

THE MIRROR

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Upcoming Retreats with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu



Photo: D. Littlejohn

2008

Italy
Merigar West
September 26–October 3
Dzogchen Teaching Retreat:
Training with the sounds of elements from
Dzogchen Upadesha root tantra
“Dra Thalgyur”
Closed webcast
www.dzogchen.it

October 6–9
Santi Maha Sangha III Level Exam
October 10–17
Santi Maha Sangha IV Level Training

October 31–November 4
Practice and Teaching dedicated to the
Dead

Spain, Barcelona
November 14–20
Dzogchen Upadesha transmission and
instruction “Kunsang Jaku”, a Terma
teaching by the great tertön Duddul Dorje
Closed webcast
www.dzogchen.es

Brazil, São Paulo
November 26–30
Transmission and instructions of
Longsal Guru Yoga of White A
www.dzogchen.com.br

Chile, Santiago
December 5–7
Weekend Retreat
www.dzogchen.cl

Argentina, Tashigar Sur
December 26–January 1
The Dzogchen tredchod teaching of Jigmed
Lingpa from the Instruction “Yeshe Lama”
Closed Webcast
www.tashigar-sur.com.ar

2009

New Zealand, Auckland
Jan. 23–25
Weekend seminar
(See International Contacts page for info)

Australia, Sydney
Jan. 30–Feb. 1
Weekend seminar
www.dzogchen.org.au

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Retreat participants following teachings outside the Merigar West Gonpa.

Photo: N. Zeitz

Dra Thalgyur Teaching with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Merigar West, Italy, August 11–18, 2008

Lauri Denyer

From August 11th to August 18th Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche gave a concise teaching from the commentaries of Vimilamitra on the Dra Thalgyur, the root Upadesha tantra of Dzogchen. This teaching comes from one of the thirteen dimensions, and was transmitted by Tenpa Ngowa Tonpa. It is very ancient. In our epoch the teacher is Garab Dorje, before whom this teaching did not exist on our planet. This text explains the origins of Samsara and Nirvana and how they are different.

As Rinpoche said, having this book without having transmission would not be very useful, so it was very fortunate to receive these teachings. Rinpoche very kindly offered examples throughout, which were very beneficial in understanding the material. At one point he chuckled, saying that

what he was teaching about, the subdivisions of emotion, reminded him of when he was studying Abbidharmakosa, and that if we wanted to really get into this knowledge, we could do that too.

Rinpoche taught from the first two chapters of the six chapters of the Dra Thalgyur. The first chapter detailed the twelve subdivisions of the explanation of what creates samsara and nirvana, and the three root types of marigpa. There are immensely detailed explanations of all the factors, which develop samsara, answers to the question: If we are perfected since the beginning, why are we in samsara? The base of samsara and nirvana is the same, the primordial state, and it is possible to get beyond them, to return to this root. The format of the book is in questions from Devas as students and answers from Vajradhara, and

that enables humans and beings to relate to the material in a concrete way, since it would be impossible for us to comprehend the communication directly from Dharmakaya to Sambogakaya.

Since all beings have the same primordial potentiality, but are dominated by ignorance, the wheel of transmigration turns without ceasing. The descriptions of the ways in which cause and effect work, and what the role of secondary causes is in producing a result, the nature of the elements and the five colors, the way negative karma produces emotions and then manifest on a material level, accepting and rejecting, the increasing materiality of samsara, and how to understand this and reverse it are all contained in this chapter. There are many categories related to the relationship of the three root emotions to our five

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10 years of
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Photo: Grzegorz Ladra

“The Song of the Vajra is the very essence”

Merigar West, August 16th 2008

When we do Guruyoga, we always add the Song of the Vajra. You already know that the principle of Guruyoga is being in your real nature. The Song of the Vajra is our existence, body, speech and mind, subject, object, everything for integrating in that state. When we haven't discovered our real nature yet, then the Song of the Vajra becomes very important for discovering it and having that experience, that knowledge. We can find that explanation in the original texts of the tantra. In the Upadesha tantra there is the 'Nyida Khajor', which means the union of the sun and moon. Its real meaning is an explanation of all the different aspects of the state of the bardo. In the bardo, in particular the bardo of the Dharmata, which means after death, our potentiality – sound and light and rays – is naked at that moment and not conditioned by the material level. For that reason if we have had some experience [of our real nature] during our lifetime, then we recognise it and can have the realisation of the Sambhogakaya at that moment. So the Song of the Vajra is mainly related to that.

In general we say the Song of the Vajra. *Vajra* means our potentiality, our real nature. When there are teachings, methods, for discovering and getting in our real nature, we add the name 'vajra'. For example, we call teachers of Dzogchen 'dorje lobpon' or 'master of the vajra' and students who follow that kind of teaching 'dorje lobma', or 'students of the vajra'. So *vajra* always indicates our real nature and the Song of the Vajra is for bringing us into that knowledge, that state.

