

THE MIRROR

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Upcoming Retreats with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu



Photo: M. Ferrada Guterrez

2012

Australia
April 6–12
Namgyalgar South Retreat

Singapore
May 4–8
Ati Yoga Teaching

Hong Kong
May 16–20
Retreat

Taiwan
May 24–28
Taipei Retreat

Japan
June 1–5
Tokyo Retreat

Hawaii
June 13–17
Hawaii Retreat

USA
June 22–24
Los Angeles Retreat

June 29–July 1
New York City Retreat

July 6–10
Tsegyalgar East Retreat

July 11–12
Santi Maha Sangha Base Exam
July 13–17
Santi Maha Sangha First Level Training

Russia
July 22
Public Teaching in Moscow

July 25–29
Kunsangar North Retreat

Ukraine
August 3–9
Kunsangar South Retreat

Romania
August 17–23
Merigar East Retreat

Italy
August 31–Sept. 6
Merigar West Retreat



Photo: M. Ferrada Guterrez

The Dreamlike Life in Tashigar South

Lacey Segal

The Buddha said that everything is like a dream; this surely includes life at Tashigar Sur. Upon leaving the earthen rooftop home and permaculture garden of Savianna, where I am staying, a large Iguana named Gala crawls out from under the staircase. She asks for a banana and lies in the morning sun. At three feet in length, black, with scales like a gigantic lizard or a tiny alligator, Gala looks up into the eyes of Revelle, 9 years old.

“Gala, too much time since we’ve seen you!” says the young girl.

On the road to the Gar, a cacophony of dog barking reverberates against hills of stone. I have to climb behind a fence because five horses gallop on the dirt road. These majestic creatures of muscle somehow fear the dogs. A motley crew with all shapes, sizes, personalities, and varying

degrees of uncleanness: this dog pack chases horses relentlessly.

It’s the morning and the children have gathered at Tashi-bar with their music teachers, five long curly-haired men with guitars. “Volando voy!” they sing in unison, until Manu begins a trumpet solo. He makes silly noises for the children who laugh. Others shake homemade instruments for percussion. The wind carries music to the comedor where Sandra and Soledad sew prayer flags and others prepare Namkha. I mention to Bergit from Germany that I did not sleep well, and she hands me a Vimala pill. Wow! Nearby, a makeshift empanada factory springs to life as Chögyal Namkhai Norbu’s students fill, fold, and bake empanadas for Ganapuja. There is a vegetarian from the United States named David who just can’t seem to get it right, but he learns from the Argentines.

Three young Russian women, Lena, Macha, and Irina, with purple stains on their hands and giant smiles on their faces, enter the comedor with a bucket full of perfectly ripe blackberries. “Do you want some?” They spent the morning on the trail that leads to the swimming hole by the river. The blackberries grow wildly there, in endless amounts. This river, very near the Gar, has a small waterfall inside a miniature cave of stones. Like an initiation, one can crawl through it and sit under the cool waterfall to practice Guruyoga then sing the Song of the Vajra, on a very hot day.

Below the comedor, in the Gonpa, is the beautiful Prima Mai. She is leading instructor training for Vajra Dance. These dancers have been preparing for her arrival every day, practicing whenever they can,

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The Bardo

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“We finish our whole life with our preparation.”

Tragpa Gyaltsen

Good day to everybody everywhere. Today we have the continuation of the teaching of Shenpa Zhidral with an explanation by Tragpa Gyaltsen.

First of all, we pay homage to the teacher because the teacher is very kind in transmitting and making us understand the sense of the teaching. The teacher introduces transformation, like the visualization of deities, Hevajra, etc. In the real sense in Vajrayana, superior tantra, that is the path. You remember that when we go for refuge in the Buddhist tradition, we say we go for refuge to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. We go for refuge to Buddha because Buddha gave us the path; Buddha is the teacher and with that teaching we will have realization and the real state of the Buddha that is dharmakaya. This is the importance of Buddha and why we take refuge in Buddha. We take refuge in Dharma because it is the teaching that was taught by Buddha Shakyamuni. If we have no Dharma and there is no Buddha, we could not have realization. Where there is a teacher, we receive that teaching, we apply that teaching and we have realization. So in this case Dharma becomes very important.

In Vajrayana teaching, dharma is the transformation method. We transform impure vision, our physical body, our dimension, which manifests like a pure dimension, like deities and a mandala. That is the method we receive from the teacher. Secondly, we pay homage to deities, because this is the method. We go for refuge from the bottom of our heart; that means seriously feeling and taking refuge. In the Sakyapa tradition, for example, we use lama yidam because there is no tradition called the three roots in the Sakyapa, Kagyupa, and Gelugpa traditions. We have our attitude and we know that the three roots are guru, deva and dakini. The three roots are more like the Nyingmapa tradition - coming from Anuyoga and Dzogchen. The name three roots does not exist, in general, in Vajrayana. Otherwise it is very easy to say we pay homage to guru, deva and dakini.

When I pay homage, I am asking to receive a blessing. When we offer or pray there is always a reason and the reason is that we need to receive a blessing, an empowerment, or something. It is not always necessary in practices to pronounce that, because if we are praying to a Bodhisattva or enlightened being, they are omniscient, and they know very well why we are praying. If we have no desire or interest we are not going to pray. For that reason, sometimes it is not necessary that we pronounce. In general, in our human condition, we are very concentrated to make a request in a precise way, and to be satisfied we use words like, “I need this, please give it to me.”

For that reason, sometimes when people do any kind of practice they say, “Oh, I am doing practice of Guru Dragphur, Tara or Simhamukha. I know what the main practice is, but please tell me what the action mantras are.” We like to concentrate very much on action mantras in a specific way; this is our limitation. We use action mantras when we have a very strong desire for satisfaction. If you understand the main point and do only the main mantra, you can obtain everything. You must understand that the deities and all these beings are omniscient and they know why you are praying. So here [in the commentary] it also says not only to use the mantra in a relative way.

It [the text] says we do not need to perform any actions that do not correspond to our practice. We know our practice and what corresponds to our practice is that we need to have realization; so then if there are any kinds of actions that correspond it is always positive and when it does not correspond we create many negative actions. For that reason it is not necessary to apply actions that do not correspond. We have the idea that we are doing our best when we apply any kind of actions that correspond with dharma, but sometimes it does not correspond.

In general, in Mahayana teaching, it says that the most important thing is our intention. If we have good intention it always produces good fruit. This is universal in the Mahayana tradition. It is true that when we have good intention there is the accumulation of merits. In Mahayana it does not always correspond one hundred percent, but we do not say that. In a practical way it does not always correspond.

★ Tragpa Gyaltsen wrote the commentary of Shenpa Zhidral.



Photo: M. Ferrada Guiterrez

Shenpa Zhidral – Four Sakya Oral instructions on Freedom from Attachment

Day 3, Tashigar South, Argentina
January 22, 2012

Sakyapandita, the nephew of Trenpa Gyaltsen, gave a very good example. He says it is very important that we have presence and then we know if our intention corresponds in that moment; even if we have good intention it does not always correspond because everybody has a different way of seeing. He gave the example of the small bird. He said that near by South Central Tibet, near Assam, India, in that part of Tibet, there is warm weather and some birds; there are particularly some small birds who love their mother very much. They recognize that their mother is very kind, going around every day and bringing food and the small birds slowly grow up. They wait day after day to grow up, and then they themselves notice they are becoming bigger and bigger. Then they say, “Oh we should do some good actions for repaying the kindness of the mother because we are growing up and after a little while we will fly and go away. Before we go away we need to do some good action for mother.” That means they have a very good intention, but in a practical way what are they doing? They don’t understand but they are picking the feathers of mother one by one, every day, and in the end when they are ready to fly away the mother has no feathers. Their mother will suffer because she cannot fly, so you see it does not correspond. This is the example given by Sakyapandita.

So in this case what the Dzogchen Teaching says is very important. It says we need to be present, not distracted, and we need to know what the circumstance is and how to work with circumstance. In Dzogchen Teaching this is really the rule of practitioners. For Dzogchen practice, there are no particular rules or a book from which we can learn. Other teachings have rules, they say you should do

like this with body, speech and mind and there are certain kinds of limitations. In the Dzogchen Teachings from the beginning, we are learning to free all these kinds of limitations. How can we be totally free without having any kind of rule? A rule is necessary in the relative condition and the relative condition is in circumstance. So in the Dzogchen Teaching it says you should work with circumstance and be present. When you are present you know that the relative condition is not the real condition. Now everything is going perfectly, your rule, and the one responsible for the rule is you, not a book or a kind of vow or something like that. So you see when you are learning Dzogchen Teachings these things are very important to know.

Here, primarily, what the Shenpa Zhidral explains is how to free attachments. So to do something in the correct way, like dharma activities, we should learn Shenpa Zhidral. “So now for freeing attachments I am explaining to you and you listen well” – this is the meaning. This is how Sachen Kunga Nyingpo explained the root of the four verses yesterday. I am not explaining them again, so now we continue with those explanations.

First there is this verse: if we are attached to this life then we are not dharma practitioners. First of all, in order not to be conditioned by attachment to this life, what should we do?

There are three arguments:

Number one, like in Hinayana, we receive a vow. Once we receive a vow, limiting what we can do with our body, voice

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Khyentse Yeshe

The State of Joyful Mind

First part of his teachings at Merigar West, January 2, 2012

Today I will summarize what I said in these days. I will do this briefly and then I will talk more about how to continue in this knowledge.

First of all we went through different aspects of our knowledge in terms of experience, in these days. The first one was mostly related to the experience of emptiness or vacuity. This means that we try to understand how the condition of our mind is, not falling into the two main pitfalls of eternalism or nihilism.

Then we went mostly through the aspect of potentiality, our clarity, which means everything that is our experience in practice like visualisation, meditation and working with our energy. All these are very important means to realise knowledge of our existence and are something we try to continue for all our lives.

The most important thing you should remember is to do Guruyoga. When we do Guruyoga we always combine it with the most important aspects of taking refuge and cultivating *bodhicitta*. Then we end our session with the dedication of merits and we keep this presence and understanding during our day. We dedicate merits because we understand the importance of what we are doing and of our knowledge and most of all we know that we are on the path and that we are not the only ones. Being on the path, as you understood during these days, is not so easy.

When we say ‘being on the path’, according to the teaching of sutra it is easier because we have an idea of our condition, some direction and the final goal and our condition is the condition of ignorance. So mostly it’s about our virtue. When we are talking about the gate of Ati, we should be responsible. The way that we remain on the path, or that we are Dzogchen practitioners, is a lot more demanding. It means that we are always supposed to be more and more aware and present in our daily life. The best support, the best way to keep this condition of presence and state of Guruyoga or contemplation is that we combine [it] with the third experience, sensation. It means that we try to appreciate our life and have satisfaction through our ordinary actions. And I explained to have this feeling of satisfaction it is important that everything is evident and simple.

As soon as we follow our mind, we enter complexity and expectation and everything becomes very difficult. In this case, when we fall into this level of complexity, we should accumulate merits in order to accumulate wisdom. So we learn that remaining on the path, not being at the side [of it], according to the principle of Dzogchen, is being aware of this. Nobody is asking you to al-

ways be perfect in your actions, in your mind, in your thoughts. But you should never negate the fact that you are distracted. You should always be aware that it is very easy to lose this condition of awareness, but it is not a matter of feeling guilty and then punishing oneself. In the principle of the Dzogchen point of view being guilty and punishing oneself doesn’t exist. The fact that we judge ourselves and we recognize that we are guilty or that we are in the wrong condition or using a mistaken approach doesn’t give any benefit.

The final goal is not that we succeed in developing virtue but that we understand what virtue means, why being in the condition of virtue, being a virtuous one, is better. Just like we are not falling into the belief of vacuity or emptiness without compassion. It means that we understand that this virtue is mandatory, is something we need because it is a better condition for us, not at an abstract level something like good and evil, but it is very important because it makes things easier. It brings us into the condition that everything is evident and simple. We are not using mental activities and capacities very much to justify ourselves, so feeling guilty and punishing ourselves is out of the question.

We are mostly responsible for ourselves. We are responsible for good and bad. At the beginning we start with bad. We try to overcome our obstacles, try to accumulate merits, try to work with ourselves at a basic level to avoid bad conditions like bad health, bad mood and so on. This, according to the words of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, is called ‘educating our mind’. But then we should also educate it for good because good has the same potentiality, the same power as bad. So we should be in the condition of virtue, not in the condition of judging good or bad because being in the condition of good is just as negative as being in the condition of bad.

As I explained, if we feel interested [in something] and always follow our mind, we have the same result at the end. It is easier to avoid, to correct or educate all these negative aspects rather than positive aspects because negative aspects are judged to be negative by most people. Instead positive aspects cannot be judged because everything that is positive goes beyond time and space. All that is negative is within time and space, limited by time and space, it is an event, it is a meaning that we give or link to. I always give this simple example of what is negative, for example Nazism is negative. When we say Nazism, a person like Hitler is a negative example. But after some years, we forget and then we have to establish a ‘Day of Memory’

to remember what happened because some people remember, while others, like the new generation, don’t even know the real meaning of what happened. Even though it created so much fear, after a while it is all forgotten because it has the nature of being negative, so sooner or later time makes all of this disappear.

But it is impossible to delete positive aspects. I always give as a positive example someone like Buddha Sakyamuni or Jesus Christ. We don’t need a ‘Day of Memory’ to remember what Buddhism or Christianity is because the evil of Nazism lives outside of us, while the teaching of Buddha Shakyamuni or Jesus Christ lives within us. It doesn’t need anything to continue. This is important. When it is really connected with our own dimension, what people normally call ‘our heart’, then it doesn’t need any effort and it continues and prospers without any obstacles.

However, if this condition is something that is created by humans, and all humans define or establish that it is positive or good – for example, a beautiful poem that we all read, we feel that it is beautiful and we are inspired and so on, then after a few years the poet commits suicide – we should understand that this has the same value as bad because it is not something related with knowledge. If in its own nature it automatically goes beyond time and space, it is fine and we can follow it. If not, it is better that we recognise what this nature is.

In this case we should learn to deal with our mind – when we feel very interested we should ask ourselves what the nature of this interest is. What the final goal of this interest is. If, for example, it has the final goal of overcoming human limitations, then there are so many beliefs, so many studies and ideas with this principle.

Today there are so many values that are the base of sacrifice and killing: justice, ethical values, liberty and so on are the base of killing, of destroying entire nations. To establish justice and liberty we need to kill. Sooner or later we arrive at this point because we are trying to overcome human limitations and the value of justice and the value of liberty are worth more than my life. In this case we should learn not to follow our mind. What is bad is very easy to identify while what is good is not so easy.

This is the reason why we have three kinds of path. When we talk about the lower vehicles, it is easier to understand what is negative. But when we go to the higher vehicles and enter the gate of Ati we understand that everything is relative. It means that everything that relates to our vision, our mind, we don’t believe to be something positive or negative, that something good, something bad exists any more, but we try to accept our existence. For example, we immediately analyse and understand what value means. Every time we feel that something is valuable, then we are ready to



make a sacrifice. For example, we sacrifice ourselves and others for the value of justice, for the value of liberty, we establish rules and so on. How long does it take for our mind to accept that a higher value exists called ethical value for which or for whom we should sacrifice ourselves.

Values are always superior to humankind. We have the idea that humans are at the level of animals and we raise this level with all these values. Humans create civilization through these values and for this we are ready to sacrifice our lives tomorrow. But we don’t know when this tomorrow will arrive. Tomorrow we will discover that another value exists, it will take one more week, one more month, one more life to realize it. And all our life passes with this dream that we will realize something higher than a normal, average, common understanding of life.

So it means that it is easy to sacrifice, it’s an easy example. It’s very easy to sacrifice oneself. If we think well it’s not so difficult to die for an idea. Maybe at the beginning our understanding is not so developed and the fear of physical or mental pain is very strong, but once we go a little bit beyond youth, with maturity everyone that starts to get old understands that they can sacrifice their physical body or mental condition without any problem. As soon as you have children you do this all the time. So you can understand that it is not so difficult to make sacrifices. It is very easy. It doesn’t prove anything.

Instead understanding aspects related to oneself, like joy, is very difficult. I can sacrifice

myself with the principle of will, but I am not able to enjoy with the principle of will. For example somebody tells a nice joke and you start to laugh and suddenly you feel happy and joyful. In that instant, notice how many values you have. What is the basis of this enjoyment? What will are you using in that moment to get to this state? You don’t find anything. Nothing. Just like the principle of emptiness, vacuity. In this case the base is emptiness. The gate to that state is a paradox, just like ancient Greek philosophy says. It means that it doesn’t work with will, that there must be another way to remain permanently in this condition of bliss and joy.

In our Western culture there is no indication or instruction about this. That is why we are interested in Tibetan Buddhism because with Vajrayana for example, with Atiyoga, we find this instruction and remain in this knowledge. This condition of joy, what is called joyful mind, happens just like when someone is telling a joke, without will or effort. That is the base that we need which is not a base that is built or constructed with complexity. There is no wonderful thought or incredible concept that creates this joy. All concepts, all thoughts sooner or later just create suffering. This is what Buddha Shakyamuni said. So in this case we should learn to relax. When we are in the knowledge of the experience of enjoyment, like when we laugh about a joke, and we keep this as the basis of our awareness so we remember this kind of joy every morning when we wake up, after a while we learn to recall

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and mind, our three existences, we apply that, whatever vow we have received. Then we can control ourselves and not commit negative actions because we have controlled our body, speech and mind in this limited way. When we are following this, it is called *tsultrim* in Tibetan. *Tsultrim* means moral rule, but not an ordinary moral rule, it is something that corresponds with dharma and teaching. *Tsul* means how is the condition of something that corresponds, *trim* means the rule we are applying. So this is the first thing, we follow this kind of morality. Even Dzogchen practitioners, we do not take any kind of particular vow, but we work with circumstances, and we are present. We have that kind of commitment to be always present. So we can understand that presence is the essence of *tsultrim*.

The second is *thösam*, which means we are studying, listening the teacher, the teacher explains and makes us understand. We listen well and then we are judging and thinking and understanding concretely. This is called *thösam*. We are always doing *thösam* when we follow teachings.

Then the last one is *gompa*, not only listening and thinking, but applying our understanding and then it becomes concrete for us; not only a kind of nice idea. That is application. So this is called *thö sam gom sum*, in general, listening, judging and thinking, and understanding its real sense and then applying that. This is indispensable at the beginning when we are dealing with attitude that corresponds with the dharma. There are two different ways we apply this: we can receive a vow, we can study and listen, apply, etc., but if we apply this only with the interest of this life, concentrated on this life, on some benefit for this life, if we apply that way it does not correspond with dharma, and you are not a practitioner of dharma. It is much better you stop, keep aside, you don't apply and go ahead that way.

Firstly, morality is explained because it is very important to attain the three high level states: the three states in *samsara*. For example, in Mahayana sutra, there is an explanation: if you take a vow and you keep this vow in a very precise way, it means you are applying *tsultrim* in the perfect way. You can apply two, three or four kinds of rules – any quantity and it is still *tsultrim*. If you apply this very well, in that moment, you can overcome the kind of problem you have.

For example, if you have some problem of alcohol and you cannot control yourself, you take a vow to never drink alcohol again. In this moment you no longer have this problem in your life. It also affects your future life. The fruit is that if you applied this morality in a perfect way, you can have rebirth in higher states. For getting rebirth in a deva, asura or human condition, particularly in deva, it is guaranteed when you followed the rules very perfectly. It says it is something like a root for obtaining the three higher states. It is also like the first stage when you are ascending towards your liberation from *samsara*. Also it becomes an important antidote for freeing suffering. So it says it is very important that we follow that *tsultrim*, that perfect rule, connected with the dharma.

When we speak of *tsultrim* all these things are very important. But if you are applying *tsultrim* only with your own self interest in this life, it becomes the root for obtaining the eight worldly conditions, the eight worldly phenomenas, which means for example, you are obtaining something or not obtaining; when you are obtaining something you are happy and when you are not you feel sorry and you are angry. When you are famous you are happy and contrarily you are sad, you are a very important person and you are happy and if it is contrary you are sad, you are very rich and important and you feel happy and when you lose all of this, you feel sad. There are the eight aspects related to the eight phenomenas of the world. So when we are not really perfectly corresponding with dharma, it becomes something like this.

Here is an example. Some people say, “I am building a monastery, a very important one in our country and there are no others like this.” Instead of doing practice and applying *tsultrim*, people go around to make money for building monasteries. Why are these people building monasteries? When they have succeeded to make a very big and elegant monastery, that person becomes the head of the monastery. Before this person was an ordinary lama, but now people call him/her ‘Rinpoche’. Now this person has a position. This is one of the eight worldly phenomenas. It looks like an important monastery is being constructed, but really it does not correspond. It is much better you apply refuge or the four immeasurables or bodhicitta concretely, something like this, than building some kind of elegant monastery.

In *samsara* everything is unreal. It is in time and unreal. I remember when His Holiness the Dalai Lama arrived in India and there was a great meeting of all traditions of the schools. He gave a lecture for all the important Lamas and Khenpos of all the different traditions, particularly Gelugpa. I still have a copy of what the Dalai Lama said. He said to all the important Lamas and Khenpos of the Sera, Drepung and Ganden, monasteries, the three biggest monasteries, “ I remember when I was in Tibet and you were all building very, very elegant monasteries with ornaments of silver and gold and each monastery was in competition with and doing better than the others, instead of applying the real teaching of the Buddha.” The real teaching of the Buddha is *lung gi tenpa* and *togpai tenpa*, which means the real teaching of the Buddha, the *lung*, we study in college, for example. The college of study is very important because at least the teachings are studied there. *Togpa* means understanding and application, that means the college of the practices. These are not ordinary monasteries. In the main monasteries there may be a college of study and a college of practice. Then the Dalai Lama asked, “When you were in Tibet you were always developing these big elegant monasteries and sacrificing for that, now where are they and what are you doing with them?”

