

By Patricia Galaczy

A Handful of Leaves: a Brief Review of Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo's Book into *the Heart of Life*

"In the Sutras there is an account of the Buddha walking with his disciples in the jungle. He leaned down and scooped up a handful of leaves and said to the people around him, "Which is more, the leaves in the jungle or the leaves in my hand?"

The disciples said, "The leaves in the jungle are infinite and the leaves you are holding in your hand are so few." The Buddha said, "That is analogous to how much I have realized and how much I am telling you. But still, what I am telling you is all that you need to attain your own liberation."

So begins Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo's (2011) publication of ***Into the Heart of Life***. Through this work, and with clear, simple language and relevant universal examples, Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo offers the reader her own handful of leaves from the infinite forest of her wisdom and practice.

Since first coming across the book in the spring of 2011, I have kept it beside me as a constant companion; as a reminder of the Dharma; and as a practical guide for daily living. As acknowledged in the preface by His Holiness, The 12th Gyalwang Drukpa, "Buddhist philosophy is sometimes complex, and difficult to understand, especially difficult to implement in daily life without clear understanding. Jetsunma has made Buddhist philosophy very easy to comprehend and to be put into practice."

Indeed, having gifted the book to several friends new to the practice and teachings of Buddhism, I am delighted by the depths of their receptivity and the extent to which they have integrated many of the key Buddhist teachings into their everyday life.

It was with the greatest reverence and joy that I had the opportunity to meet and travel with Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo during the 11th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Attending the conference and traveling throughout Vietnam, I had the honour of witnessing the grace, insight, compassion, and wisdom with which Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo

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responded to all events; events both great and small and events both comfortable and challenging.

Knowing this and knowing the history of Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo as one who became one of the first Westerners to be ordained as a Buddhist nun; as one who spent twelve years of seclusion in a remote cave, and

as one who is deeply concerned with the plight of Buddhist nuns, establishing Dongyu Gatsal Ling Nunnery in India and traveling tirelessly as both teacher and leader, I know that ***Into the Heart of Life*** offers the wisdom of *lived* Dharma and the very handful of leaves that each one of us needs to continue on toward our own liberation.

All proceeds from the sale of this book go to the Dongyu Gatsal Ling Nunnery Endowment Fund, which has been set up to secure the future of the nuns.