The Song of the Vajra that we use can be found in the Nyida Khajor tantra. In general there are so many different kinds of tantras, particularly tantras that are *terma* teachings. Most of them are called *tagdrol* tantras, which means that when we wear them, they are the cause of liberation because they are related to the 6 senses. When we have contact with our 6 senses it can always create a cause for liberation, not just for practitioners but for all sentient beings.

We have our 6 senses – hearing, seeing, tasting etc., and then with our mind we do meditation, visualisation. For that we have 6 things called *tagdrol*, *thongdrol*, *thödro*l etc. *Thongdrol* means an image is prepared with the figure of Samantabhadra *yab yum* and a mandala formed by a mantra. Sometimes we can find this in very important places and when people see it, it creates the cause of a very good relationship, meaning that in the future they will have the possibility to have a connection with that path in some way. The Song of the Vajra has that potentiality and the short version, the 6 syllables, also has that function.

Just seeing the letters of the Song of the Vajra creates a good cause. Then when we hear it, it makes a good cause. For example, when practitioners sing the Song of the Vajra, many sentient beings hear it who will have a precise cause to join the path in the future. This is called *thödro*l.

Then we have the 'Bardo *thödro*l' mainly with mantras, invocations of Shitro, the Song of the Vajra etc., and when people are dying we read this [to them]. So you can understand why it is called *thödro*l because *thödro*l is more developed, more diffused than others like, for example, the Tibetan Book of the Dead, the Shitro of Karma Lingpa which is a very nice invocation of the Bardo *thödro*l.

All 'Bardo *thödro*l' tantras have explanations about the Song of the Vajra mentioning the two kinds of [Vajra Songs of the] state of Samantabhadra and Samantabhadri. We can find many different versions of these two and in each *terma* you read, the Song of the Vajra is not always the same. Many people ask which is the correct one because people always think that one is correct and the other is wrong. But in the real sense, all of them are correct because this teaching did not come from only one place or at only one time. There are so many places, so many dimensions, so many realised beings in the universe and different *termas* originated in different dimensions. Don't worry if they are slightly different. What is important is to follow the transmission that you received.

We also have, for example, the complete *terma* teaching of my teacher, Changchub Dorje, which has a lot of words that make it different from others. But what we use in the Song of the Vajra is called the non-dual state of Samantabhadra and Samantabhadri. There is only one state, not two. Its real nature is called *chönyi kyi rang dra*, the natural sound of the Dharmata, which means that sound develops from emptiness. Then how does its potentiality manifest? That is natural sound. So the Song of the Vajra is that kind of sound.

Its title is the Song of the Vajra; 'song' means that we must sing and 'singing' means that we work with our existence through these words and sing them. In the 'Nyida Khajor' tantra it talks about singing and dancing the Song of the Vajra and that is what we practitioners should apply. But even though it is explained that way in the tantra and most Dzogchen masters and practitioners know that it is very important, singing and dancing it are not very diffused.

I had my first contact with the Song of the Vajra through dreams when I was 13 years old. At that time I considered myself to be a scholar, a very intellectual person because I had started to study many sutra teachings. But

even though I had received many Dzogchen instructions and teachings, I still did not have much knowledge of it. When I had that dream of the Song of the Vajra I did not know what it was and how important it was. I asked my uncle, Khyentse Rinpoche about it and he said it was a *tagdrol* mantra. I asked him what a *tagdrol* was and he replied that it was related to the 6 liberations. Then I thought that maybe it was something important. I asked him to give me that teaching and later he gave me a kind of initiation of that. I was satisfied when I received it but I still did not know the real meaning.

I was only interested in knowing how to sing it and I asked my uncle to teach me how to sing it but he said that he didn't know. Then I told him that in my dream he was with me and was singing it. He said to me, "That was your dream," and that he had never learned it. In this dream there was another mantra that was also called a Vajra Song mainly used during Ganapuja. My uncle was also very expert at singing this during my dream. Then I said to him that if you don't know this one, you should at least know the other one because in the Sakyapa tradition when they do the puja for the Guardians there is an offering to the *dakinis* at the end of the puja and at that time they chant this mantra. But they don't sing, they use the *damaru* and bell and recite it very quickly. I'd learned this ritual by heart because I had learned all the rituals of the Sakyapa tradition and my uncle used it when he did the puja of the Guardians so I said to him, "I am sure you know this". He replied that he knew it a little because he had had some dreams but he didn't generally sing it.

Then I asked him, "How do you sing it in your dreams?" but he said that he didn't remember very well and asked me how it was in my dream. I told him that I only remembered some of the melody. He wanted to listen to that and so I tried to show him. He said that it was perfect so he must have remembered something but he said that he had never heard the Song of the Vajra. He told me to ask my uncle Togden because perhaps the students of Adzom Drugpa sing it sometimes at Adzomgar. Later when I met my uncle Togden, I asked him and he said that he knew it a little. I insisted that he sing it but it wasn't anything like the melody I had heard. He sang a bit like they chant the prayers normally at the monastery.