At that moment people understood a little but then after some time they started to build gigantic monasteries in India, Nepal, and everywhere again. Sometimes it is not so negative because it is also related to culture and tradition. But that is not the main point. So we can understand

morality a little and that all these things should be something concrete, otherwise there is no benefit. This attitude becomes the root of the eight worldly phenomenas. When you have this kind of condition, it means you are not doing things in a perfect way and only following desire. This does not correspond to the teachings and then you speak badly with people. The people who are applying the worldly *tsultrim* are jealous of the people who are really practicing according to the *vinaya* and how Buddha explained. It also means that in front of people you are very good monks and nuns, but in the real sense you are doing what you want. You are doing something false; this kind of *tsultrim* you should give up and throw away.

Here it is explained which kind of *tsultrim* we really need to have. *Tsultrim* corresponds with body, speech and mind, how the real condition is. You see in the teaching of Buddha there is an explanation linked with the dharma teaching of the Buddha about how long we will remain on this globe. There are five hundred this and that, five hundred in different epochs and now we are in this epoch called *kaliyuga*. In *kaliyuga* we have no concrete teaching of *lung gi tenpa* and *togpai tenpa*. It is called *tagtsam tenpa*, which means at most we are keeping the form of the dharma. This really corresponds to how things are now. It does not mean that all things are one hundred percent that way, but when we know that it is very important that we try and go in the essence as much as possible and not develop more and more *tagtsam tenpa*, only form. ✽

Transcribed and edited by Naomi Zeitz

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Schedule 2012

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Italy
Sept. 7–9
Santi Maha Sangha
Level I Examinations
Sept. 10–16
Santi Maha Sangha
Level II Training

Sept. 21–27
Second Retreat
of Merigar West

Greece
October 3–7
Greece Retreat

Spain
October 12–16
Barcelona Retreat

Canary Islands
October 26–30
First Tenerife Retreat

November 9–13
Second Tenerife Retreat

November 23–27
Third Tenerife Retreat

December 7–18
Fourth Tenerife Retreat

Dec. 26–January 1
Christmas and New Year:
Fifth Tenerife Retreat

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this joy. It means that even with the minimum effort we find our mind in this state very easily and this sensation can be kept during the day. This is the most precious and important aspect related to the continuation of the state of contemplation.

The experience of the enjoyment that we have in our lives is not only based on a material object, for example, experience related to eating some pleasant food, tasting something that we like, smelling something that is pleasant and so on. There are also experiences related to attraction such as sexual union. But there isn't only this, there is also something more common called love that goes to all levels, not only male and female

But a joke also exists, completely based on the essence,

the nature of our mind which is empty. Why is it funny? Because it is a paradox, it doesn't exist. It doesn't have a material base. This is the reason why it's funny. It's funny because we have this potentiality which is called emptiness and clarity, but which cannot be separate from sensation. Automatically what manifests is something like joy.

We all have these experiences and don't need an introduction to something at a higher level. But we can reach the same state of joyful mind through practice. In the gate of Ati we consider everything relative. When we enter this gate, we remember that everything is relative, that is all. What we know is ourselves. All the rest is relative. Time is relative, space is relative, our condition is relative. It means that we get used to this and we don't feel

this as a problem. This is the base and the most important aspect to continue with this knowledge.

So if we want to go more in the direction of developing intellectual capacities, which I explained are very important, the first step is to discover the nature of things. If we discover the nature of our mind, the nature of our energy, the nature of our body, at the same time we discover the nature of everything because everything we are in contact with depends on this nature. Without knowledge of ourselves, we cannot have knowledge of anything outside. It means that what is outside, just like a reflection, we understand perfectly now. Developing our intellectual capacity means that we recognise quickly and immediately how the nature of things is. But not things in general. Each

one is a derivate and has its own characteristics, is different.

If everything is the same nature, it doesn't mean that it has the same function. There are millions and millions of derivatives of different things that have different functions, but this doesn't mean that they are really different in their nature. They are the same thing. And with this we understand why in many religions there is the idea that one entity or one principle created everything and there is no difference between these things. In the cause is the same entity or principle, but in the form and the function it is different so we can feel that there is a difference. But when we look inside the difference, it becomes the same thing. For this reason it is important that we keep this awareness.

So if we want to say this in more common language, if we know that all things come from the same source, there is no reason to judge them. If there is not so much difference, why should we spend time judging? If we are all human, why should we judge who the best human is? What is the final result? That one is superior and all the others are inferior? It doesn't make sense so we should learn these things. Establishing something as being superior is a positive good idea for society. It's not considered a negative or bad idea. In our society we rank everything, this is number one, number two, etc., this is higher, that is lower etc. This is considered good. Instead, think well. If we come from the same source, why do we have to rank everything? For example, we

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Best Wishes from The Mirror for the Year of the Water Dragon 2139



Drawing by Bepe Goia
Calligraphy by Giorgio Dallorto

The Sign of the Water Dragon

Lama Gendun Dhargay
February 2012

In Tibetan astrology the sign of the Water Dragon is a very important sign, associated with mystery and the unknown. It is the symbol of everything that can happen unexpectedly, linked, of course, to the maturation of the karma of a person. It is a legendary animal, not a domestic animal, of which human beings know little, it cannot be touched and its head and its tail can not be seen at the same time. This year, 2012, is a very special year in which many things may happen that we do not expect, and for people born under this sign, its influence will certainly be very positive: they will have a new self-confidence, more clarity and mental stability, even from a spiritual point of view if they seriously dedicate themselves to the practice of Dharma with perseverance and dedication, they can achieve unexpected results. The sign of the Dragon contains the elements of wood, fire, earth, metal and water. This year will be the year of the Water Dragon, a sign full of positive energy and resources, but which needs to be contained. This is the principle characteristic of water, which takes the form of the vessel that contains it, so it must find the right cause and condition in order to draw upon all its resources. Since this year is under the influence of the Water Dragon, the water is like a river in flood with a lot of flowing water rather than a stagnant pool, hence many things move, ideas change, there will be a lot of creativity, there will even be a lot of changes from the economic point of view. In the constellation of the Dragon, the sign of the Dragon has the honor of being the guardian of the Eastern Sky, and traditionally speaking, the Dragon brings the four blessings of the East: health,

Greetings to my Vajra sisters and brothers on LOSAR

Year of the Water Dragon

Jaqueline Gens

- Hail imperial beast
- Patient denizen of the underworld
- Abiding in the watery abyss
- According to tidal lunations
- The ebb and flow of necessity
- Biding your time beneath the surface
- A loch ness of ephemeral appearance
- Neither here nor there
- Until rising at will into the mists of time
- To present yourself
- At this critical juncture
- The Black Era
- Honored guest
- Master of wisdom
- Manifest perfection

virtue, longevity and harmony. It has always been considered to be a symbol of prophecy and wisdom, and in the East it is often put at the entrance of temples and monasteries, as the guardian of the treasures that are kept there. We can see that there are the four animals even on Tibetan prayer flags: the wind horse (lung-ta) brings strength and fortune, and needs the eagle (wisdom), the dragon (power), the lion (courage) and the tiger (self-esteem) to achieve a perfect balance. The characteristics of this sign are ambition and the ability to organize for oneself and for others. People born under this sign prefer to live by their own rules, and

if they are left alone often reach the goals they have set for themselves. They apply themselves totally and with dedication and are not afraid of challenges or taking any kind of risks. They are always very enthusiastic about what they do, dedicating a lot of energy to it although at times they waste a lot on new projects and in the end feel tired, exhausted or unmotivated. Those born under the sign of the Dragon have an altruistic attitude, are attentive to the needs of others, are usually very generous and try to help those who are in need, even if they are unable to seek help for themselves. They do not like gossip and are very

responsible. They are often surrounded by many people because they have a very charismatic personality, but deep down they prefer to be alone perhaps because they are more successful when they do not work in a group and are able to commit themselves totally to what they are doing. They never tire out and go on until they have completed a project, following their own methods. They are considered to be hard workers, but often suffer from muscle tension and headaches caused by the stress of their increasingly busy lives and challenges. Generally they do not have many children but tend to devote themselves to community projects outside the home. Their daily routine should be integrated with walks in the countryside, meditation or yoga which will be able to balance their body and their mind which are always on the go. The positive days for this sign are Sunday and Wednesday. The negative day is Thursday, so on this day it is better not to start any business such as opening a shop, not to undergo surgery or get married. The sign of the Water Dragon, the sign for 2012, is possibly the most balanced of the signs. The mewa number is six, the mewa of the angels. Those born in this sign are very intelligent with a long life that is precise and well organized and take care of their appearance. They have a more versatile mentality and are also able to look at things from other points of view than their own, they do not always need to be right and can make decisions in consultation with others. This sign, however, does not like restrictions of any kind which could stifle creativity and may get angry very easily and must be careful because others could harm him or close relatives might be jealous of him. In general these people are very loving, full of ideas and good humor, with lots of energy, very ambitious and always thinking about big projects and

big ideas to be undertaken. They use theatrical gestures but not to draw attention to themselves. It is a natural way for them to behave and doesn't mean that they have something to show. They are often aware of their talents, although, as we mentioned previously, too much enthusiasm often leaves them exhausted, and although they are always surrounded by many people, deep in their hearts they love solitude because they know exactly how to look after themselves. In Tibet, these animals are mainly seen during the summer, which goes from spring to autumn and is called the season of the Dragons. They often appear with the noise of thunder and with lightning and some people manage to see their tails. People have to take care of their wheat crops in the fields because in the months of July and August the lightning and thunder from the dragons may destroy the entire harvest, mowing down whole fields. Then in September and October, the dragons sleep and wake up again in April and May with the first spring thunderstorms. In Tibetan villages the rain is always connected to dragons, and when it does not rain for several months, they do pujas to invoke the rain, which usually arrives. The figure of the dragon is often linked to the nagas, which are spirits that protect places, and dragons are often asked to protect the wheat fields. It is said that in general a snake can transform itself into a dragon after many years. ©

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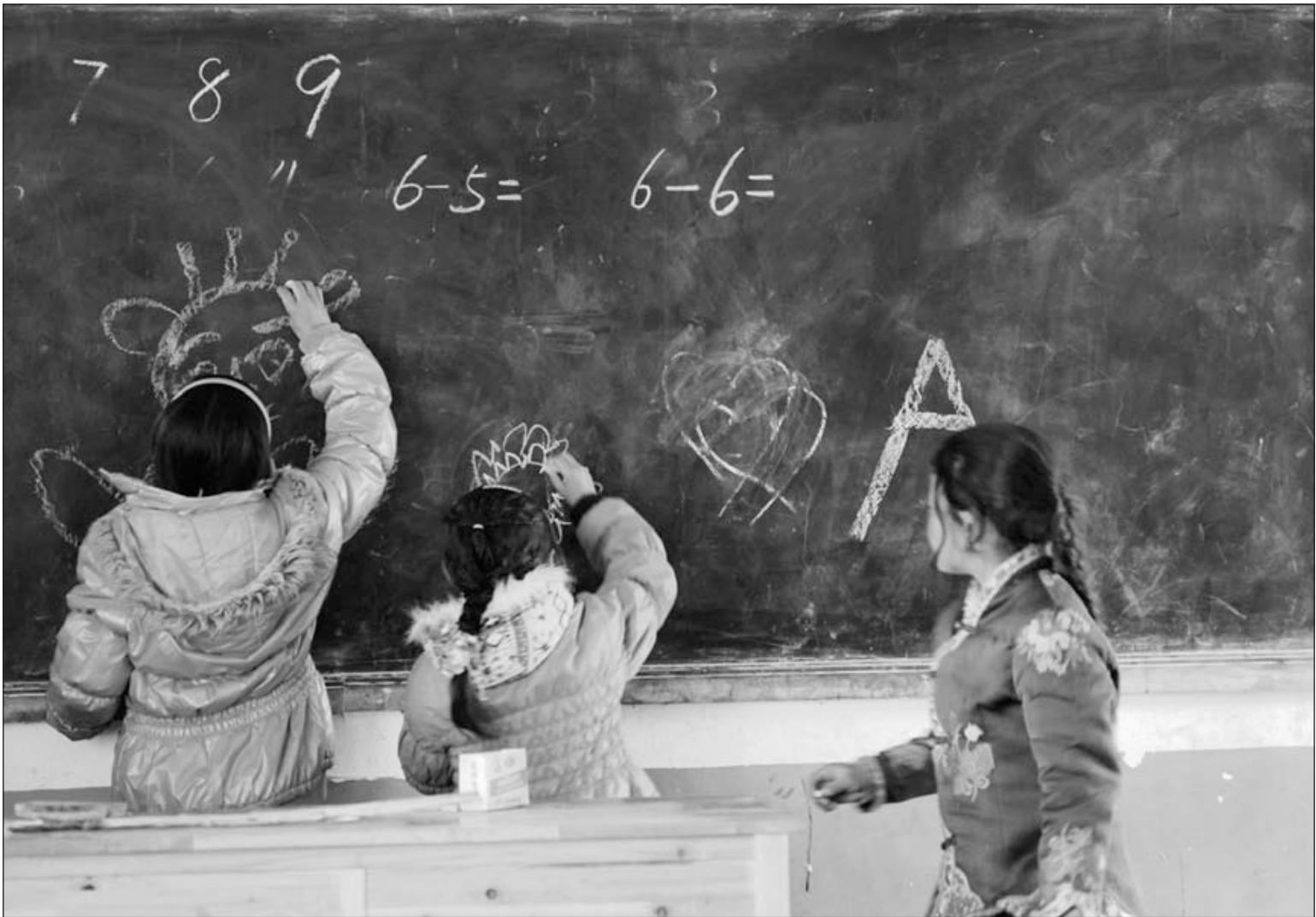
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A School for Girls

The girls’ school, built in 2006 by ASIA, was created to ensure the girls of Golok Prefecture the same opportunities as their male peers. Today it is attended by 500 students, 135 of them are supported at distance through ASIA.

The project to build the Golok school took its origins from the experience of a monk called Jigmed Gyaltsen who founded a private school near the famous Monastery of Ragya in 1994 with the aim of giving new generations an opportunity to acquire knowledge of Tibetan culture while receiving a modern education. The school, the only one in the province of Qinghai to apply traditional methods of debate and the system of memorization that was once used in the monasteries, immediately stood out as one of the best in the province attracting students from all over the Tibetan region of Amdo. The curriculum includes the study of traditional culture – logic, grammar, rhetoric, Tibetan, astronomy and astrology, Sanskrit, and medicine; Chinese, Tibetan and English languages; current affairs – politics, the fundamentals of law; history – including Chinese and world history; and the sciences: geometry, algebra, physics, chemistry and computer science. The staff of ASIA, present in the prefecture since 1993, have often visited the school to assess the results of the teaching methodology used by Jigmed Gyaltsen. The only aspect of this well structured school system that was quite unsatisfactory was the total absence of female students. In fact the school is located in area of the Ragya monastery and, in compliance with rules that prohibit females from entering the monastery, cannot



accept female students. Seeing that the girls of the area were penalized and the strong demand on the part of the families of the area, as a result, ASIA decided to build another school for girls that would be based on the teaching of traditional methods and the experience gained from Jigmed Gyaltsen.

The work on the construction of the school began in 2004, in an area that spreads over the south eastern plateau of Qinghai province, in the prefecture of Golok, at an average altitude of 4200 meters. The very cold climate, the harsh living conditions and the lack of infrastructure make the development of this region very difficult. In this area the

school attendance rate of the Tibetan population is very low and in some villages 75% of females have no access to education. The school, which has two offices, dormitories for girls, classrooms, a dining hall and kitchen was completed and fully operational in 2006. 240 girls were enrolled.

Today the Golok school serves 500 girls, most of whom come from very poor nomadic families. Among them, for example, is little Tsering Tso who has been attending the first class at the Golok school since September 2011. Her parents own only a few head of cattle and without distance support it would have been extremely difficult for them to meet the expenses necessary

to ensure a decent education for Tsering that respects her cultural roots. To date there have been 135 girls who, like her, thanks to a parent at distance, are able to attend school, without being a burden on their families economically. Many others, however, are still on ASIA’s list waiting to be matched with a supporter at distance who will accompany them throughout their education.

Then distance support is not only an economic aid but permits the supporter and the beneficiary to establish a relationship through the exchange of letters, and at times by meeting each other. For us at ASIA it is undoubtedly one of the most effective tools to support the Tibetan people and

to safeguard their cultural heritage. Allowing Tibetan children to preserve their cultural roots is, in fact, a way to make sure that the future “seeds” of Tibet can grow.

To learn more, visit our website www.ASIA-onlus.org or write to: adozioni@ASIA-onlus.org ©

>> *Joyful Mind* continued from page 4
don’t need to quote Longchenpa or something from the Dzogchen teaching because this is common to all religions. If it doesn’t make sense, if it doesn’t have any function, it is better that we don’t waste our lives on it.
So it becomes extremely important that we have this recognition of how our life is, how much our life is connected with all this. We understand that we cannot avoid this. Even if it is not so meaningful for us, this is where we are, this is our karmic condition and it becomes easy to understand the nature of all these values such as why a person has so much interest in becoming superior? Because he feels himself

to be inferior. Our duty is to work with this condition, not to go and discuss, to become superior and so on. Our duty is not to feel superior or inferior.
We should try to have a normal life with satisfaction, not always projecting ourselves in our society, in our world, in our ideas. If I am a person of a certain age, with a certain position in society but I would like this and that, if I am dealing with these things, I will never be satisfied because there is incredible diversity at this level. There is always someone better than me so I never succeed in reaching the final goal. And there is always someone worse than me. This is called *samsara* and this is the characteristic of

samsara. It means that there is me, there is something less and something more than me. And there is always the feeling that I am missing something, as if I was detached from my real self at the moment of birth. This is the feeling of *samsara*.
Samsara is temporarily interrupted with small joys, as I said, something nice to eat, some nice feeling and so on. When we don’t succeed in remaining in this joy, we try to create it with our will, with struggle and sacrifice. How can we avoid this? It is very simple. Just observe whether the final goal that is projected in your mind exists or not. Does it belong to what you own or not? You will discover that it never belongs.

It is always a higher projection, something impossible. In this way when the deadline arrives you can move ahead because it’s impossible, just because the nature is not possible. So automatically it will move ahead, for one or two years, all your life. Why does this happen? Because you have clarity. Because of clarity you know very well that it is impossible. Because of your potentiality you perfectly choose what is impossible and also impossible in the timeline.
This means that when we say emptiness and clarity or potentiality, it means that they always work perfectly. If we use them in the wrong way, we have suffering. If we use them in the right

way, we have enjoyment. But we cannot avoid clarity because if we say three primordial wisdoms, like essence and nature, emptiness and clarity are always present. If for example, we believe our mind a lot, then we use them for our mind. If we learn not to believe that much in projections of mind, then we use them for enjoyment, just like a joke which makes us happy. This means that it is possible but it is not simple. It requires not so much conceptual activity but awareness and presence of how our real nature is. ©
Transcribed and edited by Liz Granger



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New Digital Titles from Shang Shung Publications

Shang Shung Publications is continuing to release the digital versions of its books for the Kindle platform.

Until now, five titles have been published:

- * Longchenpa's Advice from the Heart by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu
- * Parting from the Four Attachments by HH Sakya Trizin
- * The Foundation of the Path by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu
- * The Life of Padmasambhava by Taranatha
- * Togden Shakya Shri: The Life and Liberation of a Tibetan Yogi by Kathog Situ Chökyi Gyatso

In the next months we plan to release On Birth, Life and Death, The Light of Kailash: A History of Zhang Zhung and Tibet, Healing with Fire: A Practical Manual of Tibetan Moxibustion and The Practice of Tibetan Kunye Massage by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. We sincerely hope that having these titles available in the digital form will help making them more accessible to the readers in the whole world – and also easier to read, especially while traveling.

All these books are available for the Kindle platform. It means that they can be read on the Kindle device, which is a light e-book reader, but also on a variety of other devices:

On the PC and Mac computers, using the Kindle software.

