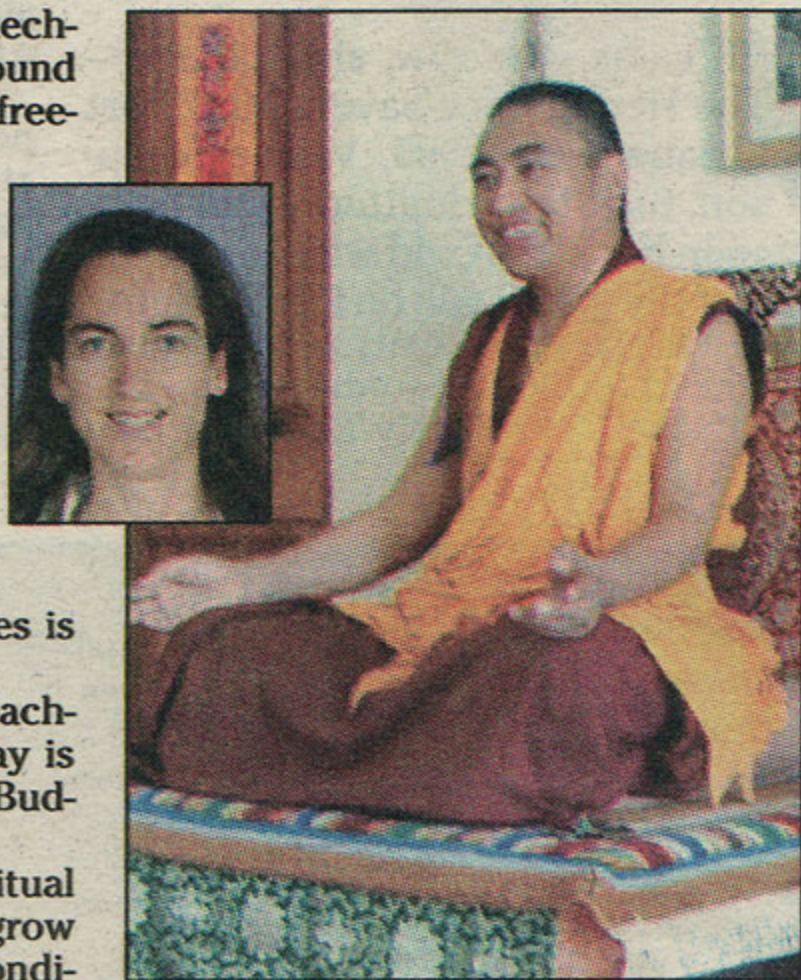
"If this seed is watered, it has the potential to grow towards enlightenment and produce flowers of loving kindness, compassion, generosity, selflessness, wisdom and other enlightened qualities.

"Our potential for enlightenment is watered by the practice of meditation, the spiritual purpose of which is to transform and purify the mind of its negative qualities and cultivate its positive qualities – and unlimited potential."

According to Buddhism, the source of happiness and suffering lies within our own minds.

By training our minds through meditation, says Leela, we can achieve purity and bliss.

"There are many different kinds of meditation (in Buddhism), such as



**ENLIGHTENED . . . Buddhist monk Geshe Phende, with (inset) Leela.**

transcendental meditation, to access higher states of consciousness; mindfulness meditation, to be aware moment-to-moment of what is happening inside our minds; loving-kindness meditation, to increase our capacity to love; calm abiding meditation (samatha), to calm and still our minds; and insight meditation (vipassana), also known as analytical or contemplative meditation, to gain spiritual insights on the path to enlightenment.

"It is possible to meditate in a chair – you do not have to sit in the Lotus posture!"

□ Sat Chit Anand hosts weekly meditations and Buddhist teachings. Spiritual retreats are held regularly.