Later on I found a book by Adzom Drugpa's students about how to sing this Song of the Vajra and how to dance it. I tried to understand the explanations but it was similar to the way they dance and sing the Lama Dances. This was how I had my first contact with the Song of the Vajra.

But then later on when I met my teacher, Changchub Dorje, received direct introduction into Dzogchen teaching and finally knew what Dzogchen really was, after that I had many dreams. In my dreams I was always singing the Song of the Vajra and was always very expert at singing it but when I woke up, I didn't know how to sing it. But gradually I started to learn it and then later I knew how to sing it. And even today I still have many dreams in which I am singing the Song of the Vajra at different moments, in different dimensions.

In many traditions of Dzogchen, they do not use the Song of the Vajra that we use, but that doesn't mean they don't know its importance. Not only singing but also dancing. If you study the 'Nyida Khajor' tantra then you can understand what it means when it says we should 'sing' and 'dance'. By singing and dancing it, we can increase our capacity of Dzogchen practice. In particular those who have no knowledge of Dzogchen can wake up when they use it. This is the explanation we can find in the Dzogchen tantra.

Then it says that anywhere you sing the Song of the Vajra, even though you think you are singing it alone, you are never alone. When you sing the Song of the Vajra millions of *dakas* and *dakinis* are present. When you sing the Song of the Vajra, that place will always be a sacred place meaning that there is a potentiality, people go there and it makes a cause for liberation. So you see that the Song of the Vajra is really very important. That is why we always use it.

A lot of people sometimes ask me why other Dzogchen masters and practitioners don't sing it and why only I sing it and teach it. This is because I find that the Song of the Vajra is the very essence: when you learn the real meaning of the Song of the Vajra it is something like a key to all knowledge. The root of all the different methods of the Dzogchen *semde*, *longde* and *upadesha* are related to the Song of the Vajra.

The syllables of the Song of the Vajra govern all our *vajra* body. For example, when we pronounce 'Ema kiri kiri' etc., each syllable corresponds to a different place, different *chakra* – main *chakras*, secondary *chakras* – all are

Yeshi Silvano Namkhai

The Presence called Instant Presence

Yeshi Silvano Namkhai

Moscow, Russia, 09.07.2008

Today I will focus on the first verses of this text, Rigpai Kyujug. It is a cryptic introductory text that briefly explains, in poetic form, the essence of the Dzogchen Teaching in terms of a state, something more than a method. The first two verses present vision in a very concise way. Generally we have two or three main ideas about vision.

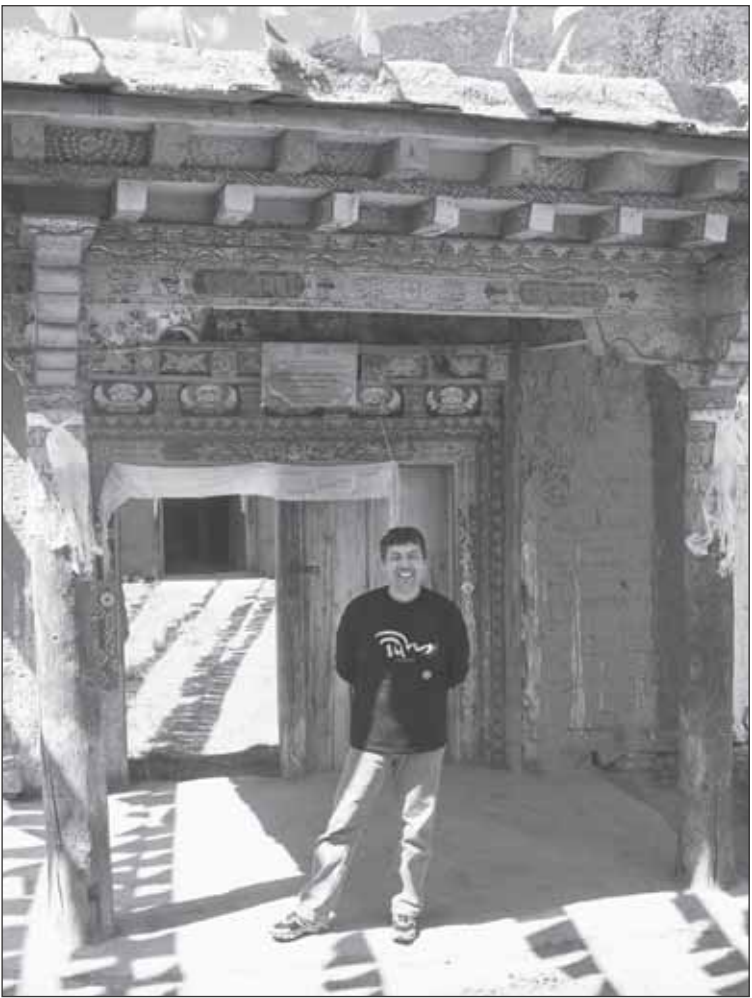
When we introduce the state of Dzogchen, we start from the idea of vision. With vision we don't mean vision like fantasy but our idea of reality in general. So basically we identify three kinds of vision. First is karmic vision which means our usual, ordinary view. When we talk about karmic vision, we are immediately reminded that there is a sort of law and that is the law of karma. The law of karma means that somehow we have some debts with suffering and we have to suffer. Then there are all the possible ways of perceiving reality and creating bad karma. Then we basically speak about passion.