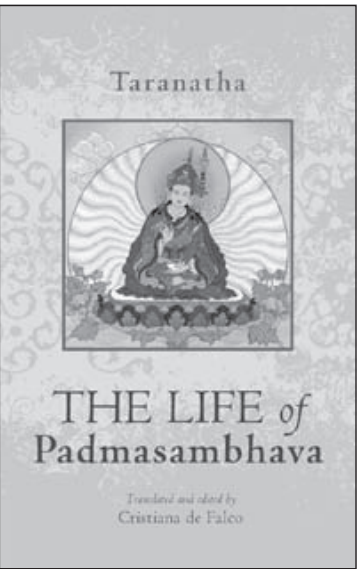
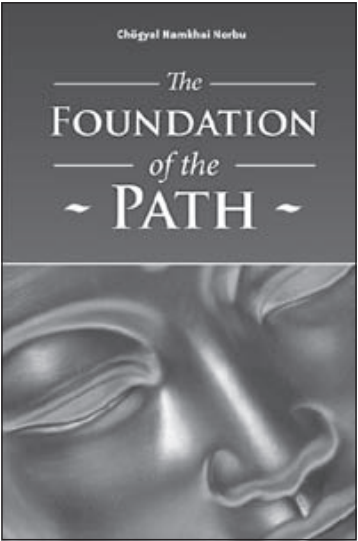
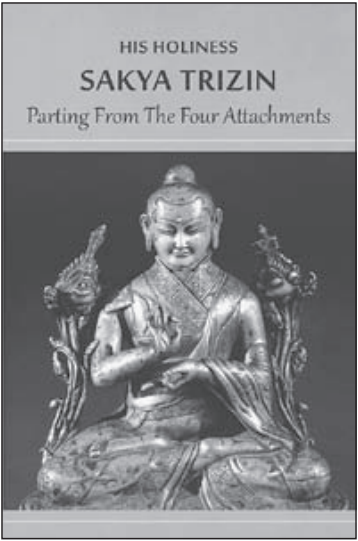
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The most comfortable is the classic Kindle reader (not the newest one called Kindle Fire): it's small and light enough to carry everywhere, and it uses the e-ink display, so your eyes don't get tired so easily and the battery lasts for a few weeks. With the 3G model you also get free 3G connectivity in several countries, which is quite useful while travelling.

The titles are available from Amazon.com (USA), Amazon.co.uk (UK and Ireland), Amazon.fr (France), Amazon.es (Spain), Amazon.de (German-speaking countries) and Amazon.it (Italy). For local Amazons, you can substitute .com in the addresses below with the corresponding domain (.fr, .es etc.):



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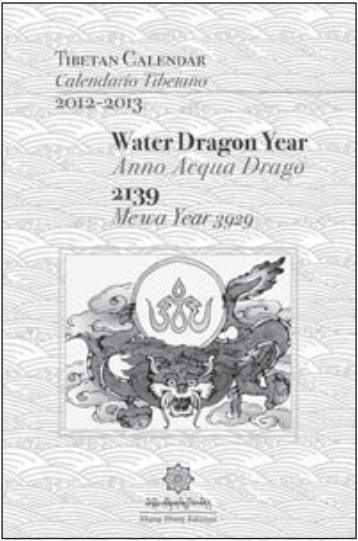
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May it bring benefit to everybody!
Shang Shung Publications Team



Tibetan Calendar Water Dragon (2012-2013)

Pocket agenda containing concise indications of the practices recommended by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu for special days, positive and negative days for the Naga Practice, astrological data of the Tibetan Calendar and the individual aspects for those born between 1918 and 2012. Indispensable for finding out favourable and unfavourable days for daily activities and to remember special practice days.

This year the calendar has been expanded to include a table indicating the days of the month to avoid surgery in specific areas of the body according to three Tibetan astrological systems as well as a table with the first days of the Tibetan new year according to the Phugpa system.

www.shangshungstore.org



Dear vajra family,

The Year of the Dragon has begun. According to the astrology of the elements as taught by Arya Manjushri, it will be a fortunate and prosperous year for some, but some of us might experience challenges due to conflicts between aspects of the elements. Fortunately, these conflicts can be balanced. Rinpoche's recent book The Four Methods of Development gives us instructions on how to calculate the elements for each year along with the mantras we can apply to counteract imbalances.

The book can be purchased in our webshop

www.shangshungstore.org

Part of the application of this method is wearing a specific mantra close to the body. This mantra is printed on fabric, a T-shirt or a scarf.

T-shirts, with the mantra applicable for you printed on it can also be ordered at Shang Shung Institute at Merigar. As this method has been prepared by Rinpoche to help his students and practitioners to improve their lives, no fixed price has been set. It's donation based. To give you an idea, the production cost is about 10 euro. Having that in mind, the donation should exceed where possible the basic costs, and the postage.

The complete income will be given to Rinpoche.

If you are interested in ordering a T-shirt, please send an email to the secretary@shangshunginstitute.org with the following information:

- Name and family name
- Date of birth
- Gender
- Size of the t-shirt
- E-mail address
- Complete postal address

The money should be transferred to Shang Shung either by back transfer or pay pal.

Please find the information in the webshop

www.shangshungstore.org

If you have any questions, regarding the T-shirts please feel free to get in touch with the SSI secretary: secretary@shangshunginstitute.org

Wishing you all the best for the coming year,
Shang Shung Edizioni and
Shang Shung Institute ©

Shang Shung Institute's School of Tibetan Medicine - USA

The Year of the Water Dragon was off with a great start for the SSI's School of Tibetan Medicine. Our 750-hour, Tibetan Kunye Massage Program is now underway. The first of its kind, this 1 1/2 year program provides the most advanced training offered anywhere in the US or abroad. Menpa Phuntsog Wangmo began teaching a group of enthusiastic students on January 26th of this year: graduates will be trained for the professional workplace, and may apply to the Board of Registration of Massage Therapy for licensure as massage therapists in the state of Massachusetts, or other states throughout the US, upon completion of the program. We thank all the many people interested in discovering when will be the program's next offering of classes, and we will be announcing the new class's up-and-coming start date later this year.

But we have more good news! In early February the Massachusetts Board of Education gave US permission to launch the new four year on-line Tibetan Medicine, which we are doing our best to begin on the auspicious date of April 11th, 2012. The program will be offering students around the world the rare opportunity to learn the ancient art of Tibetan Medicine from our revered Director of Education, Menpa Phuntsog Wangmo and her esteemed colleagues. Of course, classes will also be available on-site for US citizens and US legal residents who would like to receive these teachings in person.

We extend a heartfelt CONGRATULATIONS to the Medical School's graduating class of 2012. They have completed their written final exams on the cusp of Losar, and they will leave at the end of March for their optional internship at the Mtsho Sngon Tibetan hospital in Qinghai, P.R.C.

For more information, or to request enrollment applications for the Tibetan Medical Program, please direct your inquiries to secretary@shangshung.org.

Everyone here at SSI – USA School of Tibetan Medicine wishes you a joyous and prosperous New Year!©

The Bardo - A Different Vision of Life And Death

Elio Guarisco

The Tibetan Book of the Dead is part of a large constellation of texts known as The Profound Teaching of Natural Liberation Through Recognition of One's Primordial State [as Embodied in the] Peaceful and Wrathful Deities. Originally taught by Padmasambhava, the doctrines contained in the text are certainly a synthesis of all that has been written and understood throughout the centuries by the Indian and Tibetan masters of life and death.

In particular the Tibetan Book of the Dead is the sum of the understanding and living experience of the process of death and the post mortem state which have already been described in the Buddhist Sutras, in the Tantras and in particular in ancient Dzogchen Tantras such as The Union of Sun and Moon and the All Surpassing Sound.

However the particularity of the Tibetan Book of the Dead is that it has borrowed the mandala of the peaceful and wrathful deities set out in the Guhyagarbha Tantra, the root Tantra of Mahayoga, and associated it with the post mortem state called the Intermediate State of Reality.

This practically amounts to the use of a symbol with which the spiritual practitioner has developed familiarity during life, in order to awaken his or her consciousness to awareness of its real nature during the intermediate state after death. Although the Tibetan Book of the Dead also instructs the deceased on some tantric methods, the main point is certainly connected to the Dzogchen view and meditation.



Main Peaceful Deities: the Tathagatas Akshobhya-Vajrasattva, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha, Amoghasiddhi.

Without bothering to enter into useless philosophical arguments, the Tibetan Book of the Dead gives for a fact that, although the outer shell of one's being is discarded at death, the nature of mind, just like the energy, is indestructible and its existence continues. Life and death are both an intermediate state of an ongoing cycle and this cycle, according to the Dzogchen teaching, is nothing but the display of the energy of the primordial state of each individual.

The point is to recognize all that appears as one's self, and thereby go beyond the illusion of duality created by the movement of energy, which is a quality of one's primordial state. Both life and death offer this possibility of recognition for one who has trained in life in the discovery of his or her real nature, however, the post mortem state offers a unique occasion, because in particular, during the intermediate state of reality the con-

ceptual mind, just like in deep sleep, is totally absorbed in its very nature, and its potentiality manifests as various peaceful and wrathful forms. By abiding in pure awareness, the illusion that these deities are external entities dissolves, and oneself and the vision become one, at which point one regains the knowledge of the ground of being just as it is: this, if one wants to use a word, is called enlightenment. Thus both life and death are the playground in which one can recognize one's true nature.

Discovered by Karma Lingpa at the end of the XIV century, the Tibetan Book of the Dead, which inspired the curiosity and fantasy of the West, was first translated into English by Lama Kazi Dawa Samdup and published by Evans-Wentz (1954). Carl Jung and others have drawn inspiration in their work by interpreting the book according to their own background. Moreover the journey of the Tibetan Book of the Dead

in the West took off significantly with the psychedelic movement, when in 1964 Timothy Leary, Ralph Metzner and Richard Alpert explained the psychedelic experience on the basis of the Tibetan Book of the Dead. This was indeed the door through which many young people of that generation went to India and began the transcultural process of importing the real meaning of the Tibetan Book of the Dead.

There followed other translations of the book, such as that of Trungpa-Fremantale that offered an interpretation closer to the original context from which such teachings originated. Then came the translation of Robert Thurman that, in the attempt to universalize and modernize the translation, produced a text which is hardly recognizable as the Tibetan Book of the Dead. Some scholars like Detlef Ingo Lauf, and more recently Henk Blezer and Bryan Cuevas have made major contributions in setting the

book in its historical and cultural milieu. Gyurme Dorje made the first precise and accurate translation of many of the texts associated to the cycle of the Tibetan Book of the Dead. But there remain many other texts associated to that cycle which await translation.

Forthcoming from Shang Shung Publications is a new translation of the central texts of the Tibetan Book of the Dead with an introductory commentary by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu which shed considerable light on the principles which underlie this book, a revisiting of an old translation that was published in Italian years ago. This will be particularly addressed to the practitioners of the Dzogchen Community as well as to all those interested in Tibetan Buddhism and spirituality in general, conveying to them the message of the need to use their lives for the quest of their true nature and in order to prepare for the time of death. ©

The Tibetan Book of the Dead

Tenerife October 19, 2011

Elio Guarisco

I would like to speak a little about the 'Tibetan Book of the Dead'. The 'Tibetan Book of the Dead' is of course connected to the belief that is held in the Himalayas and generally in the East that the mind continues after death. The moment of death is a crucial moment of our life. When we die respiration and all functions of the senses cease, but the mind remains in the body for sometime. During that time it is said that one experiences the luminous clarity that is the nature of the mind.

For ordinary people that moment of seeing the luminous clarity can be very short, like a snap of the fingers and the experience passes almost unnoticed. But for one who in life trained in the recognition and in remaining in that luminous clarity which is the nature of our ordinary mind,

that moment can last days and the experience is crucial. That is why the teachings related to the 'Tibetan Book of the Dead' speak about four bardos or intermediate states. The first intermediate state is our life itself, and if we want the moment of death to become really meaningful, we must not live like animals, only working for food, house and wealth. We have to find the real purpose of our life. In Dzogchen, the highest teaching that we find in Tibetan Buddhism, it is said that the purpose of our life is to discover our true nature. That true nature is the very nature of the mind which is always with us, and that manifests nakedly at the time of death in all its luminosity.

Nature of Mind

When we say luminosity we do not really mean the appearance of a light. We are talking about the nature of the mind that has no form, no color, and whose nature is inexpressible. We have mind and the nature of the mind, as we have fire and the nature of fire. These are not the same, yet not completely different. Mind

refers to the faculty I use, for example, now when I am talking, in order to coordinate some memories I have of the teaching. Mind is what you use when you try to understand what I am saying. But that mind is somewhat limited and depends on time and space. Mind changes according to the time and the space or situation in which you are. For example, you may be in a nice restaurant for dinner and feel very happy. That is your state of mind because you are in that particular place, possibly with someone you like. But perhaps afterwards, in the street somebody may make some comment about your girlfriend, you get into a fight and your mind gets angry. That anger is also your mind. So you can see how quickly mind changes. The opinions we have about this world, politics, finances, ecology, spirituality etc., and to which we give great importance are mind: unstable and changeable. Yet these are something that changes just like the example I have just given, and most of the time the opinions we hold on to with great attachment are useless.

On the contrary the nature of the mind doesn't depend on time or space or on the circumstances we find ourselves in. For example, if we think about the sky, today it is not very nice, there are a lot of clouds. These clouds are like our mind. But when the clouds have passed there is this blue sky that appears which is like the nature of our mind. In truth, the blue sky is always there even if hidden by clouds. The nature of our mind never changes, regardless of what we do. It is always the same. Usually people who practice a spiritual path think that in this way their mind will somehow transform and become different: this is not true. Their nature of the mind is always the same. If they think they are progressing along a path it just means that they have the concept of progressing. Actually there is nothing like that.

What we want to discover is a space within ourselves that has always been the same. A space that as it was thus it will be, that does not improve nor get worse. We call this space the nature of the mind. But it does not mean that the nature of our mind is

like a stone: we have feelings, thoughts, and emotions. But when we don't recognize the space that never changes within ourselves, we are dominated by the clouds of mind, by feelings, thoughts and emotions.

Thus, during the intermediate state of life, we should learn to recognize that space within ourselves and abide in it. If we are able to be in that we can have thoughts, feelings etc., but instead of being dominated by them we can use them. Therefore our life is very important, very precious, for during life we have the opportunity to approach the understanding of the nature of our mind, of what we really are.

Death and Clear Light

But when we die what happens? It is almost like falling asleep. When we fall asleep our sense consciousnesses withdraw, and for a while even our mental consciousness doesn't function: this is a kind of non-conceptual state. The same thing happens when we die: all our thoughts and emotions dissolve and we have the ex-

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Photo: K. D. Angdus

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perience of that nature of mind, clear like a sky free from any clouds. Those who, in life, were familiar with this sky-like space within themselves, now, at the time of death will meet the nature of mind, in its fullest and without any obstructions.

What happens when we nakedly recognize the nature of mind that appears to us at that moment? We discover our ground or being, what we really are. In the Dzogchen system this is called enlightenment. Enlightenment is not something that we attain after following the path of the Bodhisattva, accumulating merit and so forth. Enlightenment is our own real nature. And if we have trained in life, and we have not recognized that nature fully, we have the possibility to realize it very much at the time of death.

For this reason, in the Himalayan regions there is the tradition of leaving the body of the dead person for three days without moving it because that person, if he or she is a spiritual practitioner, may be in the state of the clear light. Some practitioners may stay longer in that state, 8 days, 10 days, or even a month. The body is clinically dead but the mind is still there and there are signs of this because the body does not generate, it remains seated, the head is still straight and the complexion clear.

For example a few years ago, when I was living in Darjeeling (India) working, an old monk from the Drukpa Kagyu tradition helped me to translate the biography of a famous lama of the past. After a year or so the monk died. When I came to know that he had passed away, I went to pay my respects at his monastery. They had put his body in the middle of the temple and he remained there for eight days. His body was exhibited so that everyone could see him. He was dead but his complexion was fair as if still alive, and there were no signs of degeneration of the body.

There are also other signs that indicate that the deceased is in a state of clear light, such as a slight heat in the region of the heart, etc. Then, when the head

droops, liquid comes out of the nose, the complexion of the face changes, these are signs that the mind has left the body.

When the body of a good practitioner is burned many signs of his or her realization can manifest. There can be external signs in the environment like rainbows, colored clouds, etc., and these signs are described in detail in some Dzogchen scriptures. Moreover, at the cremation, among the ashes there may appear many relics of different colors, coming from different parts of the body, and also a kind of red powder called *sindura*.

I remember that some years ago I was in a place in India where a yogi had passed away. I and a journalist friend of mine went by that monastery and the lama in charge of the monastery showed us the relics of that yogi. These were very small, perhaps 1 mm in diameter, in nice colors like turquoise and red. He gave us a magnifying glass so that we could see them. When we looked through the glass we saw that they were perfectly formed miniature conch shells. Sometimes letters may appear or the form of deities on the bones. So all of these signs indicate that a person has achieved a high level of realization.

Intermediate State of Reality

For one who, at the moment of death, recognizes his or her own real nature there is no intermediate state afterwards. But if a person does not have that understanding, after the experience of the clear light he becomes unconscious for three and a half days and when he wakes up from this state he enters what is called the intermediate state of reality.

This is the intermediate state of the real nature of the mind. During that intermediate state, our normal judgments, the thinking mind, is not active so the visions we have come directly from the pure potential of the nature of our own mind. Therefore, if in life we have been introduced to the peaceful and wrathful deities, such visions can appear to us in the intermediate state. But of course, even those Tibetans

who have not received that type of introduction, explanations and so forth, will not have these visions. However, everybody will have signs like lights, sounds and rays, which are the manifestation of the very nature of reality. If we have been introduced to the peaceful and wrathful deities during our life, then in the intermediate state of reality we can recognize them and attain realization at that time.

Now I want to explain a little what these deities are. First of all they are not something unrelated to ourselves: they represent our psychophysical make up, that is, the various aspects of our body and mind, everything that constitutes our person. When we speak of the peaceful deities mainly we are talking about the five Dhyani Buddhas that represent our own psychophysical constituents. For example there is Vairocana, white, that represents our body. Ratnasambhava, yellow, that represents our feelings - pleasure, pain etc. Amitabha which represents our mental recognition of things. Amoghasiddhi which represents our volitions.

The Five Buddhas also represent our emotions. Generally in Buddhism emotions are considered to be like poisons. Of course, if we have a low capacity this may be true, but if we have the ability to recognize the nature of our own mind, emotions can be wisdom.

So when we wake up from the unconscious state that follows the experience of the clear light, on the first day we have a vision of Vairocana and his entourage. Vairocana represents ignorance as the wisdom of the true nature of reality. At that time a bright light also appears which symbolizes that wisdom which comes from the heart of Vairocana and reaches our heart. The light that symbolizes the wisdom of Vairocana is like a rope that connects us to that vision in front of us which represents the purity of our body and the purity of our ignorance. But at the same time we have another light that reaches our heart. This is the white light of the world of the gods and is like a path which has been created

by our own habitual tendencies that we accumulated during our life. For example, if we had a lot of attachment, we liked to enjoy things, this habitual tendency becomes the path to have that kind of existence in the future. Maybe we will become a god entertained by pleasure. So we have these two possibilities – either we recognize the light of wisdom that is our own wisdom or we go for a light that is a path that has been created by our habitual tendencies and will lead to another birth in the cycle of existence.

Book of the Dead

At this point, we use the teaching of the ‘Tibetan Book of the Dead’ which is especially related to the post mortem state. The post mortem state is also explained in classic Buddhism, but in the tantra the explanations are more extensive, and for some reason became crucial and very detailed in the Dzogchen teaching.

The ‘Tibetan Book of the Dead’ belongs to a particular tradition which in Tibet is known as the *terma* tradition in which some teachers discover scriptures, objects, etc., that have been hidden for a long time in rocks, mountains, temples etc. Sometimes these teachings are not material objects that are discovered in the outer environment but revelations that come to a person, in dreams or the waking state.

In the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism they say that these kinds of revelations are connected to the original teachings of Padmasambhava, the master who brought Buddhism to Tibet. The guidance and instructions contained in the ‘Tibetan Book of the Dead’ are considered to be teachings of Padmasambhava. The book was discovered in the 14th century by Karma Lingpa when he was a fifteen-year old boy in the mountains in Tibet. Its teachings, which became widespread in Tibet, present specific instructions to guide the dying person to recognize what happens to him or her at the moment of death, to recognize the visions of the intermediate state of reality, and to assist him or her to choose, if liberation has not been

attained before, a favorable re-birth.

On each day of the post mortem state a part of the ‘Tibetan Book of the Dead’ is read to the deceased so that he can recognize the visions that appear to him or her.

On the second day Akshobya appears, a blue Buddha which represents anger which is the mirror like wisdom. As for all the other four wisdoms, we should know that the mirror like wisdom is not the wisdom of some enlightened being separate from us, but a facet of the nature of our own mind.

On the third day there is a vision of Ratnasambhava which symbolizes our pride which is the wisdom of sameness. Then we have the vision of Amitabha which symbolizes discernment and our attachment which is the wisdom of discernment. On the fifth day there is Amoghasiddhi which symbolizes our jealousy, the wisdom which accomplishes all actions.

So on each day we have a light of wisdom from the heart of a Dhyani Buddha that reaches our heart as well as a faint light from one of the realms of existence. The bright lights are those of wisdom and the faint lights those of the realms of existence. When our emotions, such as attachment, have piled throughout our life, like a pile of cow dung, when we die, their potential becomes our vision or life in the future.

We have six main emotions corresponding to the six realms of existence. For example, if we accumulate enough anger in our life, at the moment of death we enter a vision of hell, so this is what is meant by taking birth in hell. Some people may ask whether this vision of hell is real or not. It is real, just as every subjective perception and vision is real for oneself. Yet hell does not exist anywhere outside one’s vision. However, other beings who have the same karma may share that vision, and for that reason the realms of existence are basically visions created by the shared collective karma of beings.

When the bright lights of the wisdoms of the five Dhyani Buddhas appear together with the faint lights of the six realms of existence, we have the choice to let ourselves be taken by the light of wisdom or by the light of a realm of existence. But of course, we are dead and the habitual tendencies we created in life may influence this choice. Thus reading the instructions of the ‘Book of the Dead’ helps the deceased to follow the light of wisdom.