We have a different vision called the vision of the practitioner, the vision of people following the path, which should be our correct vision. It is connected with our understanding of recognizing a Teacher, recognizing a method in terms of the teaching and, of course, applying it.

Finally we have a third kind of vision, very mysterious, which we call pure vision. So we understand quite easily that with karmic vision we create a state of suffering and that whatever we do creates suffering at the end. Somehow we have an idea what the vision of a practitioner is in terms of the path. In terms of the path, vision means that somehow we should have an attitude, we should have a sort of behaviour and we should follow the teaching and apply it in a certain way. We face all these instructions understanding that the real meaning of Dzogchen is a state of perfection. We try to understand what having a sort of behaviour or attitude means and try to integrate with the idea of a perfect state.

We always have the problem of balancing our karmic vision and our vision as practitioners and, in the end, something that represents the state of enlightenment, our Teacher, which is a kind of pure vision. We always have the problem of understanding what an enlightened Teacher means. We have the problem of understanding what pure vision means in general. In the end, we always confuse the idea of recognizing a teacher as a root teacher with the one that introduces us to our real condition.

At a certain point, we see our Teacher on the throne looking



Yeshi Namkhai in Galenting.

like Buddha. Then another day we see him eating or going to the bathroom and another day we see him ill in the hospital. Somehow we should understand what these three visions mean. When we talk about three visions, we are reminded of the three levels of existence. So of course, we have a human level and on a human level we have karmic vision. In the same way, we have a Teacher who has to go to the bathroom

or gets ill or has an ordinary life. We, too, are in the same state in which we also go to the bathroom, get ill and so on.

On the other hand, when we talk about the vision of the practitioner on the path, it means that we are talking more about our energy level, the voice level. In this context we understand how we deal with experience because when we talk about the energy level, we talk about clarity. When

we talk about clarity, in general, we talk about the method we should apply to have benefit, to have some results in terms of acquiring knowledge. Then, as we said, at the end we should also have pure vision which means we practically go beyond form, so we don't focus anymore on the idea of having or not having a form, or applying or not applying the method.

When we think about our Teacher it's important that the Teacher represents all three states. If it's simple to understand the human level, being human, we can sort of imagine how it works on an energy level. Sometimes it becomes very difficult to imagine what pure vision means, such as the level beyond form like Samanthabhadra. Generally this state is called the mind level and is explained through some experience like an experience of emptiness or presence.

What should immediately be clear to all of us is that we have different understandings of action on these three levels. So if we are on the human level, we have a lot of action and movement as humans because we move all the time. When we go to the energy level, we are already using some methods and are starting to do a sort of contemplation. We start to meditate and deal more with the internal than the external universe.

You know that at the human level we work a lot outside of ourselves with our actions or movements. When we work at an energy level, we create a link between

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governed by these sounds. When practitioners are more familiar with this practice, if you apply pressure to some of these places, doing visualisation of the seed syllable that governs that place, sounding that sound, you can coordinate that energy. For example, if you have a very bad pain in your knee, you should know which sound of the Song of the Vajra governs that place. Then you do that visualisation, pronounce that sound and you can coordinate all this energy. That is an example according to our vajra body.

Then our vajra body corresponds to all our dimension: our nearest dimension is our globe. We are on this globe. Where is it? In our solar system. Where is our solar system? In what we consider to be our universe. Each of these correspondences exists within our vajra body. That principle exists not only in the Dzogchen teaching but this explanation can also be found in the Chakrasamvara tantra.

Sometimes we don't find very detailed explanations of these things in the Dzogchen texts, only rough explanations. But in many of the teachings related to longsals which I received through my dreams, there are very precise explanations. One day, when people have really matured, I will teach them that longsals teaching. At the moment I feel a little afraid to teach this kind of teaching because a lot of people will consider it very good for doing healing and will want to use it as a kind of therapy instead of Dzogchen teaching. Dzogchen teaching is not only doing therapy. First of all it is for discovering our real nature, having total realisation. In this case according to our circumstances, we can use different ways.

When we sing the Song of the Vajra, there are ten syllables at the end called wang chu or the 10 potentialities. There are also these points of potentiality on our body. For example, when we follow the method of the Dzogchen longde teaching related to the longsals, we press on these points and can have different types of experiences. In general even though there are no explanations, we can understand them because they are used and [knowledge of them is] widespread.

Our thumb, index finger and ring finger are also related to our potentiality and we can have different kinds of experiences but mainly experiences of emptiness, clarity and sensation. If you observe a statue of Buddha in meditation, the hands are joined and the thumbs touch because uniting the thumbs is the principle of connecting energy, which gives the experience of emptiness. When you put the thumbs together you find it easier to be in the state of emptiness.

The index finger is related to the potentiality of clarity. You can see a lot of statues of figures in a state of meditation such as Longchenpa who unify the thumb and index finger and place them on the knees – emptiness and clarity unified. You can have that kind of experience more.

The ring finger has mainly the potentiality of sensation that is more related to our physical body while clarity is more related to our energy. Unifying the thumb and ring finger is the principle of detong [experience related to the sensation of pleasure (de) and emptiness (tong)]. This is necessary for a lot of Vajrayana practices in which you experience not only emptiness but emptiness and live sensation.

This is how we explain in the Song of the Vajra and you should also learn how it governs all important functions. Particularly for Dzogchen practitioners, it is very important for integration, not only integrating your physical body in your practice but also your dimension. In the same way that there are different types of chakras in our body there are also similar ones outside us.

In India, Oddiyana, Tibet, China, etc., in ancient times they talked about 24 places and 32 different sacred places mostly because this knowledge was found in these places. In India there are many sacred places which mainly come from the Chakrasamvara tantra. There is also this explanation when you do the practice of Vajrayogini. When we do longsals practice we learn about a lot of sacred places but there are still a lot we do not know about. This is an example of the relationship between our internal and external chakras. When we are expert with our inner chakras, we can easily discover the places of the outer chakras. If we dis-

cover that, then when we go there and do some practice we can have more effects of developing our clarity and our practice. This is all a bit related to the Song of the Vajra.

A lot of people ask what type of visualisation they should do when they sing the Song of the Vajra. People think that if they do some visualisation it becomes important, then when they know a little what they should do and what it means, they feel it is perfect. But this type of knowledge is always related to the mind. Mind does not have much value. Mind is very good at creating samsara but not at bringing us to nirvana or realisation. For that reason when we need to have some type of realisation we should go beyond mind.

When we sing the Song of the Vajra we are not using mind. Even though a lot of thoughts arise while we are singing, we do not go after them and we only remain in the presence of the sound. If you have experience of instant presence, you are in that state, integrated with that sound, it is perfect. And even if you don't have that capacity yet, you can do Guruyoga, with the visualisation of the white A in a thigle, you relax so that you are only in that presence, and then you sing the Song of the Vajra, remaining in that sound. The sounds continue to change, one after the other, until the end of the Song of the Vajra. Even though we do not have knowledge of instant presence that is not so difficult to do. In that way knowledge of instant presence can arise.

In the 'Nyida Khajor' tantra it says that if you have a problem discovering your real nature, when, for example, the Master gives the introduction, you follow but find it difficult, or you are not sure whether you have discovered it, then it says you shouldn't insist on only doing that but you should relax in the Song of the Vajra and sing it. That way it will arise one day. We don't know which day it will be but we have many days in our life. What is important is going ahead in a correct way and one day we will have that knowledge.



Transcribed by Liz Granger, editing J. Winkler, L. Granger

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our capacity, potentiality and what is external. That's why we do things like visualization and we transform into something, for example. We understand there is a relation between our internal and external self. We always say our 'self' because whatever we perceive is in our mind so it's created by us. When we go beyond this idea of form, it means we also go beyond dualistic vision. We don't have the idea anymore about external and internal, there is only one state and it's basically made of our presence. Presence means that the rest is only a feeling that is observing reality, observing manifestation and observing our own manifestation. If we make a simple example about this, it's easier to understand.

If I light a candle or incense, for example, I am doing an action. The action I am doing is lighting incense or a candle for the altar. Every day you make a sort of offering and sometimes you notice a little bit beyond the simple action of lighting candles and incense, as if you were in a big monastery or church, some place that gives you a deep, profound feeling of spirituality. Something like this.

If you do this action with a little bit of presence like in a state of meditation, it may happen that smelling this incense or looking at the candle, you have a feeling about this big spiritual space. At that moment, if you look well at what you perceive, what you feel, you immediately notice that it is not limited to only smelling incense or looking at the candle,

but you start to feel there are also sounds, a depth of space. It could be a dark place or a place full of light but somehow there is some action in terms of light, some movement of light, of people, that could be full or empty or could be an echo. Slowly you notice that this simple candle or incense brings to mind something broader in you.

If we can keep our state of observation a little bit, like meditation, and not go directly into this vision of the church or whatever you see, and we keep this state of observing the relation between the candle, the incense and this vision, in this understanding we have a kind of presence called instant presence. ©

Transcribed by Dasha Mikhailova and Edited by Naomi Zeitz



Developing our culture: the office of the Dzogchen Community in Grosseto, Italy

The Mirror spoke to Paolo Ferraro, Yeshe Namkhai's assistant, who runs the office of the Dzogchen Community in the town of Grosseto, Italy, about how the office was created and his involvement in it.