On the first day of the intermediate state of reality the instructions of the ‘Tibetan Book of the Dead’ read, “From the centre of the universe appears Vairocana, white, from his heart the light of wisdom comes towards your heart, but there is also another light from the god realm created by your habitual tendencies. Don’t go after the light of the gods but follow the light of wis-

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Tibetan Book of the Dead Presentation

As part of the Tibetan Cultural Week from October 14–23 2011
Tenerife, Canary Islands Spain

Guru Padmasambhava - The Tibetan Book of Dead and Vajrayana

Good day for everybody and everywhere. Here we are at the University Hall in Laguna in Tenerife. I would like to give a little information about the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* because it has become very famous in the Western world. Guru Padmasambhava originally taught the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* and was the first to introduce Vajrayana in Tibet. The first Buddhist tradition started earlier than Guru Padmasambhava in Tibet, but not particularly Vajrayana. For example, the ancient Tibetan King Terston Densten, invited a very famous Indian pandit called Shantarashtra. He was one of the very famous teachers of the Mahayana tradition. When he arrived in Tibet he started to teach, but he did not succeed to teach Buddhism in Tibet because in Tibet there was a pre-Buddhist tradition called the Bon tradition. Today we also have the Bon tradition in Tibet, but it is different from the Buddhist tradition. Their way of seeing the elements and everything is different from the Buddhists.

For that reason when Shantarashtra started to teach sutra, people were not very interested. Particularly in that period there were many famous teachers of the Bon tradition and many powerful ministers following the Bon tradition. So at the end Shantarashtra said he could not teach this teaching in Tibet and he wanted to go back to India. He gave advice to the Tibetan king and said that if he is interested to spread Buddhism, he should invite Guru Padmasambhava. Guru Padmasambhava was not only a teacher of the Mahayana Buddhist tradition, but also a teacher of Vajrayana. Vajrayana is superior for the knowledge of the energy level. For that reason he thought maybe Guru Padmasambhava could transform and give Vajrayana teaching.

When Guru Padmasambhava arrived in Tibet there were many problems. Guru Padmasambhava was not only a scholar, but a very powerful realized being. He subdued all the negativities of the Bon tradition. For that reason he succeeded to teach all over Tibet, and so until today the Buddhist tradition we have in Tibet is the Vajrayana tradition. Even though there are different kinds of schools and traditions in Tibet, the source of the all the traditions is Guru Padmasambhava. Guru Padmasambhava taught this *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, which is called the practice of Shitro. This is not the only Shitro that is diffused in the Western world, there are many kinds of Shitros in

Tibet, but of course the most important version is the one of Guru Padmasambhava.

Shitro

What does Shitro mean? First you should understand the title of this teaching. Shi means peaceful manifestation, tro means wrathful manifestation. Why are there these wrathful and peaceful manifestations? That represents the condition of the individual. Everybody has that condition. When we say peaceful we mean representing the mental condition more and also it represents the real nature of the mind. All wrathful manifestations represent the function of our senses, for example, the five senses including mind. For example we have five senses, or organs of senses, then objects of senses and their function. When we see, for example, a form, nice and different colors, etc., or we hear with our ears or smell with our nose, all these are functions. Functions are movement and movement manifests wrathful forms. So peaceful is something like the real nature or calm state. For that reason, the practice of Shitro it is based in these two states, the calm state and wrathful manifestations.

How can we manifest and understand that we have that condition? For example, if I ask you what mind is, then you think what is mind, but this is mind, you are thinking. You are thinking what is mind, and this thinking is mind. We cannot find anything, we find emptiness, nothing, but there is some movement, we are judging and thinking, and this is called mind. When you are observing and thoughts arise, I ask you, where is thought, and then you search for thought and the thought disappears immediately. You cannot not find where this thought is anywhere, this is emptiness, which represents then calm state. If you are being in emptiness then you are in a calm state, but you are not being in a calm state for a long time because another thought arises immediately. So you see, there is movement also, but when you are going to search and try to find the thought, it disappears and there is emptiness. So we can understand and have that kind of condition.

For that condition, for realizing and using it in the practice, we have the practice of Shitro. In all these kinds of practices of Shitro, there are two different ways of doing visualization. For example, the manifestations of the peaceful forms we do in the center of our body. We do these visualizations at the center of our body because we have a dimension of our physical body. When we say the essence

of the dimension, it is always in the center, so when we say our heart that means the center of our physical body.

So when we ask where our mind is, for example, many people say the mind is in the head, but the mind is not in the head. The mind is in the center because it represents the potentiality of the individual. Mind is related to its real nature, the nature of mind, and that is what governs this dimension. We think, in general, that the mind is in the head because when we do the visualization of the wrathful manifestation, we do that in the head, not in the center of the body. So our potentiality, our real nature, is represented by two different aspects, but two different things do not exist.

Even our nature, which is called nature of the mind or our potentiality, even if it is in the center, all our functions or organs are in the head. Two eyes are in the head, and if we close the two eyes in the head we cannot see anything; the mind cannot not see if there are no organs of senses. The two ears are on the head, and if there are no ears we cannot hear anything, and the nose is on the head, so that everything that receives the information of the objects of the senses we have on the head. In general in the teaching of Vajrayana and also in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, they explain that we have our consciousness, consciousness is that mind which is judging and thinking, etc. But we are also saying the five consciousnesses of the senses and that means that the function of the senses is called consciousness.

It does not mean that the consciousnesses of the senses have the capacity of judging and thinking. They have only the function of seeing and hearing and when they have served that function, they immediately convey that to the mind. Very similar on the head, we have the office of the mind for example. We are not calling this the office, but very similar, if there is not this function of senses the mind cannot do anything. So the functions of the senses are not thinking or judging, they do not have that potentiality. So in the real sense, there is no difference between that consciousness and mind. The manifestation aspect is different. For that reason, also with our real nature or potentiality, something like a primordial state is manifesting, some manifestation of an enlightened being or form or figure, etc. Just that manifestation manifests the wrathful form in the head because it represents movement. So this is called the teaching of Shitro.

Three Kinds of Logic

This is used particularly for dead people and for that reason it is called *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. But then why do we use this for the dead people, this book and knowledge? We must understand, first of all, what we are thinking and how we can understand what is after death, for example. We use logic for everything that we decide. We study everything through logic and we say that this is established logically, and therefore we can accept and believe. How can we establish what happens after death, or for example if someone asks what happens after death, we have not much idea. There are many scholars studying and many

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dom.” If, listening to the instructions, the deceased follows the light of wisdom, he or she will merge with Vairocana. This does not mean that the person will merge with a statue or a painting, or with another being which is different from himself, but with aspects of himself that manifest outside. Realizing that whatever vision we see outside, is in reality ourselves, we come back to the original ground of being which has always being enlightened before the dualistic vision of subject and object emerged from it. We overcome the sense of duality of us being the observer and the world the observed. We realize that everything that appears, all the universe is in reality our own self.

If we were to realize this in life we would know that, as Tilopa, a famous Indian *siddha*, said: “Vision is not a problem. Clinging to the vision in dualistic terms is the problem.” So it doesn’t

matter whether we have good or bad visions, that is fine. But if we cling to them, it means that we see something different from ourselves, and this is illusion.

On the sixth day of the intermediate of reality the wisdom of the five Dhyani Buddhas manifests simultaneously from the hearts of the Rigdzin or awareness holders, together with the faint light of the animal realms. Thus each day, when a different peaceful deity appears we have the possibility to attain liberation. If this does not occur, the same deities will manifest to us in wrathful forms, more difficult to recognize as our own self-manifestations if we have not been familiar with them during our lifetime. These wrathful deities inspire fear. Compared to their huge bodies, we are like small insects in front of their feet. If that deity moves a toe we will be squashed like a small ant. But the ‘Tibetan Book of the Dead’ gives instructions to the dead person – “Now, such and such wrathful de-

ity, which is such and such color, with such and such face, holding such and such implements, etc., will manifest to you. Don’t be afraid! That deity is issuing from your own brain. Again you have a possibility to recognize this. Again you have a possibility to rejoin with your original ground of being”.

Thus, if we have had introduction to and are familiar with those deities during our life, the ‘Tibetan Book of the Dead’ can be an important tool to re-awaken the recognition in the deceased. If we did not develop such familiarity during our life, recognition becomes difficult.

Intermediate State of Rebirth

When the intermediate state of reality ends we enter the intermediate state of rebirth, which means that we are on the path to take another body. During that time, the imprints of our past actions all come back to influence us, like clouds amassing in the

sky. Now, it is more difficult to have recognition of our real nature. Sometimes we may have the vision of a crowd of angry people that chase us from behind with war cries trying to catch and kill us, like in a war and when, in fear, we run away, we enter darkness, or a hurricane, snow blizzard, or hail. Wanting to escape from this suffering the desire for another body and another existence grows.

At this point there are many instructions in the ‘Tibetan Book of the Dead’ that can help the person first of all not to take rebirth and then if he has to, to choose a good one. In fact at that point, while running away from various sufferings the deceased has visions of his future parents in sexual intercourse and wants to enter into the midst of their union. If he does, he is reborn. He may be reborn as a human, but if they were two dogs having sexual relations he may wake up as a small dog, perhaps as a pet in a nice

house or as a dog abandoned on a street in India.

Moreover, the ‘Tibetan Book of the Dead’ instructs the deceased on the signs that he or she should follow or not. These are signs that indicate the realm or the continent in this world where he may be born. These instructions will help the deceased to find rebirth in a favorable place where he can continue the spiritual practice he started in the previous life.

The main crucial message of the ‘Tibetan Book of the Dead’ is connected to recognizing the vision you have as your own self and that is why this teaching is very much connected to Dzogchen and in particular to *thogyal* practice. Thus the ‘Tibetan Book of the Dead’ it is not just a fabulous book to read, but a reminder of the need to apply and practice the teachings in life so that one will be prepared to face the moment of death and the after death. ©



The inscription reads: 'On the seventh day from the pure land of Khechara, the Vidyadhara deities come to meet [the deceased]. From the Vidyadharas appear the five consorts and around them, a numberless assembly of dakinis appears: those from the cemeteries, those of the four families, those of the three places, those of the twenty-four sacred places, along with male and female warriors, protectors and guardians.' Each Vidyadhara is identified by an inscription: rNam par smin pa'i rig 'dzin, Sa la gnas pa'i rig 'dzin, Tshe la dbang ba'i rig 'dzin, Phyag rgya chen po'i rig 'dzin, Lhun gyis grub pa'i rig 'dzin. A five-coloured light of co-emergent pristine cognition (Lhan cig skyes pa'i ye shes) emanates from the heart of each Vidyadhara and reaches the heart of the deceased, together with the green dull light of the animal realm (dud 'gro'i 'od ljang-khu).

Photo: K. D. Angdus

practitioners studying different systems and traditions, studying, following and considering that after death must be somehow like that. People who are studying philosophy are trying to understand something logically, but this is not so easy.

We have three kinds of logic when we are studying. First there is direct logic. Direct logic is very easy. First I am showing you this. So you are seeing what is this, there is a box, and we can all see this is a box. If I say this is a small box you cannot ask why, because you see it and that is the logic. So everything we see and believe, we establish with our logic. In our country, for example, we have rules and we establish something when a group of people agrees. You see how many politicians and parties we have in each country. There are so many political parties because people cannot agree with each other, some are thinking and seeing and then they think they belong to this or that party. Then they establish something and they believe and apply in that way. So it is very easy to say what direct logic is.

We cannot establish everything with direct logic. Indirect logic means we cannot see or touch something concrete. We are seeing and thinking and judging and there is a kind of reason, and then we establish. For example, someone says that on the top of this mountain there is fire. If they cannot see the fire they cannot say yes there is fire, so how can they understand? In this case we ask why. Then we say there is smoke, for example. We already know that where there is smoke, there is fire. If we see there are seagulls flying, we can say there is water somewhere, there is the ocean, sea or river, etc. Why? Because we see this bird is flying. This is indirect logic and there are so many things we establish through indirect logic.

For example, in philosophy, Chandrakirti, a very famous student of Nargajuna of Mahayana, discussed with some people when they did not accept what happens after death, and he tried to explain with indirect logic. He says everything has its continuation, if we observe our breathing. After we inhale we exhale and after we exhale we inhale. If we

are not inhaling or exhaling there is no life. So that is giving an example of how we continue everything; it is a consequence or continuation. But this is fully indirect logic, and we cannot not establish with only this. So it is not so easy to say after death what happens and what exists.

Then there are people who follow teachers and teachings and those teachers believe there are enlightened beings, people who have enlightenment who are omniscient and they know everything. That is another logic. I believe in Buddha, for example, and therefore I believe that what Buddha said is correct. That logic is useful for other people following Buddha. If I am discussing with other people, like Moslems for example, saying Buddha said this, there is no value for them. If I want to discuss with Islamic people, then I must find some words from the Koran. They believe that. If I say in your book they are saying this or that, then they accept and that is logic. So in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (in Tib language)?, Guru Padmasambhava explained and we consider him an enlightened being. It does not mean that Guru Padmasambhava invented this. Guru Padmasambhava followed many ancient teachings, which were different kinds of tantras. In many tantras the state after death is explained. This is what we find in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*.

The Bardo

So what is most important here is what we call the intermediate state or the bardo. If we do not understand what the bardo is then we cannot understand the function of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. In general in the teaching of Buddha, there is something called cause and effect and everything is transmigration and produced that way. So this is related to our life. In general the bardo means between dimensions of time. There exist three or four kinds of bardos. So for example, in our life, where we are now, called cheshyi bardo, che means birth and shyi means death, from the birth to the death, where we are living in our human dimension. If we are like cats or dogs or some other beings it is different. When we are speaking human being then we have birth

and death. It is what we are doing in the lifetime, for example, we are studying, working and following teachings, doing practice, etc., there are different aspects. So what we learn in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* that is very important is the chyetse bardo because if we believe that after death there exists some bardo, some continuation, then we must understand and in our lifetime we do our best.

Maybe many of you read this *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, where it is saying that when we are in the state of bardo there are the wrathful and peaceful manifestations. Many Westerners ask me how can we have manifestations of wrathful and peaceful because we have no oriental culture or this kind of knowledge. Of course manifestations, how they are explained in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, just like Buddha, Sambogakaya manifestations, Buddha Shakyamuni and the Five Dhyani Buddhas, etc., those forms are just like the very ancient times in India, like princes and princesses, etc, and also wrathful manifestations, terrible manifestations. In Western art and knowledge this does not exist. So people wonder how we can have this kind [of manifestation]. But in the real sense, it is not that way because in a lifetime we need to receive that kind of teaching, and if we are interested in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, this is a teaching of Guru Padmasambhava, and therefore there is the teaching and transmission. We need to receive that teaching in a lifetime, the teacher transmits and empowers that; now we know how we do that visualization and we are using that method. Maybe in a lifetime we sometimes did that practice and even if we did not do it for a long time, at least we had a little experience in a lifetime. Then when we are dying, at that moment, now we have these kinds of visions, because we received that transmission, that empowerment, and now that represents our potentiality and our real nature.

Mother and Son Wisdom

In a lifetime we are living in our physical body, so even if we have that potentiality and we did that visualization, we

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The assembly of the fifty-eight wrathful deities with their entourage.

Photo: K. D. Angdus

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do not see it. We have obstacles of our physical body when we are dying; the physical body goes in the cemetery and our consciousness goes in the *bardo*. At that moment, our potentiality, everything, is naked and there is no condition of the physical body or the organs of senses. In this moment with the famous words of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, we have the mother and son wisdoms meeting together. We have wisdom in our real nature, everybody has that wisdom in their nature. Even if we have that, we do not know and we are ignorant. But when we receive that teaching of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, there is the introduction and when the teacher introduces then you notice your condition and there is that potentiality. The teacher empowers with mantra, etc., at that moment. When we are dying that is son wisdom, the experience we had in a lifetime is son wisdom. Mother wisdom is beyond our physical body and beyond our organs of senses, and then the potentiality of our real nature is naked in that moment.

Of course in that moment, the son wisdom recognizes mother wisdom. That is the moment when we can have that realization and that is why it is very important in a lifetime we need to have the experience of the teaching. Otherwise there is no reason why we have the visual manifestations of the peaceful and wrathful in the *bardo*. It is not related to culture, some people say, “Oh, we have no Eastern culture so how can we have those manifestations, this is not our culture. If this is not cultural, then why do all the forms look like the princes and princesses of the ancient Indian style?” They look this way because this is how they manifest the transmission from emptiness to manifestation. In the real nature of the individual, which in Tibetan is called *kadag*, *kadag* means since the beginning pure emptiness, not concrete or visible, with no color or form, everybody has this state of emptiness as our real nature, but this is not only a symbol of emptiness. Even emptiness it has infinite potentiality. If there is not this potentiality, emptiness has no value.

How does that potentiality manifest? When there is a secondary cause then it can manifest. All these kinds of manifestations from the emptiness need a secondary cause. From the secondary cause then can be also like the figure of the prince and princess or also some terrible, wrathful being. We don’t know how the sentient beings are in the universe. We know only human beings and some animals. We imagine in the universe some beings are just like that. You see for an example, in a film, we have very nice film of *Star Trek* and they travel everywhere in the universe. Sometimes they meet someone and their face is a little different. But they always speak English. This is our limitation. We do not know how the universe is, but many people think there can be many beings in the universe that they do not know, that they do not see, so how can they believe. Some people feel they never saw this so they don’t believe.

When we study logic in the Buddhist philosophy, there is a very famous scholar called Sakyapandita and in his teaching he says if you cannot see something, this is not logical and it does not exist. Of course with time and space we cannot see many things, like for example, what is after this world that we cannot see. We cannot negate that it does not exist and in the same way we cannot negate what in the past and future time we cannot see. So this is not logic, we can see, for example, in the nice weather in the nighttime, how many stars exist in the universe. We

know very well that like most stars, like solar systems, how many sentient beings exist. How can we believe they are just like human beings? If you want to know a little of this you should learn a little Vajrayana teaching because the Vajrayana teachings are very open since many teachings of Vajrayana are introduced in the human dimension from different dimensions from outside.

The Yamas

You see in the manifestation of deities how many different forms exist, and not only human forms. Some are just like a human forms, but with so many arms and legs and something like some animals in the water. These kinds of sentient beings exist in the universe, also higher level beings exist, not all are lower level or ignorant. An example of one manifestation in Vajrayana is very important. It is called Yamantaka. Maybe sometimes you can see some pictures in the Vajrayana style. In the picture the head looks like the head of the bull and also in the explanation it says the head of a bull. It has many arms and legs, etc., but it is not really the head of a bull, it is the sentient being which is called the class of Yama. But we do not know what Yama is. If I am explaining this head is the head of Yama, no one can understand what this is. The head of Yama is similar to the head of a bull and that is why we say the head of the bull. But of course the body, the arms and legs are not a bull. There are some very high level Yama in the sentient beings of the Yama. They had contact with the dimension of the real enlightened beings state, which is called Dharmakaya. It means the real nature of all phenomena, which is emptiness and has no form, becomes the figure of Yama as the secondary cause for communicating. Now in front of that being there is the Yama. Dharmakaya can manifest just like this being which is like the Yama. Now the Dharmakaya has the possibility to transmit to that Yama, otherwise the Yama cannot see or hear and the Dharmakaya has nothing to do. So this is called Yamantaka, that figure of Yama.

In the real sense that is the manifestation of the enlightened being. It does not mean that enlightened beings are transforming every day in a different way just like in the theater, it does not exist in that way. Just like in a mirror, for example, the mirror has infinite potentiality for manifesting reflections that is just like in the Dharmakaya, now in front of the mirror there is that being and in front of the mirror it manifests. That reflection is coming from the Dharmakaya and transmitting to that being in front.

All Vajrayana teachings developed that way from different dimensions and are introduced in our human dimension by enlightened beings called Mahasiddhas. So it is very important, in the *bardo*, in this *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, that there are many manifestations. Manifestations represent our consciousness and our different functions of senses, and our five senses, and everything is manifesting in personified forms. When ordinary people know this there is that kind of realization. It is very important in a lifetime in the *bardo* of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. In our lifetime we have day or night and in the nighttime we are falling asleep. Sleeping and dreaming, when we are waking up is very similar to dying and being in a state of *bardo* and then rebirth in some different kinds of dimensions. We should learn how the experience or knowledge of the *bardo* is when we are sleeping.

Signs of Death

There is the cheshi something bardo, which is the *bardo* at the moment of death, and the moment of death means we already have the signs of death, there is no possibly we can be saved or we can liberate from that. If you read the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* there are many explanations and one is the explanation of the signs of death. Practitioners are checking very often. If you have signs of death and you are checking, maybe your death is not in so very long a time. In this case then you should prepare for dying. But if there are only one or two signs that correspond, you must not think it is dangerous. Some of the explanations of the signs are explained with dreams, for example. You are dreaming you are in a place that is full of red flowers. It says this can also be a sign of death. For example, I have always this dream and I am not dying, so this does not correspond always to everything it is saying in the book, so you don’t worry. Some people are reading these books and then they are worried. Some people are saying, for example, if you are dreaming of going down to lower parts or you are naked and going down, it is a sign of death. Sometimes you can have this kind of dream, but you could not consider that is fully a sign of death. At least four or five signs must correspond and then it means something. In this case you need to know how it is explained and you need to check.

For example, if you are going out in the morning in the sunshine and you are looking at your shadow, not mid-day but a little early morning, when the sunshine is very clear and you look at your shadow, a kind of bubble should manifest in the head and if you do not have this it says it is a sign of death. Also there is a checking, *tzitsu*, which means you are checking in the full moon. In the nighttime sometimes there is a nice, very clear moon, and then you go outside and go to some comfortable place and you get up and look at your shadow. In early evening you can see the shadow very well, so you look at your shadow for five or ten minutes and then you look in space, if you look in space for a while and in empty space if your shadow manifests with no head, that is a sign of death. This sign is a little more important. Sometimes we are missing our arms or legs, etc., sometimes the physical body is perfect and then there is no problem. Form of light, in Tibetan. *Tse zhuk*. *Tse* means form and *zhuk* means light, and light is then manifesting in space. There are many of these kinds of signs.

You can check this way and if you have these kinds of problems, then there is something called *chilup*. *Chilup* means to save from death. There are many ways, like doing practice, like saving animals, etc. Sometimes when you are doing these things you can overcome death. But if there are many signs combined together, it is not so easy to be saved. There are signs that say still you can live three weeks, one month, two months, three months, etc. In this case you should prepare well.

Phowa

And then when you are really near death and you have an illness, at that moment your elements are slowly diminishing their functions and dissolving inwardly, also the function of senses are slowly dissolving inwardly, and in this moment you can have a very strong feeling, and in a not so very easy way. Some people have the practice of *phowa*, also in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* there is *phowa*. *Phowa* means we are transferring our consciousness in a pure dimension. When you are learning this in a lifetime it is



Wall paintings from Lamayuru Gonpa in Ladakh, India
Courtesy of Elio Guarisco

First image of *srid pa bar do*. The inscriptions read: 'Many particular appearances arise: fierce winds, karmic flesh-eaters and cannibals brandishing many weapons, being followed by wild beast from the back, a very thick darkness in the front, hail storms, mountains collapsing, floods, blizzards, fire spreading, great winds, falling from a white, a black and a red mountain.'

Photo: Kaya Dorjay Angdus

not so very difficult and if you know visualizations and you received the precise transmission and you do practice, in seven days you can obtain signs. But if you are not doing visualizations in the perfect way, there is no guarantee that in seven days you will succeed.

I remember when I was in college, once we received these kinds of practices and teachings from our teacher, and all the students were given permission to train *phowa* for seven days. At that time I was eleven years old and I did not know the visualization very precisely, I did know the visualization a little, I was too young, just a small boy, and I always enjoyed when people shouted *hic* or *phat*, and I was always shouting and replying to them. In our college there were many rooms around and everyone inside. Then everywhere they were shouting *phat*, etc., and I replied to everybody instead of doing the visualization and at the end of seven days when we checked the signs, most people had signs. We needed to do the visualization of the central channel, and there is a kind of very hard herb we put on the top of the head to see if it would remain, and most people succeeded to have this. I did not. My teacher was very angry with me at that time. He told me I must do this practice and that for me it was very important. The next time I succeeded, even before the end of seven days.

Bardo of Death and Bardo of Dharmata

It is not so very difficult when we are comfortable in our room doing a visualization, but the object is that when we are dying we transfer our consciousness. When we are dying we are in the *bardo* at the moment of death. This is not so easy at all. We can have strong experiences of each of the elements or senses dissolving inwardly. Of course some people trained very well so they can succeed, but it is not easy. In any case this is called the *bardo* of the moment of death. This is just like in the evening when we are falling asleep, you see slowly, slowly, thinking and then slowly you are falling asleep. In that moment the function of all of our senses are dissolving inwardly. When we are falling asleep we cannot see or hear. This is called falling asleep in the ordinary way and in the *bardo of death* we are dying in that moment. Then it seems dark and there is no of mind or function or senses because all functions of senses dissolved inwardly and what is associated with consciousness and the mind is transferred. The body is a dead body now and there is nothing. Just like falling asleep we can easily immediately have dream, or sometimes it takes a long time to have a dream.

Also when we are dying for example, in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, it is necessary to be in the state of the *bardo of the dharmata* for three says, and the *bardo of dharmata* means the nature of the mind. You remember the mind is judging and thinking, the nature of mind is the source of this manifestation, but it is not the nature of mind that is judging and thinking. This is very important. You need to distinguish what mind and what nature of mind is. In this case, then you need to learn with the example of the mirror; it is a very good example. In the mirror there is good and bad and everything, the mirror does not need any program, any kinds of objects in front of mirror manifest immediately. Then we say the mirror has infinite potentiality to manifest.

But how can we understand this potentiality of mirror? We cannot see or touch this potentiality but we can understand the mirror has this potentiality because we can see the reflections. Reflection is not potentiality of mirror,

it is something manifesting from the potentiality of the mirror, just like in our minds. Mind is judging and thinking, just like reflection. But the nature of the mind is the source that we have this potentiality from. So we need to distinguish that. Mind does not have this function, mind has died, or not really died but has dissolved in its origin. If in front of the mirror, there is nothing. Everything is not manifesting in the mirror, but it does not mean the mirror does not have that potentiality. In our real nature in that moment it is remaining that way. For that reason we say after someone has been dead for three days, at least, there is no function of mind. Even the function of the nature of mind does not exist its nature is naked, for that reason when we are recognizing the meeting of the son and mother wisdom then we can have realization.

The Moment of Natural Light

In the Dzogchen Teaching, the teaching I am giving, that moment is called the natural light; the moment of the natural light. Just when we are falling asleep, before any dreams arise, there is this moment of the natural light. It is also very difficult to limit time. In the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* or *Shitro* it says it takes more or less three days, like when we are falling asleep we can say that a half an hour after falling asleep dreams start, for example. But we cannot limit when we have that dream. Sometimes it is in a very short time we have a dream.

I had this experience once when I was teaching at the University of Naples. When I was giving exams, I would feel very tired and was returning to Rome on the train and sometimes I would fall asleep. I was falling asleep and then I woke up. But once I fell asleep for a short time, woke up and I had a long dream. I fell asleep for a very short time. I remembered immediately what I dreamed, but it seemed a long time if we are thinking everything is coordinated, for example. That is the example of the *bardo of the dharmata* and it is very difficult too limit. When we are falling asleep after a little while we dream. In the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* this is called the *bardo of existence*. The *bardo of existence* means we have already passed the *bardo of the dharmata*.

People who have no knowledge or understanding of the teachings, of course they do not notice anything about this *bardo of the dharmata*. Even if there are sounds and lights, they are still losing that presence; that is all. Then we are in the state of existence and this means now our mind wakes up, you remember the mind is dissolved into nature of mind and now there are secondary causes and now it manifests. With secondary causes our functions of senses wakes up. Now these functions of senses are not dependent on organs. In the daily life we are completely dependent of organs. If we close our two eyes we cannot see anything. Even we have that function called consciousness of the senses, but without the organs we could not have that function because we are living in the physical body and in the *dharmata* we are no longer in the physical body. We are already free from that. For that reason in the *bardo of existence* when that mind wakes up is associated with the function of senses. How can we understand that?

Karmic Dreams and Dreams of Clarity

We can learn with our dreams, when we dream in the nighttime. You have two kinds of dreams. One is called a karmic dream, dreams related with tensions; if we have tensions in our lifetime we always repeat this kind

of dream. For example when I was in Tibet, before I left, we had many problems in that period because there was a revolution and we were escaping, and also we feel afraid of the Chinese soldiers day and night – if we were meeting and they arrived we had so many problems. So it touched in my condition deeply. For that reason still today when I have a karmic dream, I still dream this kind of dream. I do not have problem with Chinese soldiers today. I went many times with Chinese soldiers and we had dealings with Chinese soldiers and their chiefs, there was no problem. But in my dream it is different and always I feel afraid. This kind of dream is called karmic dream connected with our tensions. But then when we practice more and more and have more knowledge of the dream, etc., then the dreams of clarity develop more and more. How are we having that dream of clarity? It means then our mind is associated with function of senses and not dependent of physical level. For that reason it has much more capacity and clarity.

For example, in the lifetime we read some books explaining some interesting things. If we have a dream we are reading this book or thinking of the arguments of these books, in the dream we can understand easily. Also in the lifetime if we have complicated situations, in a dream of clarity it becomes very clear and we can easily resolve them. This is called the dream of clarity and it is very important; it becomes important in the *bardo of existence* and then we can understand. We are being in the state of the *bardo*. The state of the *bardo* is not that we are accumulating good or bad karma or the consequence of producing good or bad karma, for that reason it is called the intermediate state, for everybody, for every sentient being, not only human beings. It is just like we being in a moment of the dream. In the dream in the moment we are thinking that this is this and that is that and we believe, but when we wake up we understand it is unreal. Even if it is unreal, then it is something related to our potentiality of karma and most people who are not practitioners, etc., follow their karma.

Bardo of Shitro

For that reason in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* it says then you can have pure or impure vision. Of course you can have pure vision if you are a practitioner and you have received the transmission, etc, you have that kind of method. There are visions, there are presentations, like these kinds of visions, these kinds of lights, etc. Some people, some practitioners, when they are dying, we have the introduction of *bardo ngntro*?. We read this book telling them they will see this and they should see this kind of light, follow this light, etc., and if they are not practitioners they mostly follow their potentiality of karma. In this book there is also the introduction that you should follow this light or not follow this kind of light or this kind of path, etc., and then we are introducing. But for people who have no experience of the teachings in that moment, it is very difficult that they can listen and believe that. So for that reason the teaching of the *bardo of shitro* is very important. Then there is something to do, otherwise it is only something nice for reading or saying that Tibetans believe this way. But then it does not help very much. Ok now we are finished. I hope you understood something. ✽

Transcribed and edited by Naomi Zeitz

Tashigar Sur

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>> continued from page 1
quizzing each other, and making adjustments. From the perspective of an outsider, Vajra Dance is a craze on this Gar; these dancers are fantastic and focused. I once thought to do some breathing practice in the Gonpa as they danced. I woke up when they finished. Everyone who wasn't dancing ended up on the floor, like me, in a very deep and peaceful sleep.

Later in the day, Yantra Yoga Instructor, Carolina, arrives with a wheelbarrow full of young trees. Carolina has organized a team of volunteers who plant them, finding fallen branches to construct "horse protections" so that the horses, when chased by the dogs, will not trample new growth. People who are not busy planting trees play soccer with the children in the field by the

attachment. The root of attachment, he explained, was giving too much importance to relative conditions. We must govern our daily life with real knowledge, being a teacher of ourselves, re-educating our thoughts so that our mind obeys our practice. We keep practicing until we no longer march to the rhythm of "I like, I don't like, I like, I don't like." May all beings be able to free themselves from this ceaseless march!

In both retreats Rinpoche emphasized the importance of Guruyoga. He prioritized, for new students and old, the necessity of first practicing Guruyoga, then being present, and after that concentrating on the dream practice of the night. He also encouraged practitioners to do the daily tun. He said that doing a few mantras with presence was better than



Introduction to the children's performance in the Gonpa.

Photo: M. Ferrada Guterrez



Children's performance.

Photo: M. Ferrada Guterrez

Gonpa. One young player, Lulu, is wearing a white dress. She dives for the ball, running beside her brother Atilla, kicking it in the goal with all of her might. "Matalo!" screams a mother from Peru; then she blushes.

The best part of the afternoon arrives finally: the Master comes to sing Tibetan songs with us. We wait expectantly for the one very special song where Rinpoche raps. He bobs his head up and down with intensity as the words stream from his mouth. Everyone smiles. Suddenly, students clear the tables and break into spontaneous Tibetan dances. Adriana leads us, thankfully. I think the Master is happy. He stays and speaks to us in Italian for over an hour before leaving at 10:30 pm. I don't know what he says but it sounds nice. I stay because it feels good there. Somebody tells me afterward that he encouraged everyone to keep practicing and collaborating, even after he is gone. I feel a little sad.

Looking back on two wonderful retreats with Rinpoche this summer in Argentina, one reflects upon what great fortune we have to know this teacher and to receive his detailed instruction. In the first retreat on the topic of Zhenpa Zhitral from the Sakyapa tradition, Rinpoche explored the theme of freeing oneself from

doing 100 mantras in a distracted manner.

The second retreat, that of Dorje Drolod, was the first ever. This terma teaching from Adzom Drugpa arrives in our dimension to help sentient beings living in the Kaliyuga, a time when samsara worsens; beings are sad; they do not apply the teachings correctly, and samayas are broken left and right as sickness and provocations abound. The action of enlightened beings works in a more perfect way during this time; so Dorje Drolod practice is precious.

Rinpoche explained that just because people might not be able to see provocations, that does not mean that they do not exist.

If practitioners accidentally provoke a being of the eight classes, many problems can occur for them and their family line. Tibetan doctors, when diagnosing, first check to see if a provocation is at the root of the illness. If it is, they treat this primary cause, and then utilize therapies for the secondary cause. Tumors, Cancers, AIDS, and paralysis are all examples of diseases caused by provocations. Doing Dorje Drolod practice connects practitioners with the guardians who control the eight classes, and the fire of Dorje Drolod burns demons and negativity so that they can never bother practitioners ever again. Rinpoche does these practices to help us. Now, after we received



Vajra Dance Demonstration in Tanti.

Photo: M. Ferrada Guterrez



Yantra Yoga Demonstration in Tanti.

Photo: M. Ferrada Guterrez

the wang and precise explanations, we can practice in a qualified way.

On the last day of the retreat it poured buckets of rain. During the naggon the sound of thunder rattled the earth beneath the Gonpa as if the protectors themselves were responding to the Ganapuja. The room, filled with

a sense of reverence, looked out the window when it was over. At that very moment, the sun shined through the clouds to conclude an amazing retreat. ©



Beautiful river at Tashigar South.

Photo: M. Ferrada Guterrez



Idyllic scene common to Tashigar South.

Photo: M. Ferrada Guterrez

Children, First

Griselda Gálmez
Translation: Ana García

For some years and triggered by the repetitive suggestions of our Master as to have spaces and special attention to children, Tashigar South is becoming a paradise for them. A flock of boys and girls in constant movement like seagulls have a huge space for games, chats, plans and even trade initiatives in our Gar.

I think the children’s importance started because they have always been the holders of gifts: for the Master, Rosa, instructors and all those who have collaborated during retreats. Before we used to choose one to give a bouquet of flowers to the Master, now they all want to take it, and of course, those who are bolder take the advantage to also give him a kiss. Then they go back happily to their places, with their task fulfilled and the happiness of having received a smile and some words from Rinpoche.

In 2009, for the opening of the new Gonpa, we organized a play called “The Balloon Seller” with all the children. At that time most of them were too young to memorize a speech; that was done by the older ones but they could all participated and were the most charming balloons we had ever seen. I remember that the same year, one of the children had the idea of making and selling scented water: he would use plants or flowers of the place. As we all used to buy a bottle, the idea spread among all, and the competition opened another branch. As I said before, also trade initiatives.



Children’s Performance for the Community.

Photo: M. Ferrada Guterrez

But in this period in 2012, since our Master arrived on January 2nd up to now, our flock of children has flourished as never before.

To start with, during the last year, a special ‘amusement park’ was built in the magic place, green and shaded by really high pine trees, opposite the external Mandala. If someone wants to find them, he will surely find them there, while their parents listen to the Master or practice. And it is there where they started to rehearse a new play. The first intention was to open the games place with the play, but a very stubborn and nearly fierce storm suggested another place to the artists: the play was finally presented at the Gonpa after the

Ganapuja finishing the second retreat.

Once again, all the children participated (and they were many more than the previous time) but this time they played a free version of the tale of the butcher and the yogi that is the SMS Base for children, a tale taken from “The Words of the Perfect Master” by Patrul Rinpoche. A team of adults built a set, another team of young adults performed the music and the children played their roles; again the butcher had to change sex because it was performed by a beautiful girl, all dressed in red. The version respected the original book, but with certain situations that made reference to the present (the cell phone that the butcher had, for example). The text was this time reproduced

in the voices of the young actors and actresses who two years ago wouldn’t have been able to memorize such long speeches and, on the other hand, the gestures went even beyond the original text and the audience astonished (even more the parents, of course) enjoyed and laughed to death with the death of the yogi that the young actor played with a sense of humour we all know he has. And this time all the children participated since even the youngest or the ones that arrived at the last minute find a place in the flock of sheep threatened by the greedy butcher. And again, it was impossible to find lovelier sheep.

The successive Gakyils of Tashigar South have been building a physical, cultural and learning place for children that have the fortune to arrive here. A place of games, free of obligations, where the only important thing is to participate. A place where noone says “this one yes but this one no”, as we were told when we were younger. The intention is not to show off, feed egos, and be as other want us or need us to be. All our boys and girls have the same value, the one of their primordial condition, and there is no possible choice. I want to think that none of us would dare to create an obstacle for them in their future (and therefore ours) leaving someone out of the shared game that has always been the art and that goes along so well with Rinpoche’s Teachings.

Our Community is full of artists, and this, that was so clearly manifested in the celebration of the 30 years of Merigar, springs, naturally, in the activities that we create for children.

Also in the ones that we organize for grown-ups, since the young are included. This time I am referring to the evening of

February 19th. That evening, after many preparations, the project of presenting Tashigar South to the neighbors of Tanti, (a small and full of beautiful town among the hills and near a river that is 15 minutes away from Tashigar by car) came into being.

Of course the neighbors of Tanti already know us, as people and mainly as customers of their shops. The authorities attended the opening of the Gonpa. But this time an event was organized in a popular club and there we performed The Dance of Six Spaces of Samantabhadra, Yantra Yoga, South American songs and Tibetan dances... and again the children.

The children made an impeccable demonstration of Kumar Kumari, then sang the chorus of a popular song and finally they joined the Tibetan dance that closed the event.

If there is something that speaks well of our Community it is these boys and girls. Natural, fresh, relaxed, thoroughly enjoying the activities and the meetings with others, having fun, fortunate to receive the illuminated presence of our Master and the special consideration of us all.

Yes, I do believe that Tashigar South has become a kind of Paradise for them. And mainly I feel that their happiness has become, for us, a paradise. ©

FREEING THE HEART AND MIND

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE BUDDHIST PATH
His Holiness Sakya Trizin
ISBN 9780861716388, 184 pages, \$15.95
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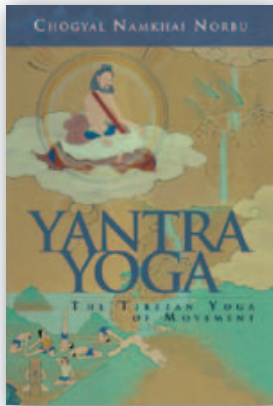
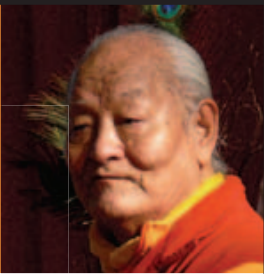


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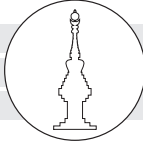
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In the last few weeks, Merigar was covered in a thick blanket of snow and for several days it was difficult to reach the various buildings. Now that the snow is melting, the roads are clear and it is possible to reach Merigar again. The scenery is particularly beautiful and spectacular, warmed by an early spring sun.

We have recently celebrated Losar, the Tibetan New Year, and for the year of the Water Dragon we send all our warmest wishes for a serene, positive, and energetic year to all the Community. At the moment we are taking advantage of the wonderful sunny weather and are putting up the new prayer flags around the Gonpa.

The past weeks also brought us a powerful reminder of impermanence when our dear Vajra brother Franco Branca left us. His presence will be greatly missed, and we will always remember him as a gentle, intelligent, and generous being.

Circumstances continue to change.

In this article you will find some information about the work and projects that are going ahead at Merigar.

The new parking area that was created a few months ago close to the entrance to Merigar is currently in use.



Putting up lungta outside the Gonpa.

The work that has been going on through the winter to amplify the area for books at the Capannone is almost finished and in a few weeks the Mandala Hall will once again be in use for Vajra Dance, Yantra Yoga and group practice. The book area has been permanently separated from the Mandala Hall creating a reading room on one side and the offices of the Shang Shung Institute on the other. At the moment we are finishing the fittings for the books in the upper part as well as the decoration of the reading room.

In April-May work will finally start on the long awaited building that will house cremated ashes. The foundation will be laid and at the same time we will be looking for funds to go ahead with the project.



Photo: L. Gräf

We are also looking for funds to renovate the dark retreat cabins in the little wood below the Gonpa.

The revised statute of Merigar West has been sent out to the European and Italian Lings so that the membership situation at all the Lings and the amounts that the Lings retain of the membership quota will be aligned. This is being done in order to help the Lings develop their activities. It is a long painstaking job but very important from a legal and financial point of view.

This year, when members renew their membership to the Dzogchen

Community, they will also be able to decide if they wish to be members of the Shang Shung Institute, without any additional costs. This innovation has been created in order to allow the SSI to develop their own list of members, which is required for bureaucratic purposes.

This year, when members renew their membership, they will be asked to fill out a form with their details, which will be put into a new database system that should make data collection much easier.

In the spring we are planning to present some courses that will also be open to

people who have not received transmission from the Master. These will be different courses that will be led by some of our senior instructors such as Fabio Risolo, Jim Valby, Laura Evangelisti and Maurizio Mingotti.

We are also working on organizing two projects to promote Merigar with an “external” public. The first one is a Yoga Week that will be held this summer, while the other consists of packages for tourists that will be organised in collaboration with the Arcidosso Municipality.