The Mirror: Paolo, how did the idea to open an office for the Community in Grosseto (a small town in Tuscany 50 km west of Merigar West) come about?

Paolo: Grosseto is the place where Yeshe Namkhai and his family have been living for several years. After he came back from Tibet in August 2007, Yeshe decided to dedicate himself totally to the Community and to the teaching. So he felt it was necessary to find a place where his ideas about how to develop the culture of the Community could take root and grow in the best way possible.

In December 2007 he saw an announcement for selling a small office in a shopping centre and in January 2008 he became the owner of it. Everything happened quickly and spontaneously.

The Mirror: And how did you arrive in Grosseto?

Paolo: Well, I have to start from way back... in 1979 when I was nine years old I had the great fortune to meet Yeshe Namkhai and become his friend. The only thing

that I have to my credit is that I never lost sight of him! When he came back from Tibet Yeshe helped me a lot. I had been working for a year on the editorial staff of a television channel but the job literally revolted me (I don't even know myself why I hated it so much). The fact was that I was depressed and didn't feel like doing anything. The television people asked me to come back to work but, with my overall feeling of inertia, I decided to leave for good. Yeshe pulled me out of my depression thanks to his extraordinary dynamism. He saw me in that condition and told me straight away – why don't you do this, why don't you do that? This was how he woke me up from my inertia and I started to collaborate with him by putting myself at his disposal. I realised that it would be very difficult but the way things have turned out I can say that there are some moments in life in which certain things have to happen.

In January 2008 when he got the office, Yeshe said to me, why don't you come and live in Grosseto and work on a series of projects? I accepted enthusiastically and, once I had found a house, in May I came to Grosseto to live and work. I also have to thank my wife who moved here with me

leaving a job that was better than her current one.

The Mirror: Can you tell us about the projects that the office is working on?

Paolo: The fundamental thing is to spread the culture of the Community while maintaining the uniqueness and authenticity that characterize it. Naturally Yeshe Namkhai carries out this delicate task of interpretation at world level. I only try to follow his guidelines by drawing up project documents in the belief that it can be useful to let people know how precious our cultural patrimony is. I think that if the Norwegian Nobel Committee has accepted the request to make Chögyal Namkhai Norbu a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize, it is also minimally due to the fact that we have developed an accurate diffusion of our culture. The same thing could be said for the project regarding the Museum of Tibetan Art and Culture that was presented to the mayor of Arcidosso in July and also, for example, the website for Merigar West which will be completely renewed, making use of some wonderful quotations: those of our precious Master.

I repeat that the fundamental aim of the office is to keep alive the authenticity of our culture as transmitted by Rinpoche. Yeshe Namkhai has devoted himself to pursue this objective and it is up to us all to follow his example. ©

A few words about the relationship between Gar and Ling

Paolo Ferraro
Assistant to Yeshe Namkhai for the International Gakyil

Both Gar and Ling are places where practitioners meet and practice Dharma. In the Mandala of the Community they are tightly linked. The link of interdependence between Gar and Ling must express itself by means of mutual collaboration and support. The aims and objects are the same, they only differ in the physical dimension: in the Mandala, as well as in samsaric vision, a Gar is nearer the Master than a Ling. Several Lings orbit around a Gar and obviously the people taking part in a Ling do the same with a Gar. The membership is the same, only distance and dimension make a difference.

For a Gar and its survival it is necessary to have the contribution of a large number of practitioners. In samsaric vision the dimension of a Gar means the necessity of facing a big economic effort to make sure of its survival. The economic dimension of a Ling, as big as it might be, cannot be so heavy as it is for a Gar. For this reason, particularly with the present financial assets, all the Lings must contribute to the maintenance of the Gar. If they do not do so, even if they have serious reasons, they risk the survival of the Gar, which in its

turn, according to the vision of the Mandala, means the survival of the Community itself.

The Ling has a fundamental role: as the basic element of the organizational structure it expresses the local dimension but, at the same time, it takes part in the global dimension in as much as it is indissolubly linked to the Gar. The Gar, in its turn, having a higher heritage than the Ling, must transmit its knowledge (stock of experiences) so as to promote the local Community.

Both the Gakyil of the Gar and the Gakyil of the Ling must fully collaborate. Although there is not any hierarchic tie, the Gakyil of the Gar carries out a more delicate and articulate role (for reasons of physical closeness to the Master and the bigness of the Gar) than the Gakyil of the Ling and we must not forget this in the relationship of collaboration.

Beyond the complicated management structure, due to our dualistic vision, in the Mandala of the Community, the Gars, the Lings and the practitioners are all integrated in the golden symbol of the Longsal, the authentic state of knowledge of Dzogchen. ©

>> **Dra Thalgyur** continued from page 1

senses and organs and objects of senses, many divisions and subdivisions, all very useful to hear about and try to understand, in order to really examine the ways we are in conditioned and formed by these factors.