The Merigar Gakyil

©

December 29-January 2

by Andrea Bucaioni

In the days between December 29 and January 2, our teacher Khyentse Yeshe generously gifted us with five wonderful days of teaching on “The nature of the individual.” In the few days of the retreat, our Teacher led us to a clearer and deeper understanding of ourselves and of our dimension, explaining, giving us many rich and useful examples and also presenting and going through the fields of human knowledge. The teaching was very essential and related to our nature and our experience, and to understanding according to the principle of Atiyoga, pointing out and clarifying in a direct way doubts and illusions, and dispelling our obstacles on the path.

Khyentse introduced to us the four aspects of education, meditation, experience and retention and explained

at length how to move in the direction of evolution that Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche is showing us. In addition he spoke about what it means and how to be part of the sangha (the Santi Maha Sangha).

With his boundless generosity and compassion, Khyentse Yeshe remained, even for hours, to listen and respond fully to all those who wanted to ask his advice, after the teachings that took place in the morning in order to allow people to follow the webcast of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's teachings from Margarita later in the day. Our Master also had New Year's Eve dinner with us, which was a very pleasant event and ended with a small party with music.

Participation in the teaching has been growing and the Gonpa was filled with groups of practitioners some of whom had come from Russia and the Czech Republic.

The sangha, the Merigar Gakyil, and new Geko all worked hard for the excellent organization of the retreat which took place in the pleasant tranquillity of a Merigar that was blessed with the sun



Photo: P. Fassoli

right up to the last day under a beautiful winter sky.

Thank you Rinpoche, from the depths of our hearts, for these precious teachings and for having honoured and

benefited us with your wonderful presence at Merigar West! ©

Information for people who intend to come to Merigar for retreats or to follow courses

If you are looking for accommodation, airport transfer, local car hire or only logistic assistance, you can contact the following information and reservation service:

(Information available in English, German, French and Italian)
Information service and reservation of accommodation during
retreats, local transport, & logistic solutions:

Email: accomodationservice@gmail.com

Phone: 0039 0564 957542

Mobile phone: 0039 339 1370739

We cooperate with local hotels, family pensions, residences, agriturismo, Community members who have rooms or houses to rent or sublet. Also we can advise on car rental (at airports or locally), on the best itinerary and time tables of trains and buses, and we have now a circuit of residents who offer various useful services like transfer from the airports, local taxi service, translations, baby sitting, etc.

UK

Summing up 2011 in the UK

by Judy Allen

We had the great joy of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu returning to London in September 2011. Rinpoche was a keynote speaker in the very successful conference ‘Bon. Shangshung and Early Tibet’, hosted jointly by Shang Shung UK and SOAS (The School of Oriental and African Studies): this followed on from Rinpoche’s ‘Light of Kailash’ address at SOAS in June 2010. The conference was followed by two days of brilliant and essential Dzogchen teaching given by

Rinpoche at the Camden Centre, once again attracting a large number of new people as well as those from other Buddhist groups. Catalysed by Rinpoche’s two visits, this last year has seen a huge groundswell of activity in London. A very full programme of teachings and events has included monthly explanation practices, a year’s programme studying the Santi Maha Sangha Base level text together with a series of academic talks organised by Shang Shung UK at SOAS, as well as the introduction of new courses such as calligraphy. This is in addition to regular practices such as Dance, Yantra Yoga and Ganapuja. The regular use of the Drukpa UK centre

in Primrose Hill for a number of our practices has provided a focal point for us until such time as we are able to have our own place in London. We are very grateful to the Trustees of Drukpa UK for continuing to allow us to use their lovely Centre. Cardiff also remains an active centre for the Community, as well as Cambridge and Devon. At Kunselling we had some wonderful courses: the Mandarava retreat in early June led by Elio Guarisco was a period of intense, dedicated practice, followed shortly by an inspiring retreat on Gomadevi led by Enzo Terzano. The Dance courses led by Cindy Faulkner are always very well attended, in addition to the practice

Dance retreat held annually in summer. Thanks are due to Rowan for all her hard work over the years organising the dance and the mandala. Jane Weston has now taken on these responsibilities. An exciting new development at Kunselling has been the acquisition of a strip of land extending from our small ‘Buddha’ garden along the full length of the field. This gives us the exciting possibility of producing fruit and vegetables for retreatants. At the AGM in London in September, there were a number of changes in the gakyil. Mandarava Bricaire and Maciek Sikora replaced Richard Steven and Dominic Kennedy on the blue gakyil; on the red gakyil, Mike Beddard and

Colin Ellar resigned after three years, to be replaced by Robin Russell and Chris Coop. Penny Stirling stood down as Company Secretary and Paul Griffin came onto the gakyil briefly to take over membership. Shortly afterwards, however, he was offered a job in Japan and Stephanie Mulholland kindly offered to take on this responsibility. Many thanks to everyone for their valuable work. We celebrated the launch of ASIA UK this year, following on from the launch of Shang Shung UK last year; both organisations signifying a new phase of openness in the Community which has been very promising. We can look forward to 2012 with increased optimism. ©

MerigarEast



Merigar East

Asociatia Culturala Comunitatea Dzog-Chen

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Winter News from Merigar East

by Daiva Razmaraitaite

This year Merigar East, like most of the places in Europe, couldn’t escape the harsh winter weather conditions and had to have it all: freezing cold, very strong wind and lots of snow. The hardest winter in Romania in the last 50 years was definitely a survival test for our dear Geko Anatolie and Fiu, the dog. Being cut off even from the nearest village for days, digging up through snow every morning to get the wood for the fire... sounds like an adventure to some or like a challenge to others. In any case, like Antolie himself says: “Even if it was really hard here this winter and I was cut off from the world, I felt good. It was warm inside and I had enough food; I was sitting near the heater and reading books of Longchenpa and Rinpoche, listening to the Webcasts and practicing... Actually my practice was going much better in these conditions!” Since the whole country was trapped in snow and couldn’t move (the Gakyil couldn’t get together for the meeting either) there have not been many activities happening in the Gar for the last two months. But with the first signs of spring we also are awakening from the winter sleep. We start, of course, with the Losar celebration on Feb 26th and then on March 2–4th we are attending the Body, Mind and Spirit Festival in Bucharest where for the third time we



are going to present the International Dzogchen Community and Merigar East. This personal development fair is the place where every year lots of people interested in healthy way of living, spiritual paths and personal growth gather together to share and exchange their knowledge, ideas and products. In the last three years quite a few people in Romania met Rinpoche’s teachings thanks to this festival. Therefore this year we are participating again with the stand and presenting the activities of Merigar East and International Dzogchen Community. The next big event at Merigar East is the Chod Retreat with Nina Robinson May 23–27th. Bring your Damarus and bells, all advanced chodpas and the very beginners!

Fundraising for Merigar East Projects

Merigar East is still in the development stage. Three construction projects are scheduled for 2012. They will strengthen the Gar not only physically by making it more comfortable for all practitioners, but also spiritually since all those buildings are part of the Merigar East mandala and strongly connected with the teachings. First, we will construct Sang Khangs to support the practice of Sang. This practice is important to strengthen the Local Guardians to increase possibilities for favorable developments. Second, we will give the finishing touch to the Gonpa: the outside walls will be painted to fit harmoniously into

the Romanian countryside, the inside walls will be decorated to portray the rich heritage of Tibetan culture and the Teachings. Third, we will create two Stupas. As an important Buddhist symbol, they will bring a strong presence of the Teachings to the entire region, and also create a symbolic link to other centers of the Dzogchen Community where Stupas have been built. In addition to the above, there is also a long-term project: the construction of a multi-purpose Dormitory. This will benefit all practitioners who come to Merigar East for retreats. The plan is to have all the building plans created and approved in 2012 so that the construction work can start next year.

You too can participate and support all these projects online: just go to www.dzogchen.ro and click the banner “Support M.E. Projects!” in the top right corner. There you will find more information and donation campaigns for each project. We will keep you informed as the projects make progress. These projects depend on the support of the entire Community, so we thank you in advance for your generous collaboration!

East Gakyil and the Fundraising team

Czech Republic

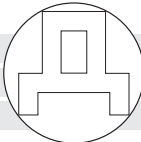
New gakyil for the year 2012

(E-mail addresses for the gakyil stay the same)
Dana Hauerova (vice-director)
Romana Zemanova
Tomas Bunata
blue@dzogchen.cz

Radim Zeman
Ales Slama
Renata Tylova
red@dzogchen.cz

Nikol Stanisova (director)
Martin Kourim
Jakub Ryska
yellow@dzogchen.cz

KunsangarSouth



Kunsangar South

kunsangar.blue@gmail.com
<http://kunsangar.org>

Kunsangar South News

by Toma Vinokhodova

This year Kunsangar South (the same as lots of other places) has been experiencing a harsh winter, with snow, ice and frost. In the middle of January the temperatures hit -27 C, but the newly installed heating system helped us deal with this easily. Some internal decorative works in the gonpa are continuing, although they have been a bit delayed by the frost.

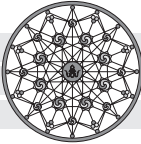
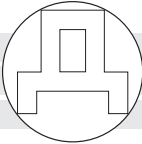
We also have the joyful news that Rinpoche has approved building a Longsal Stupa at Kunsangar South. It will facilitate peace and harmony, well-being and purification of everyone who comes in contact with it. This Stupa will be filled with the texts of Rinpoche’s precious terma and the Longsal symbol will surmount it. There is no such stupa built in this world yet, and one is going to be built soon in Izhevsk, Russia, and another one also will be built in Crimea. We will have more detailed information on the stupa project on the

kunsangar.org website. If someone wants to send a donation for the construction of this stupa, please contact us at stupa.sbor@gmail.com ©

Photo: T. Vinokhodova



KunsangarNorth



Kunsangar North
kunsangar.blue@gmail.com
http://kunsangar.org

The Ultimate Nature of Knowledge

On 18–19th of February and 25–26th of February two workshops took place in Moscow led by Khyentse Yeshe on the Ultimate Nature of the Individual. They were preceded by a public talk on 17th of February that was attended by 400 people.

Each of the workshops included 108 participants and took 2 days of theory and practice from 11 am till 6 pm with a lunch-break.

The main topic of the courses was how we understand the meaning of knowledge, the way our understanding relates to the modern approach of the Knowledgeable society and how we can represent our knowledge in the most efficient way.

It is quite difficult for me to write about it because my mind was not able to understand and remember all in a perfect way. Many points remained on the level of sounds. Of course those who had already some business experience before, or good basic knowledge of cognitive sciences, understood these things more easily.



Photo: M. Tavobilova

Thanks to his immeasurable clarity and compassion Khyentse Yeshe found the most direct way to explain different ideas and phenomena. Sometimes it seemed that he explained the same thing several times with different words and examples.

In a cheerful and natural manner he explained the writings of philosophers and experts in the study of knowledge, joked and laughed at our fears to look

stupid and opened our eyes to evident sides of ourselves. It became really interesting and we wanted so much to understand what Khyentse was talking about. As if his every word was crucial for our lives, the audience turned into a single big ear, eye and brain.

The practical tasks instantly demonstrated our capacities to collaborate with each other. The students were divided into 12 teams of 9 people, which

had to agree what to do and how to express it using different types of maps, such as mind, process and concept maps.

Almost immediately we discovered that the most difficult aspect of the task was to reach an agreement with each other. It seemed that in some of the groups it was almost impossible to come to a general understanding of the task and the method of its fulfillment. The differences between the members of the Dzogchen Community were as strong as were their doubts about what they had to do.

Clarity and ability to assign the opinion of the interlocutor finally won, and all doubts dissolved as soon as the speakers took the markers in their hands and went up to the whiteboard. There was no way to surrender in front of the Teacher!

During the practical part the process of discussion by itself often became the source for analysis and gaining knowledge on a certain topic. Khyentse also mentioned that many groups did the first day's task on the second day, by that showing that they had learned something. It was important for Khyentse Yeshe to get people's feedback, so

Teacher and students could understand each other better.

Of course we will listen again several times to the recordings of these workshops, will read the UN and UNESCO reports and will share a thousand times our own understanding with each other. But now, only one week later, I can say that my work in the office is the best thing that could ever happen to me after the Teacher provided my mind with resourcefulness and simplicity, and filled my heart with patience and a smile!

During these workshops we understood how we can develop in a modern world, how to develop and retain Knowledge, how to be active, responsible and not to be afraid of changes.

This is an arrow to the future which will allow the Teaching to remain pure, the Community to develop, and the Teacher to be happy.

With devotion and great gratitude to the Teacher Khyentse Yeshe for the Teaching, a student from Moscow, Lobanova Masha

©

St. Petersburg Autumn with Elio Guarisco

People who live in the City of Rains – that is the way St. Petersburg is called in Russia – know exactly when they should not invite any guests to the Northern Capital. “Visit us at the end of May or beginning of June and you will see the white nights and lifted bridges! Come at the end of August or beginning of September in order to enjoy golden leaves falling in the Summer Garden and Peterhof!” – as we usually advise tourists. But November–December in St. Petersburg is the time when the open sky museum city provides the most severe conditions for visits due to biting winds, slush, rain mixed with snow, late daybreaks and heavy clouded sky. And definitely, the lack of color and light during that time does not promote the health or joyful attitude of Petersburgers.

It was in this difficult moment that Elio Guarisco resolved to support Vajra Brothers and Sisters from Sangyeling with Teaching. Santi Maha Sangha Base and 1st Level retreats as well as Moxibustion training were held in St. Petersburg from November 25th to December 19th. Elio masterfully staying beyond concepts was serene, benevolent and attentive from the very first minutes of our meeting with him. He gave teaching for two hours on weekdays and four hours at weekends. We know that for the majority of native Italians the temperature of plus 10 seems like frost, so we tried to find a cozy apartment for our instructor near the place of the retreat – the picturesque historical center of St. Petersburg. And our Vajra Sisters who were most skilful in cooking pleased Elio with his favorite Indian dishes.

The SMS Base course, held from November 25th to November 30th,

was attended by 100 people, and 25 Community members who had already passed their SMS exams continued the training from December 2nd to December 7th. The youngest attendee at the retreat was the daughter of Lena Bobylskaya, the translator, 8 year old Polina who gave lucent glass spheres that looked like tigles to Elio during the breaks between the tuns. The adults traveled across the whole city after a hard working day bringing along warm socks, sweaters, writing pads and pens striving to gain a fresh insight into the Santi Maha Sangha texts rather than only intellectual understanding. And the main thing is our own experience of remaining in the real nature of mind without any efforts.

From December 9th to December 19th we had lots of smoke in our lovely gonpa – a cozy one-room apartment on Zagorodny ave. We drove the cold away from the apartment and our bodies at

the same time. 25 attendees practiced Tibetan fire healing – moxibustion. We had theoretical training during the first part of the day and practical training during the second part of the day: rolling of artemisia cones (it was not easy at all to find the required Artemisia fibers in St. Petersburg) and placing them on special points described in the new book by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, “Healing with Fire”. The text was translated into English by Elio Guarisco, who also received instructions from Rinpoche to explain the Tibetan healing art and to train all interested people to do moxa. Although we don't have the Russian translation of the book yet, the Shang Shung Institute decided to herald the Russian edition with the training course, as well as Elio's lecture at the Medical Academy of Afterdiploma Education at the Department of Reflex-therapy where medical doctors learn acupuncture, auricular-

therapy, etc. Teachers at the Academy became familiar with moxa for the first time during Elio's lecture on December 9th. On the same day a film crew shot a TV report on Tibetan fire healing and Rinpoche's book with the participation of Elio Guarisco. The piece was broadcast by the main Russian TV channel in the morning.

The only thing we regretted when seeing off Elio Guarisco was that we could not give him bright summer Petersburg with traditional trips on the rivers and canals. But we hope that autumn walks around the city, the journey to Tsarskoye Selo (Tsar's village), the Tchaikovsky ballet at Mariinsky Theatre and the warmth of our hearts left the Italian with a tender memory of St. Petersburg, while Sangyeling received a lot of knowledge, inspiration and joyful experience of effortless practice from him. Elio, please, visit us again to see the White Nights!

©

Singapore



New Ling in Singapore

Dear Vajra Family,

Thanks to the blessings of our dear Guru, the Singapore Ling was born on 22 Feb 2012 on the auspicious occasion of the Losar of the Water Dragon Year. Its name is Namdrolling.

May everything become auspicious.
Happy Losar to our dear Guru, family and vajra kin.

Tashi Delegs
KC Ong
On behalf of Namdrolling
dzogchencommunity@yahoo.com.sg
www.atiyoga.org



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Namgyalgar South



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Dzogchen Community in	NSW 2546	www.dzogchen.org.au
Australia	Phone/Fax: 61 02 4473 7668	

Santi Maha Sangha Scholarship

by Arnaud Coquillard

Dear Vajra Brothers and Sisters,

Just few words to remind you of the unbelievable opportunity we have to explore more deeply the meaning of Dzogchen Community” (Santi Maha Sangha in Sanskrit). About 10 years ago, Rinpoche started the Santi Maha Sangha scholarship with our current Gekö Lama Thubten Rabgyi, and since then a few lucky ones have received infinite benefit from it.

Rinpoche and Mark Farrington have contributed a small fund to allow eligible practitioners of the international



Photo: G. Horner

Dzogchen Community who wish to dedicate at least 6 months, and up to a year, to the SMS training. The requirement is to have participated in the first

level training or above. This scholarship is available at Namgyalgar South, known as the SMS Gar. And in fact, all aspects of our land are auspicious for

it. We have a huge library and reference collection available, two light retreat cabins, one dark retreat cabin, peaceful and quiet land 10 minutes from the Ocean on a sacred aboriginal mountain, warm and supportive local practitioners, many small and a few big retreats occurring and infinite Karma Yoga!

I can’t express how grateful I am for the time I am spending here. I am sharing the daily life with the Gekö since June 2011 – alternating study, practice and work. I wish that all genuinely interested people are aware of this sponsorship and have the possibility to apply for it. I am French and have been living at Namgyalgar South on and off since 2009, my scholarship will end early June 2012. I am happy to answer any questions about my experience of the

scholarship and my time at Namgyalgar South (arnaudmc17@gmail.com).

Send your expression of interest to the SMS scholarship coordinator Ben Pearsall (bengakyil@gmail.com), who can supply full details of eligibility requirements and an application form. Among other things, the applicant should be willing to contribute to the development of Namgyalgar South through karma yoga in collaboration with the Gekö, Gakyil and local Dzogchen community members. The scholarship can be taken up from late May 2012. Donations for this scholarship are always needed and welcomed. If you wish to donate, please contact the SMS scholarship coordinator Ben Pearsall.

May Rinpoche’s vision and wishes fulfill the whole universe. ©

Tsegyalgar East



DCA Tsegyalgar East		
PO Box 479	Phone: 413 369 4153	secretary@tsegyalgar.org
Conway, MA 01341 USA	Fax & Bookstore: 413 369 4473	www.tsegyalgareast.org

New Blue Gakyil Member

We welcome Lori Leff as the new Blue Gakyil member!

Thank you,
Tsegyalgar East Gakyil



My Reincarnation has been chosen to kick off PBS’s Acclaimed Documentary Series POV for its 25th Anniversary Season

Airdate June 21st, 2012 on National Primetime Television across America.

My Reincarnation will premiere as the Opening Film of the 25th Anniversary Season of PBS’s award-winning documentary series POV (“Point of View”) in 2012. Airing on the national PBS schedule on POV, My Reincarnation will be carried in the top 50 markets, with over 97 percent market coverage. The film will reach 1–2 million households for its broadcast premiere. In addition, the film will go on to be seen by over 20 million people on-air, online and on the ground through national public awareness campaigns. Being the lead program on this acclaimed series’ 25th Anniversary season will offer unprecedented press coverage for people to meet the Teachings and our Masters.

The My Reincarnation broadcast is scheduled right before the USA Teaching Tour of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, which commences June 22 in Los Angeles and continues onto New York and Massachusetts. POV has agreed to co-promote Rinpoche’s Teaching Schedule in every way possible before the Broadcast. This is by far the biggest promotional opportunity the community has ever had or may ever have to invite people to learn about the Teachings and to meet our Masters. There will be many ways the Community can participate in this event. Stay tuned as we start passing on information regularly as we countdown to the broadcast date of June 21st.

While My Reincarnation is perfectly positioned in its airdate and slot, the United States is a huge market where the competition for attention is fierce. Many programs have much higher press budgets than what is afforded by Public Television, which has notoriously little. Due to this fact, we have committed to raise extra PR funds so that we can en-

sure our message about the Teachings and our Masters rises above the rest.

We have two campaigns in mind:
· **Adding Additional PR Funds:** We are starting a fundraising campaign to add Additional PR (AAP) to the Broadcast Event to bring optimum attention to the message of the film and allow the press to have direct contact with Rinpoche for interviews. Planned are a One Day Satellite Media Tour with Rinpoche and a One Day Radio Media Tour with Rinpoche (plus other additional Advertising and Press Events.) This would mean that key TV and Radio journalists across the nation would have direct contact with our Master – in two limited 2-hour time slots that protects his precious health. He would appear on both nation-wide Television and Radio. We can both fundraise with small donations and also – using another strategy – PBS has offered to allow a singular donor or group to have their name on the film as an Underwriter Credit. That person or group would have a Present-

ing Credit at the head of the film for the duration of its broadcast over a period of four years. They would also have their name on all press materials. That group or person would get enormous PR exposure. We must lock in the Presenter Credit no later than March 15th. If you know anyone – or a group of people who would like to join together under one banner – who would like to help maximize this incredible opportunity for the community, please contact us at zohefilms@gmail.com

· **A Day-And-Date National Screening Event** of My Reincarnation in 20–40 Cinemas across the USA with a Satellite Q&A/Teaching with Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche afterwards in each cinema location.