The second chapter contains the ten subdivisions of the nature of the real condition, beyond suffering and deals with questions such as "What are sentient beings, what is their condition?" "How is our real condition beyond any kind of illusion?" The real state of enlightened beings, uncondi-

tioned by illusion, the absence of the concept of illusion or non-illusion, the absence of dualistic vision, and many other discussions of this nature were aspects of the material of the beginning of this chapter. There were also then discussions of how our real nature is empty, and non-dual. And so on.

Although for me the various categories and subdivisions and the structure itself of this teaching were beyond my intellectual capacity to assimilate and understand in an ordered way, the effect was to produce a sense

of the reality of this view, and a desire to make it part of my real understanding, since just hearing it made the denseness of my own samsaric vision less oppressive. But as Rinpoche said, those who go to a teacher for teachings should apply what he teaches, and do practice, not just listen and understand in an intellectual way, like receiving medicine from a doctor and not taking it.

This very rich retreat stimulated discussion and brought great satisfaction to students everywhere. It was attended in Merigar by more than 500 students from

many countries, and the web cast included at least 800 audio and between 70 and 80 video connections.

Merigar is a place where the teachings feel as natural as the wind in the trees, as refreshing as the fall of soft rain on the dry earth (however, it did not rain at this retreat), as vast as the blue sky above it. It is the perfect place of assembly for the thousands who come here each year to hear teachings. The way in which the Community here has learned to offer all necessities to the students in a simple way

is always impressive. Good food is available and plentiful both at the Golden House and at the Meribar. There are books and DVDs of all the practices available at the Shang Shung booth, and an enormous selection of the wider world of Dharma books at the shop. Many lings from other countries also offer useful materials to sell. In general it was a blissful and congenial gathering, with much benefit both for those fortunate enough to participate and for all sentient beings everywhere. ©

Finding the perfect Sky Mandala

July retreat with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu at Merigar East

Liz Granger & Andrei Besedin

The new Gar at Merigar East, Romania, hosted its second annual retreat with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in mid-July. It is situated in east Romania about 35 km from the ancient port of Constanta, founded by the Greeks in the 6th century BC, conquered first by the Romans and then much later by the Ottomans. Originally called Tomis, legend has it that Jason landed here with the Argonauts after finding the Golden Fleece. The area has a very long history intermingling a wide variety of different cultures and beliefs and is now home to the Dzogchen Teaching with its roots reaching back before written history.

The Gar is off the beaten track a few kilometers from the tiny village of 23 August, walking distance from the Black Sea coast and a little distant from the noisy tourist resorts that dot the coast. It is close to the beach and surrounded by broad stretches of fields of wheat and sunflowers extending far into the distance and which, at the height of the summer, are filled with yellow wheat stubble and a few rogue sunflowers.

Just like last year the enormous white Gumpa tent was in a large bare flat field stretching as far as the eye could see, under an enormous space of bright blue sky. Strings of coloured prayer flags flapped in the breeze around the teaching tent, flanked by a smaller tent for eating and sitting and another for registration.

The day before the retreat, Rinpoche came to the Gar and spoke to a group of his students who were gathered in the Gumpa tent.

“Look around, you see, there’s more sky than earth. It’s like a big sky mandala. It is rare to find such a perfect sky mandala.”

Then he explained that before starting the retreat the next day, we still had something to do. “What can we do?”

His students were silent for a bit, and then someone suggested, “Guru yoga?”

“Who said Guru yoga? That’s correct! We always have to deal with Guru yoga”, said Rinpoche. “Let’s do a Guru yoga with the Song of the Vajra!”

And so we did.

This year’s retreat welcomed about 250 participants from all parts of Europe with the majority coming from Russia and the Ukraine. There were also many young practitioners from Eastern Europe – the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary and so on. The mood was festive, the ambient a little spartan yet perfect for receiving such important Dzogchen teachings. As the Master himself commented, “Even

though we are in this tent, we enjoy the situation as it is.”

On the opening day of the retreat Rinpoche was greeted by the Merigar East Gakyil who welcomed him saying that, “We turn to you as sunflowers to the sun” in order to receive his teaching. This is the distinctive flower that the Master chose the year before to be the symbol of the Gar because it fills so many of the surrounding fields under the powerful July sun and, as the sun passes from east to west, so the sunflowers turn their faces to it.

For this retreat, the Master had chosen to explain a commentary on ‘Khorde Rushen’ from the Root Tantra ‘Dra Thalgyur’ by Vimalamitra, an important Dzogchen Master who lived at the time of Padmasambhava and who manifested the Great Transference. The Master began the teaching session by giving a detailed history of the origin or *nyengyü* of the teaching and then went on to describe how he had been able to find two versions of the commentary, which was practically unknown in Tibet and very rare. Since the copies came from two different sources in Tibet and were hand-written he had found many mistakes and differences between the two. After managing to put them on the computer, Rinpoche said that he had been comparing and correcting the two versions and in the future hopes to be able to present the book in a form that can be translated. The ‘Dra Thalgyur’ explains many methods very clearly which are the essence of Dzogchen practice and by discovering the nature of mind, one discovers the state of Dzogchen. It is a discovery not only an intellectual idea.