Utilizing cutting-edge satellite technology, we are planning a National One Night Screening Event scheduled for June 19, 2012 preceding the Broadcast on June 21 2012. The film would be simultaneously beamed into cinemas

across the USA and afterwards the audience would have the chance to meet Rinpoche in a recorded Q&A Teaching. The event would occur in at least 20 high-end cinema venues to be determined. It would create a huge amount of buzz towards the broadcast, the Teachings, Rinpoche, and the coming Teaching Tour in the USA. While this event will cost money (that we must now raise), it has the exciting potential to turn a substantial profit in a short amount of time that can go to any cause that the investor identifies. A portion of the profit will be donated to our Masters, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and Khyentse Yeshe. We are looking for an investor – or group of investors – to underwrite this singular event. Please let us know if you or anyone you know is interested in discussing this wonderful and powerful opportunity. We must raise these funds by March 15th 2012, so time is of the essence. You can contact us at zohefilms@gmail.com. ©

Fabio Andrico’s US Tour

February 2012

By Naomi Zeitz

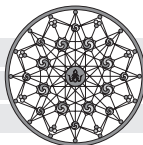
We were very fortunate to host a small tour for Fabio Andrico as he went from the biggest Whole Foods in the USA in NYC to talk about the BreAthe DVD, and then on to the prestigious Amherst College where he gave a public talk about Yantra Yoga as part of a series on Tibetan Culture organized by Dr. Paola Zamperini, who is a professor at Amherst and the current director of Shang Shung Institute, USA, and finally off to Kripalu, an internationally known, popular yoga center

in Western Massachusetts, where Fabio introduced Yantra Yoga focusing primarily on the Eight Movements.

All the presentations were very successful and people expressed strong interest to have more contact with Fabio and Yantra Yoga. Fabio has already been invited back to Kripalu for the fall based on the extreme satisfaction and appreciation of the students there.

We look forward to hosting more of these kinds of public activities and presentations with Fabio in the US. It seems the US is ripe for Yantra Yoga, as a pure and unadulterated form of authentic yoga, and for the exciting and dynamic teaching style of Fabio. ©





www.tashiqarnorte.org

by Rosemary Friend

From the treasury of Longchen Nyinthing upadesha series, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu selected the Invocation of Base, Path and Fruit, a terma from the impeccable mind of Jigme Lingpa. We were fortunate indeed to receive the complete Dzogchen introduction to our

We continue to try to be practitioners, being aware, discovering our limitations, liberating our emotions, discovering the state of no tension - where there is no longer the thought that there is something better, noticing effortless compassion arise from our real nature.

May the Base, Path and Fruit arise in us all and when that Knowledge arises may it become something concrete in ourselves and therefore benefit all sentient beings. ©

by Carlos García

Once again, we have reasons to feel fortunate in Tashigar Norte to have the presence of our Precious Teacher Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, who gave to us the possibility to hear to the explanations of the wonderful Dzogchen Teachings in a retreat from 27th of December 2011 to the 2nd of January of 2012. That was the best way to finish 2011 and start 2012!

There was a group of new people connected through the Festival de Oriente and some old practitioners who live in Tashigar Norte, Mérida and Caracas, and also from Europe, Australia, USA, Russia, etc.



Photo: D. Dalia

During the retreat Rinpoche talked in general about the Longchen Nyingtyk, which is a terma teaching of Jigmed Ligpa (1730–1798), and explained the Base from the point of view of Sutra, Tantra and Dzogchen, with emphasis in the last. We also received very deep explanations about the essence of the path: The Guru Yoga and the transmission, and we did that practice together. Then daily we started every session of the retreat with Guru Yoga practice.

Rinpoche explained the fruit of the three paths, mainly in Dzogchen, and finally we received precious advice about how to be serious practitioners in this dimension and the ways to integrate the Dzogchen knowledge in our lives. As usual we received the tridlungs of the collective practices and we finished with the Guru Yoga.

We will try our best to apply these precious, simple and deep teachings in our hearts!

Thank you Rinpoche!

©

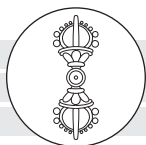
by Carlos García

The night before the first day of new year, we prepared the famous Tibetan soup traditionally performed without forgetting its status as oracle. For the first time we chased away the negativities before taking the soup. A group of younger men (or less old) were turning in circles shouting against the negativities provocations, barking like dogs to scare them, someone took a torch and we went offer them outside the house at a crossroads, then back to Natasha's house without looking back, as tradition teaches. The soup was talking about the future with salt and pepper, cotton, paper, wood and cypress, with figures of a sun and moon, the symbol of Longsal teachings and the unmistakable a tibetan A . Dina and Adriano undertook to interpret the fate of each in the coming year of the Water Dragon.

The arrival of the Tibetan year 2139 in Tashigar Norte was held, as always, starting with a water bath of stars in Playa Zaragoza. We also practice with Rinpoche Mandarava's webcast. Then we shared a delicious breakfast together, with arepitas, potato soup with egg, cream, butter and cheese. In the afternoon there was a simple afternoon of games and at the end of it we did a Ganapuja. All happened in a happy and harmonious way.

Losar Tashi Delek to all of you and a warm hug from the Caribbean! ☺

TashigarSur



www.tashigarsur.com

It was at the beginning of January 2012, when the new authorities of Tanti, a town near our Gar in El Durazno, Córdoba, Argentina, invited us to be part of the events scheduled for the summer.

It was great since it coincided with our wish to get closer to our neighbors and share what we have been doing in Tashigar South for 22 years now. So we thought that our project would be called "The Happiness of Sharing." We decided to hold it on Sunday, February 19th, and we did it in a hall belonging to the "Sierras Club Tanti."

We prepared for a long time before under the supervision and direction of Adriana Battisti, who with energy and enthusiasm produced, informed and gave the show a strong base. We wanted to show our neighbors what goes on among the hills of El Durazno, and of course, we were a bit nervous about how it would be received. We wanted to share our happiness and certainty with them, and our luck for having a great Master such as Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

Under the direction of our Vajra Sister from Perú, Charo Verástegui, we started the event in a simple way, explaining why it is called the “Dzogchen Community”, that it was a State that we all had, a state of absolute peace and joy, and how we could be in that state through methods; these methods using our three doors of communication and under the guidance of a highly qualified Master such as Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

We showed the video of Yantra Yoga and had an exhibition explained by Fabio Andrico, then Kumar Kumari supervised by Marisa Alonso and Carolina Mingolla, and we danced the Dance of The Six Loka in two mandalas supervised by Prima Mai and Adriana Dal Borgo. Then the Community children sang and danced and later some Vajra brothers played some music. There were also cumbias [traditional South American dance] and traditional Tibetan dances wearing the long-sleeved costumes with Adriana dal Borgo.

Everyone joined the dance as an expression of laughter and happiness that we all enjoyed. During the event there was a lottery with prizes of a prestigious Argentinian company, products and



services from shops of the area and nice T-shirts with the logo of the Reforestation Project that Tashigar South encourages.

All the Dzogchen Community from El Durazno participated in the event together with the people of the town of Tanti, and there were around 300 people all together!

The presentations were wonderful and could transmit to the community of Tanti that we are a group of people

that under the guidance of a Yogi born in Tibet, our wonderful Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, and we dedicate ourselves to work on practices that help us to live in harmony with ourselves and the world around us.

We only had to see the faces of the people watching the Yoga and Vajra Dance performances with such concentration and with so much joy and relaxation, as well as the artistic, musical and dance show, to know the show was successful.

Courses & Retreats

Merigar West



SMS1 course with Fabio Risolo in Merigar West January 2–7, 2012.

Tibetan Pronunciation Course with Fabian Sanders

At Gyamtsholing, Venice

It seemed like a joke, a way to make his students laugh. Rinpoche often likes to tell little stories in which a Western person wrongly pronounces the name of a divinity or a mantra, possibly calling a spiritual being with the name of an animal or reciting a mantra

with the words of a nursery rhyme. Joking like this is a “technique” of teaching used by Tibetan masters, sometimes as a way to break the tension, at times as a way to bring attention to an important question.

And for Rinpoche, correct pronunciation of the Tibetan language during the recitation of the practices for the Dzogchen Community is not only important, but essential.

Italy, Venice



Pronunciation course with Fabian Sanders.

Following the last invitation by the Master to pay some attention to this aspect of the practice, the Venice Ling decided to organise a two day course, January 21–22, taking advantage of the presence of Fabian Sanders, professor of Tibetan Language and Culture as the Cá Foscari University of Venice and member of the Dzogchen Community for many years.

For some time now Fabian has been working on a fantastic project for the Shang Shung Institute, which in the

future plans to “publish” a software for learning Tibetan language and its pronunciation. During the first day of the course, this program was partially used to show us all the letters of the alphabet, with their correct pronunciation and the main compounds. Before presenting the alphabet, there was a fascinating introduction to Tibetan language, its grammar and its place in the field of the Buddhist Sacred Sciences. Fabian also dedicated part of his talk to the “sound”

value of mantras in Sanskrit, with a short account of the pronunciation of the most frequently used syllables. There was a special space devoted to the introduction of the Drajyor system of transcription used by our Master.

We spent the second day working on practice texts. With patience and commitment Fabian led us on this “new path” of the correct pronunciation in each part of the Short Tun and in some parts of the Ganapuja. This path certainly wasn’t simple but definitely practicable with a bit of goodwill and perseverance and opened the door on a world of greater awareness in the recitation of the sacred texts, especially for those of us who had never attended a course on Tibetan language. A world that our Master has invited us to discover and to study, giving us an opportunity to grow in the practice.

This first step carried out enthusiastically by the Venetian Community will soon have a follow up with other days led by Fabian Sanders who has generously offered to help us deepen our study of the language and practice its pronunciation.

Spain



Costantino Albini in Barcelona February, 2012.

Photo: P. Fassoli

UK



Chöd retreat at Kunselling, Wales; Barry Patterson.

Photo: T. Tallian

Czech Republic



Yantra for beginners with Fijalka Turzikova in Plzen January 13–15, 2012.



Tibetan pronunciation with Fabian Sanders in Prague February 2–4, 2012.

THE MIRROR



Newspaper of the International Dzogchen Community of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

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Namgyalgar South

Chöd Retreat with Angie Gilbert, New Year 2012

Once more, Angie Gilbert skillfully led a retreat on the practice of Chöd at Namgyalgar South. It was an opportunity for the 20 of us to observe ourselves deeper, and to share a really relaxing time.

Even though all of us mostly felt on holidays, we met during three sessions everyday; alternating between explanations, training with vajra bells and damarus, the short or long practice of the Chöd and introduction to some parts of the ‘Precious Vase’ text.

Angie gave a real focus on the importance to keep presence of awareness in every moment. We all did our best to dedicate some time to this, in formal or informal sessions ; at the beach, fish’n chips,... and during our Karma Yoga and daily activities at Namgyalgar South.

There would be so much more to tell about the retreat, but let’s just say that after all, we felt like a family; each of us doing our best for discovering and going beyond the limits of the ego.

Namgyalgar South hosts The Dance of the Song of the Vajra Retreat: Our Last Dance with Jean

We were most grateful to Cosimo di Maggio for returning to Namgyalgar South last week to instruct us in the 2nd part of the Dance of the Song of the Vajra. The practioners at Namgyalgar South enjoyed Cosimo’s clear and joyful teaching yet again. His thoughtfulness and humour both deepened and lightened our experience. Thank you so much Cosimo.

The mandala was overflowing with many practitioners who came from the local area and from further afield, many travelling long distances to attend the retreat at Namgyalgar South.

Losar occurred during the retreat, we swam at Mystery Bay before dawn delighting in the Star water. We did a Mandarava practice together, continued with the retreat and ended the day with a Losar party. We ate, sang, danced, laughed and played together.

Jean Macintosh, our local Vajra Dance teacher, assisted Cosimo. Jean tirelessly



guided and supported us through the steps we had learned from him. She was endlessly patient, always ensuring our understanding and ready to support any memory lapses on our part.

It fills us with great sadness that Jean died suddenly on Sunday 26th February at 9:11 pm the day after completing the teachers update with Cosimo. It was wonderful that Jean spent her last week immersed in the dance, her great passion, happy in the knowledge that more of us were learning the Vajra Dance.

Jean has touched many hearts in the Dzogchen Community. She has been a dedicated practitioner since first meeting Our Precious Master in 1987. Jean was in at Tsegyalgar when Chögyal Namkhai Norbu first taught the Vajra Dance and became the first Vajra Dance teacher in Australia.

Jean is widely known and loved throughout the international Dzogchen Community having spent time in the different Gars around the world.

Jean was instrumental in the creation and development of Namgyalgar South. Her ongoing dedication to Namgyalgar South has been, and will continue to be an inspiration to us all. Many of us have born the brunt of her fearless courage as a driving force for Namgyalgar South through the years. Even more, we have also been privileged to witness Jean’s huge capacity for compassionate loving kindness and her wicked sense of humour.

Jean was supportive to others either through doing practice for them or by actively helping whenever needed. An example of this is her unwavering support of Rabgyi since his arrival at Namgyalgar South in 2003. Over the last few days, many people from the local Tilba community have expressed their appreciation of Jean.

Our gratitude, love and deep respect are with you Jean. Thank you. ©

Melbourne



The Vajra Dance of the three Vajras Course with Nicki Elliott from 28th–29th January 2012 in Melbourne.

Tsegyalgar West



December 26–January 2, Tsegyalgar West, Green Tara Group Retreat.



SMS Retreat in Tsegyalgar West with Steven Landsberg Feb 3–12, 2012.

Mexico >>Pelzomling



Steven Landsberg taught the study and practise of the 7th lojong at the new residence of Pelzomling in Mexico City January 26–28, 2012.



Preliminaries of Yantra Yoga, Breathing and Pranayama with Patrizia Pearl in Mexico City February 10–12, 2012.

Mexico



Vajra Dance Course in Todos Santos, BCS; Mexico Jan 13–15, 2012 with Anya Neyman.

Tashigar Norte



Open Course of the Six Spaces of Samantabhadra in La Asunción

by Carlos García

As a result of the Festival Oriente that was held on Isla Margarita in November, Tashigar Norte was requested to offer a dance course of the Six Spaces of Samantabhadra at the Art Center Omar Carreno in Asuncion at the end of January. About 15 people, mostly women, attended the course and some of them were deeply moved to tears during the dance sessions. Carmen Rivas, the local instructor, led the course brilliantly and now some of the students are returning every Sunday to dance here at Tashigar Norte. ©

Tashigar Sur



Course for deepening the different aspects of breathing with Fabio Andrico, January 13 to 15, 2012.



Kumbhaka Course with Fabio Andrico, January 16 to 18, 2012.

Tashigar Sur



Course of the Vajra Dance of the Song of Vajra-second part with Nelida Saporiti, January 26 to 31.



Vajra Dance Teacher's Training – First Level, with Prima Mai and Adriana Dal Borgo, February 15 to 20. This was the first time this training was held in Tashigar Sur.

Passages Died

Merigar West

Memories of Franco Branca

In mid February this year Franco Branca died in his bed of a brain hemorrhage during a great blizzard that left the whole of Italy dazzling white under deep snow. He was fifty-seven years old. Many of you may recall him as the one who always made sang in the sangkang near the gonpa in Merigar during all of Rinpoche's retreats. He was a deeply devoted student of Rinpoche. He was one of the main builders of the Mandala Hall, the Gonpa and the great stupa and also did endless karma yoga.

Here are extracts from some of the many messages sent by Vajra Brothers and Sisters from many parts of our globe. We have left them anonymous.

He was a true and steadfast pillar of Merigar: quiet in his devotion, strong in his will, funny and certain. Through his work, and all that he did he will be remembered for years and years to come. We did Xitro for him this morning and his presence was so very strong. He knows what to do.

I am so sorry to hear this news. Franco is one of the quietly colourful personalities of the community. It would be hard to find many people as fiercely devoted to Rinpoche as he is - and to be so without shouting about anything. His tale of Barry Simmons flying around inside the Gonpa will always remain with me.

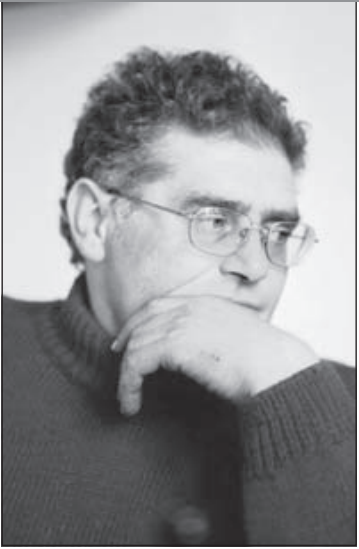


Photo: L. Carniel

I was deeply moved by Franco's passing. It really is shocking to think of him not being there. My best wishes are with you always and right now especially. It is largely through you that I got a better understanding of that stern-looking contemplative with the pipe, who was always working. I will never forget him explaining how Frank threw up "like a whale!"

As soon as Franco arrived in Merigar he started to build the Mandala Hall and library together with Giorgio Minuzzo and a local builder called Ennio Pii. That was just the beginning of his participation in all of the building works in Merigar. He also gave many hours of karmayoga in a great variety of ways. Amongst these he helped to create the gardens around the Gonpa and also constructed the stone stairs that make much easier access to the woods where the retreat

cabins are situated. Carrying buckets of cement and great slabs of stone on his shoulders, he said, "I am building the Stairway to Liberation".

When he was constructing a pergola for the grape vines in front of my house he said: "First I built the Mandala Hall and then the Temple of the Great Liberation and then the Stupa of Enlightenment of the Mind (Changchub Chorten) and now I'm building a temple to Bacchus."

Everyone who arrived at the retreats of our precious Masters in Merigar will remember the perfume and the smoke of Sang. Behind it there was always Franco. He built the sangkhangs, fetched the branches of cypress and tended the fire with precision. For all of us he was an inspiration and a teacher – by example – of the practice of karma yoga. If I close my eyes I can still see him working in Merigar, hanging up Prayer flags, filling in holes in the roads, clearing ditches, throwing salt on the roads during the hard winters, preparing the embers for barbeques at the end of long sessions of karma yoga. Though I saw it with my own eyes I still fail to understand how he managed to place the jewel on the top of the stupa. It was forty kilos of solid copper! Did you ever wonder how it got up there? I was always happy to drive him home at the end of the day whether he was feeling happy or sad. I feel honoured to have known him and to have collaborated with him on so many projects.

For years Franco was an on-going and unobtrusive presence at Merigar.

Even the newest people there cannot help but remember his figure moving tirelessly between the sangkang incense burners during Norbu Rinpoche and Khyentse Yeshe's retreats, filling them with cypress leaves in order to produce that fragrant smoke. I would often pause to breathe its fragrance while reciting the purification mantra just before going into the Gonpa.

Franco was a shy and reserved person, he never made himself the centre of attention and could go unnoticed, but his traces are very present at Merigar in all the construction work done over the years. Franco was also a lot more, not only a practitioner with great devotion but also a rich person inside, as shown by his few but intense written pieces that he wanted to dedicate to the Community. The article he wrote in last summer's issue of the Merigar Letter describing the construction of the Great Stupa of Merigar is a crystalline example of his ability, and I feel a little bit of pride that I stimulated him to write it. Franco was in fact modest: he was a worker, humble and reserved... worthy qualities.

It was not easy to embrace Franco, his figure seemed a bit gruff and did not make it easy to express such a spontaneous and affectionate gesture, but I hope I was able to let him know in person at least a little of the affection and admiration I had for him. ©



Myriam Ruedin

Myriam Ruedin left her body Wednesday January 4th.

She used to say that Zhenphenling in Rome was her Vajra family; we all did our best to share her love accompanying her throughout the months of her illness, that she faced with extraordinary peacefulness of mind and awareness.

Myriam was a generous and humble person, always ready to involve herself totally and concretely for the Community. Her love for the Dance and for the Mandala was deep and unshakeable, the little heart mantra that she would often say will always resound in our memory like a sweet echo of her devotion. ©

Namgyalgar South

Jean Macintosh

Jean Macintosh passed away peacefully surrounded by love from family and Vajra kin on Sunday 26th February at 9:11 pm (+11 hours GMT) in The Canberra Hospital, Australia.

We remember Jean as a loving and compassionate friend who constantly helped others. We will miss Jean’s good heart, strength, energy and humour enormously.

*



Jean Mackintosh 1940–2012

Jean was a dear friend and Vajra sister to so many of us. She is already greatly missed.

Jean Mackintosh was a founding member of Namgyalgar South in the true sense of the word. She found the land at Tilba,NSW, Australia on the rugged slopes of the sacred Mt Gulaga. She oversaw the building projects including Rinpoche’s house and the Gonpa, and has been its caretaker and gatekeeper ever since. Before Namgyalgar became her life’s work Jean spent time living and working in Merigar and for the last decade was a dedicated teacher of the Vajra Dance. She initiated many projects at Namgyalgar, one of them being the care and sponsorship of Tibetan

monk and refugee Rabgyi to become an Australian citizen. A champion of the underdog, known for her great generosity, fierce directness and loyal personality, her passing is a great loss to our Community. If we can each bring a tiny bit of Jean’s spirit, energy and vision to our Dzogchen Community we will achieve great things.

Please join Namgyalgar’s Facebook Page and share your stories and memories of Jean
www.facebook.com/groups/133404090031517/

A Message from Jane Chandler, a close friend and Vajra Sister to Jean

Jean was indeed a remarkably capable and wonderful person, her capacity was daunting. She had such a huge passionate drive to work relentlessly to help her beloved Teacher to realise his vision to achieve a Gar in Australia. Her love for Rinpoche was very big, and that gave her the energy move to Tilba to assist with the development of what is now a wonderful functioning Retreat Centre, Namgyalgar South.

To do this she rented a cabin on Pam and Kevin’s farm, and would leave at 5. am to drive about 3.5 hours to work as a psychologist in Goulborn, and later she worked in Moruya, 1 hours drive away, 5 days a week. She did this whilst she project managed the development at the Gar, and built her own new home in Tilba. What capacity!!! In Tilba the local people loved her, and respected her capacity, her sense of fun and wit, and most of all her caring nature, especially for those who were troubled and in need. Jean had a big and loving heart, and although her dragon nature could sometimes breathe hot air, she would tell us that dragons are mythical creatures so they cannot hurt others with their fire, and that dragons are

protectors. And that is what Jean was, a protector for her friends and for the Community and Namgyalgar. Her home was always an open haven for travellers and friends.

Jean had so many aspects to her character, and she had the courage to let them all be seen. She could stand up, with tenacious passion to protect what she believed was right. This included the welfare of Namgyalgar, her friends, and those who need support and shelter. I found that Jean was nearly always right in her decisions, something that was hard to achieve when she had so many decisions to make. She faced the difficulties that came her way, not to be defeated she kept going with strong passion and joy of life, making a big contribution until the end.

These days I think everyone loves and appreciates Jean and her wonderful contributions. Having been introduced to painting classes by her American friend Angela, Jean quickly picked up the art of water colour painting and she has left behind a beautiful collection of art works. She has a large group of fellow artists friends who live around in the beautiful hills. They also will miss Jean a lot.

At the Shitro Practice that we did for Jean last night, we all had such a strong

sense of Jean’s presence, and after we all felt lighter and we laughed and enjoyed talking about our Jean. Below are some things I think about her.

To Jean, firstly I have a huge respect and love for you. Thank you for being my very good friend. Jean, I loved you when you taught the Dance. You seemed to connect so well with those you were teaching, in a relaxed easy way, creating a confidence for them be able to master the steps. I loved your loyalty to your friends, I loved your feisty and passionate nature, and your funny wit, and sharp intelligence. Jean, I came to love your contrary nature, knowing that it was part of what made you so charming. I loved your unusual and quirky way of dressing and the creative and sometimes bizarre way you put fabrics together. I loved your challenging mind and I loved being challenged to stand up for my own opinions. I did learn to do that from you. I loved the proud way you walked along the beach in your bathers. Your passion for the sea and for nature is inspiring. I loved the way you could tell me that you had been a bit naughty. I loved the way you were able to be yourself, without compromise. Jean, the list goes on and on, and I will remember all of the treasures that made you. I will remember your deep respect for the Dzogchen Teachings. ©

Programs

Merigar West

Evolution Workshop
at Merigar West April 6–8

The Ultimate Nature of the Individual
with Khyentse Yeshe

April 6
Introductory conference
open to all

April 7–8
Workshop
restricted to participants
The workshop will be open to a maximum of 108 participants. To qualify, candidates need to complete a form, submit it and wait for a response.

The form is available at
www.dzogchen.it

Fee: 160 euro
No discounts are available

For more information, contact
office@dzogchen.it
or +39 0564 966837

Upcoming Activities 2012

March 8
Garab Dorje Anniversary, Worldwide Vajra Dance Day

March 8–11
“Shine and Lhagthong in Dzogchen Teaching”
with Fabio Risolo

March 17–18
Base course of Song of the Vajra
with Rita Renzi

March 24–25
Yantra Yoga Base course
with Laura Evangelisti

April 8
Easter retreat

April 13–18
Vajra Dance Teacher Training Level 1
with Prima Mai

May 1
Meeting on SMS Second Level
with Jim Valby

May 2–6
“Purification in Sutra, Tantra, Dzogchen”
with Jim Valby

May 12–13
5th Base Course of the Song of the Vajra
with Rita Renzi

May 19–20
Base Course of Dance of the Six Spaces
with Maurizio Mingotti

June 1–7
Vajra Dance Teacher Training Level 1
with Adriana Dal Borgo and Prima Mai

June 29/30–July 1
Intensive Yantra Yoga Course, 3rd and 4th Pranayama series
with Laura Evangelisti

Merigar West is pleased to announce
Two Vajra Dance Teacher Training courses!

The Teacher Training is a course open to all those who already know the steps of the Dance well for the female (Pamo) and male (Pawo) and who want to deepen their experience of practice. It is a particular course reserved for only 20 students and lasts a week with morning and afternoon sessions.

It will be led by the main teachers who will have the time and the opportunity to guide each student.

First Level Teacher Training
led by Prima Mai
April 13–18, 2012

open to all those who already know the parts of the Pamo and Pawo of the Dance of the Six Spaces of Samantabhadra and the Dance of the Three Vajras

Second Level Teacher Training
led by Prima Mai and Adriana Dal Borgo
June 1–7, 2012

open to all those who already know the parts of the Pamo and Pawo of the Dance of the Song of the Vajra.

Following these courses is a prerequisite in the training of Vajra Dance Teachers.

To sign up you should fill out a card that can be obtained from the Shang Shung Institute.

For information and registration, please contact Salima Celeri
s.celeri@shangshunginstitute.org

Netherlands

The Dzogchen Community in The Netherlands invites you to follow a course for beginners and advanced practitioners:
Course of the first half of the Dance of the Song of the Vajra
With Stoffelina Verdonk
April 7–12, 2012

Times: Daily from 10:00–18:00
Location: De Orangerie, Gein-Zuid 56, Abcoude, in the direct surroundings of Amsterdam
Prices:
Ordinary members: € 120
Reduced members: € 75
Sustaining members: € 60

Contact us for more information:
info@dzogchen.nl
www.dzogchen.nl

France

Courses with Jim Valby

“Primordial Knowledge”
7/9 April in Paris
Santi Maha Sangha Base
10/11 April in Paris
Registration necessary:
paris.dzogchen@hotmail.fr

Santi Maha Sangha Base
13/17 April in Dejam Ling
Santi Maha Sangha First Level
18/22 April in Dejam Ling

(Open only to those who have passed the Base level exam and who have received the teachings of the 1st Level Santi Maha Sangha from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu)
Housing in Dejamling: 8 euro per day in dormitory, or 5 euro in tent.
Registration necessary:
dejamlingfr@gmail.com

Germany

SMS Base, Rushen and Semdzin Course
with Alexander Pubants
March 9–11 in Höfen
Registration: Viktoria Gershevskaya
viktoria.gershevskaya@dzogchen.de

Song of the Vajra Course, Part 1
with Lenka Kroh with supervision of Prima Mai
April 6–10 at Dargyaling, Cologne
Registration: Viktoria Gershevskaya
viktoria.gershevskaya@dzogchen.de

SMS Base Level Course
with Jakob Winker
May 4–6 at Dargyaling, Cologne
Registration: Viktoria Gershevskaya
viktoria.gershevskaya@dzogchen.de

Vajra Dance Beginners Course
with Karin Heinemann
May 11–12 in Munich
Registration: Viktoria Gershevskaya
viktoria.gershevskaya@dzogchen.de

Tsegyalgar East

USA

Mexico City >>Pelzomling

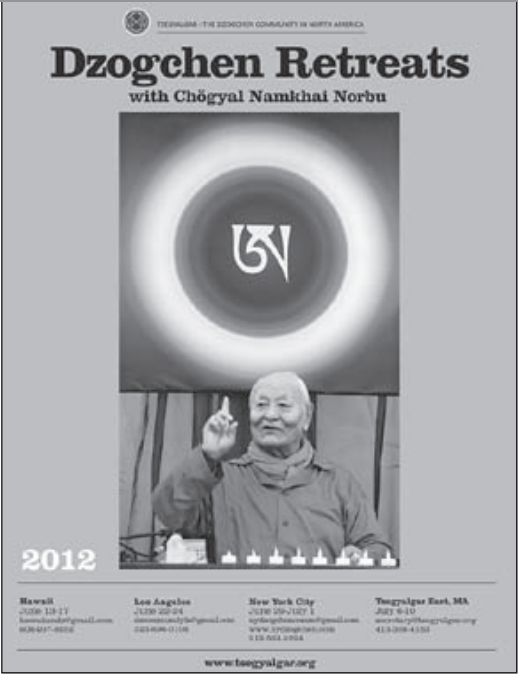
Passages

Brazil



Like her older brother, Gabriel, one of the first things that she heard was the Song of Vajra!

Her parents are Marta Zaidan Lilla and Otavio Lilla.



Saturday & Sunday, 4/7 & 8
9:30 am–12:30 pm & 3–6 pm on Satur-
day and 9:30 am–1:30 pm on Sunday
\$ 35/session or \$ 90/weekend
For more information contact:
Tara Keegan tckeegan@gmail.com

Leonardo’s Lost Princess and Peter Silverman

Peter Silverman, a long time student and friend of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, had the great fortune to rediscover a lost Leonardo da Vinci drawing in 2007 in New York City after having regretfully underbid on it 10 years earlier at Christie’s Auction House. Peter and his wife Kathleen Onorato, had the supreme great fortune to meet Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche in Rome in 1977. They then invited Rinpoche to found the Paris center in 1978, where they have continued to host him. Rinpoche was also invited by Peter and Kathleen for his first visit to New York City in 1978 where he gave teachings before going on to the West Coast.

Peter and best selling author Catherine Whitney collaborated on a book about the discovery called “Leonardo’s Lost Princess” published in February of 2012 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey. On January 25th, 2012, US Public Television aired a one hour documentary called the Mystery of a Masterpiece and on May 5th this year will be featured on the Arte Channel in Europe.

[Below see the opening remarks published on Amazon.com of the fascinating account of this providential discovery as well as the words of Peter himself about his spiritual quest that led him to great teachers and onto his discovery of the Lost Princess.]

“How an oddly attributed \$19,000 picture proved to be a \$100 million work by Leonardo da Vinci - a true art-world detective story

In late 2010, art collector Peter Silverman revealed that a “German, early 19th century” portrait he had bought for \$19,000 was, in fact, a previously unknown drawing by Leonardo da Vinci – an exquisite depiction of Bianca Sforza, rendered 500 years ago. In Leonardo’s Lost Princess, Silverman gives a riveting first-person account of how his initial suspicions of the portrait’s provenance were confirmed repeatedly by scientists and art experts. He describes the path to authentication, fraught with opposition and controversy. The twists and turns of this fascinating, decade-long quest lead from art history to cutting-edge science, and from a New York art gallery to Paris, Milan, Zurich, and ultimately a Warsaw library where the final, convincing evidence that the portrait was indeed by da Vinci was found.”

Amazon.com



Rinpoche, Peter’s wife Kathleen and the Lost Princess.

Peter’s Story

Peter Silverman

A few things in life, I believe, can be imputed to mere chance. My own life has been a karmically fortunate one and I must have done something well in past lives to have merited the great good fortune of having met not one, but two, great masters in this life.

The first master, Swami Rudrananda, or simply Rudi, saved me early on from despair and the wrong path after a great personal loss. He also helped my now deceased friend Barry Simmons, although he met him but once, overcome a dangerous blockage and after Rudi’s untimely death, in some mystical way helped Barry to the path of meeting Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, and so I, too, had the supreme good fortune of being introduced to Nam-

An email recently sent by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu to Peter.

Dear Peter & Kathy,

Congratulations!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

We are really very happy to receive this very good news.

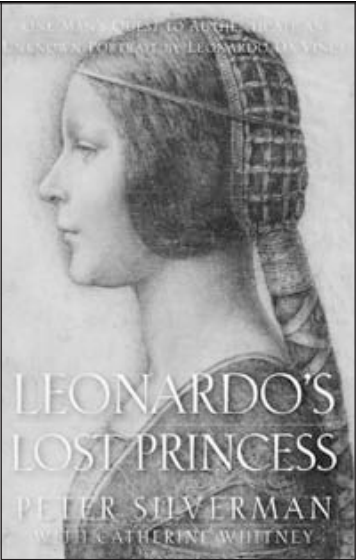
We all are well here, and our retreats are going very well.

I opened amazon.com and read all information. It looks really fantastic. Of course, I’ll inform all our Dzogchen Community and I am sure many people will like to read your book, Leonardo’s Lost Princess.

I really hope everything goes well with you.

With our warm wishes to you both.

Ciao ciao!!!!!! NN.



khai Norbu Rinpoche through Barry.

In gratitude, my wife Kathleen and I introduced Norbu Rinpoche to France and then the USA. The rest is history.

My teachers provided the spiritual anchor which helped keep my life ‘on track’ and although I can surely be faulted for not being as devoted and serious a practitioner as I would have liked, the teachings were deeply embedded in my psyche and my root system to be called up whenever craziness and the five deadly sins threatened to overcome me. For the precious teachings and Norbu Rinpoche’s friendship, I am profoundly thankful. If I am granted enough time to witness the sale of the Leonardo da Vinci, I plan to channel a vast sum of money to further various philanthropical causes; Tibet and Dzogchen are on the very top of my list.

For anyone interested in the history of the discovery my newly published book, “Leonardo’s Lost Princess” is now available on Amazon.com. It is naturally dedicated to my teachers. I hope you will have as much fun reading it as I had writing it. ©

NOTES: The February 2012 edition of National Geographic magazine, published in over 25 languages, features an eight page article on the da Vinci. A one hour documentary entitled the Mystery of a Masterpiece was shown on PBS and other US channels the week of January 25th. It can be ordered on DVD through the National Geographic website. The documentary will be aired in Europe on Arte Channel May 5th, this year. “Leonardo’s Lost Princess” will be published in French in late April and Italian later this year.

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How I Met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Birgit Gewehr

Maybe it began in the Canaries in the early eighties that a door to the teachings opened for me. I was in Gomera for holidays and enjoying lonesome walks through beautiful mountains, canyons and forests. Alone in this wild and somehow magic nature I felt a strong wish for getting into contact with the deep truth of it all... I could not really name it. I had lost belief in the god of my childhood long time ago but I still knew the power of praying. My prayer was not logic at all, it was something like: "God, I don't believe in you anymore but please lead me on a spiritual path." I was on a sort of pilgrimage.

Back home in Berlin I found a book about Buddhist philosophy. I had no idea about Buddhism before and was amazed by statements like: Everything is illusion. The mind creates all.

1984 I travelled together with a friend to India and Nepal. Looking for travel reports I had come upon the book "Way of the white clouds" by Lama Govinda and reports of Alexandra David-Neel. I understood that there was a tradition and lineage of Tibetan Buddhist masters. I was fascinated by their spiritual attainments and their final liberation.

In Nepal we went on a trekking tour in the Himalaya mountains. After reaching our goal, the Anapurna base camp at 4000 meters, I was not satisfied but depressed. All my life I had been fighting. I was fed up of always running after something, always up and down, happy and unhappy again. I felt old, as if I had gone through everything in life, as if I had come to an end – a very strange feeling as I was 29 years young.

One day I cycled from Kathmandu to Boudhanath, on a sightseeing tour to the big Stupa. I was overwhelmed. The atmosphere was magic, wild pilgrims surrounded the Stupa, people from all over the world seemed to come here to search for wisdom; the sound of drums and bells filled the air, and last but not least these Tibetan khampas were very good looking.

I spent the whole day looking for a place to stay and finally rented a room in a house for pilgrims. The place was managed by a Yugoslavian woman who was living there with her Bhutanese husband and her little son: it was Zeljka. I had found my number one Vajra sister although I did not know that in this moment.

I was in a strange mood. Every night I had fever and great fear. Every morning the fever was gone and I explored Boudhanath and kept moving around its pole, the Stupa, over and over again. Zeljka and I became good friends and she helped me a lot answering all my questions. I had come to the conclusion, that I had always lived in fear and effort and that I needed help. I started looking for a meditation teacher.

I went to Kopan, a nearby monastery. The teacher, a monk, gave a talk for Westerners. He told us that if we were attached to someone's body, we should see it as a bunch of bones, flesh and blood. I asked whether we could meditate and enjoy at the same time but he answered: Not yet. Zeljka took me on a visit to Chatral Rinpoche, her teacher. He patted my head softly and fed me with fruit, he treated me like a child and I felt safe and happy at his feet, but he only accepted students who spoke Tibetan.

I heard of a living Dakini, the wife of Urgyan Tulku in nearby Nagi Gompa. I walked up the mountain and found a beautiful old gompa. Nuns were singing and playing drums, it was the first time I saw women practising. The Tulku and his wife were not present.

Zeljka advised me to visit a teacher, who in these months was living opposite her house: Dzonang Rinpoche from the Nyingma monastery in Dhera Dun in India. I asked him to teach me meditation. He only spoke Tibetan and a young man was translating. He told me twice to come back again. On the third day he asked me to watch the nature of my mind. I had never met anybody who was so pure and kind and relaxed, and at the same time so determined, that I followed his somehow mysterious advice. After some days I had to tell him what I had found. I had to admit that my thoughts were always dealing with future or past, I was never just present and so often lost in complicated mental constructions, hardly ever relaxed. To tame my mind, which he told me was like a wild horse, he let me first gaze at a stone and then at a holy object – as he called it: the white Tibetan letter A. He drew the shape of an A on a piece of paper. I felt more and more curious and open, deeply touched by his great kindness and clarity.

Finally he put the question to me: "What colour is the mind?" For three days I thought about it. I was so fed up with my confused mind that I wished my mind would be white – white like an empty piece of paper on which I could always write something fresh and new. I was not completely satisfied with this answer, because I thought the mind could not have a colour, but it was also not nothing. He revealed the secret to me in one sentence: "The mind is like a mirror." It was wonderful. Like a miracle. I knew it was true although I did not really understand it.

Dzonang Rinpoche also listened to my dreams and came to the conclusion I needed purification. I began to do the practice of prostrations and Vajrasattva. He said that Guru Yoga was still missing, I would get it later, and, he joked that it is also a Tibetan habit to leave something back so that one has a reason to return.

Two months later I was preparing to go back to Germany. Zeljka told me that in Europe there was a great Tibetan master called Namkhai Norbu and she sang me the Song of Vajra. It sounded very beautiful. But I did not ask where this teacher lived, my idea was to return to Boudhanath. I did not know that I would never see Dzonang Rinpoche again, as he passed away soon after.

Back in Berlin my former living conditions had changed completely. My boyfriend was married. The community I used to live in was just dissolving. My friends considered me strange. I had a breakdown and was brought to the hospital. After my recovery I moved to Hamburg where I found fresh wind from the sea and several dharma centers. Besides my job I began to study Tibetology and I went on with my Ngöndro practice and fixation on the A. I had the notes of the Song of the Vajra and I tried to play it on the guitar.

Half a year later, in 1985, in an esoteric magazine I discovered an announcement that Namkhai Norbu would be participat-



ing in the international conference "Spirit of Peace" in Amsterdam, representing Tibetan Buddhism. This was the master Zeljka had mentioned!

I went to Amsterdam with my brother. The talks were boring. Everybody was tiring, soft and peaceful. Then Namkhai Norbu began to speak, in Italian, translated by Barrie Simmons: "What does peace mean? For the sheep peace means there is no wolf, for the wolf peace means there are enough sheep to eat."

The audience woke up. This master was like a storm. With amazing energy and presence he spoke about inner peace and the nature of mind. Afterwards I found him in the cafeteria sitting together with some students. I approached with folded hands to greet him, bowed and said: "Rinpoche..." He interrupted me: "My name is Norbu. Sit down and have some wine with us." A woman was just complaining that her friends could not understand the dharma and did not accept her spiritual path. He said to her: "You don't see that they have totally pure nature!" I was impressed; this was also an answer for me!

I told him that my Ngöndro practice had been a strong experience at the beginning but now it was only an obligatory act and I was developing more and more aversion against it. He said: "It is better to stop

it, relax and concentrate on the essential practice with A." I felt relieved. I asked him how it is possible to build up strong will and aspiration to work with the practice and still go beyond this kind of tension and relax while practising. He folded a piece of paper and then with a second piece of paper he cut the first one along the folded line. "You see, paper cuts paper."

Then there was a panel discussion and Namkhai Norbu was also sitting on the stage. Suddenly three men in the audience took the microphone and one of them, a bearded man with a Muslim cap, was the well known musician Cat Stevens. He shouted out: "This meeting is satanic, everybody who is not committed to Allah, is committed to the devil!" Everybody was shocked. Nobody knew what to do. There were no body-guards working at the conference. People were running around, speakers on the stage made helpless remarks like: "I am happy that you showed me how aggressive I still am."


Namkhai Norbu did not move. He kept completely calm. Somehow the trouble came to an end. I think the Muslims drew back. I kept my balance just looking at this master, who was like a rock in the breaking waves.

Some months later I went to participate in his retreat at Merigar in summer of 1985. About 60 people had come together under an open tent-roof, among them was Zeljka! The A and the Song of the Vajra sounded over the hills. Namkhai Norbu explained that we should find ourselves in the nature of our mind which is like a mirror instead of looking through the glasses of duality, as is our habit. We practised Guru Yoga together. I felt like coming home.

In the small Gonpa in the so-called yellow house I found myself stunned in front of an image of a wild looking woman with only one eye. I was told she is considered the protector of the Dzogchen teachings. "And the dog?" With one hand she seemed to whirl a dog in the air. "She sends dogs as messengers."

I don't know whether that is true or a fantasy. But it is true is that I found my Vajra Guru like in a dream and I am very thankful. ©

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