The second day of teaching Rinpoche gave an extensive explanation of Guruyoga before starting to introduce Vimalamitra’s commentary. “Our mind is like a monkey”, he said, because we always follow our thoughts and this is one of our heaviest problems. The value of *rushen* practice is to learn how to distinguish our mind from our state of mind.

The weather elements manifested dramatically the following day during the morning session during which the Master started to explain the main teaching. With a precision similar to that of the Master’s, at exactly 10 o’clock the blustery grey skies opened up just at the moment Rinpoche started the main teaching and the rain poured down so strongly that it was difficult to hear him even through the loudspeakers. While explaining the instructions on the *rushen* of Body and Mind the Mas-



The new logo of Merigar East.



All photos by Jacek Machowski

ter commented that, “The aim of Dzogchen is to take you beyond limitations. This is what you can discover with this teaching. You can overcome your attachment to the body...” As the session closed the rain gradually stopped leaving the air fresh and cool.

The turbulence of the elements continued the day after with the wind blowing strongly as the teaching tent creaked and groaned like an ancient galleon at sea and flapped almost as if it was going to fly away in the force of the wind. Rinpoche continued

Amitayus and we did the practice together. He also explained that this practice is a *terma* teaching discovered by Nyagla Padma Dündul and described the circumstances in which he attained the Rainbow Body. Rinpoche explained how he had received the teaching directly from Ayu Khandro, his lady master who was a student of Padma Dündul and also from the son of Changchub Dorje. After the teaching session the Master and his wife Rosa visited the lunch tent and shared a simple meal with practitioners.

As usual Rinpoche rounded up the retreat with advice on how to integrate the practice into daily life and gave the *trilungs* of many Dzogchen Community practices. After the final practice he warned people about the dangers of certain Gyalpo practices and strongly advised those present not to get involved in them and how to protect themselves.

In spite of the ‘nomadic’ situation, the lack of running water and electricity on the land and the, at times, inclement weather, the organization of the retreat



with the main teaching regarding the *rushen* of Mind saying that when “...one has concrete experience, one discovers how one is limited”. After describing how to apply this *rushen*, he explained that the practice is not complete without *nalwab* or relaxing in our real nature immediately after the practice, which is the main point.

The fifth day was air and fire – the strong breeze lifting the Vajra Dance Mandalas in waves off the floor of the tent while the sun bore down from a limpid sky. It was also a full moon day and, the Master explained, good for doing practice to increase and purify so he gave the transmission of Guru

On the 6th day Rinpoche gave detailed explanations of the *rushen* practice found in other Dzogchen tantras. In particular the *terma* teaching received by Ratna Lingpa and the method of Vimalamitra from the Nyingthig Yazhi which differs a little. He also spoke about a famous master in east Tibet that his father received teachings from and related this to *shine* and *lhagthong* in Dzogchen. “Integration is the main point in Dzogchen,” said the Master, “but it is essential to discover our real nature first.” In the Dzogchen Community, he said, we use the inner *rushen* practice with the 6 Lokas which is linked to a *terma* teaching by Changchub Dorje.

was very smooth and relaxed thanks to a lot of dedicated hard work on the part of a very enthusiastic gakyil, retreat organizers and the students who came to help prepare before the start of the retreat. As always, we participants were overjoyed to be able to receive such profound teaching from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and hope that in the future the Master will be teaching at Merigar East in a new Gumpa. ©

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's First Retreat with the Dzogchen Community of Toronto

Introduction to Dzogchen
July 3rd-6th, 2008

Jacqueline Hanley

In the summer of 2006 a small group of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's students gave rise to another small group, driven by energy and a desire to learn and follow Rinpoche's teachings. Soon we were joined by a few others and in the Fall of 2006 we invited Jim Valby to teach Santi Maha Sangha. This was a great success, followed in short order by a workshop on Dream Yoga with Michael Katz and a Yantra Yoga retreat with Oni McKinsty in November 2007. Oni suggested that the word in Tsegylgar (actually from Naomi Zeitz) was that if we were to form a Gakyil and invite Rinpoche – he might very well accept.

The group was thunderstruck. We formed a tiny Gakyil of three at lightning speed and invited Rinpoche to come. He replied that, regretfully, he couldn't come. His schedule was too full. With a mixture of disappointment and relief we accepted this. Lo and behold a few days later Rinpoche wrote again and said he had re-jigged his schedule and he could come! We got into high gear again and by mid-December of 2007 we were buzzing around like blue-arse flies (as they say in the U.K.). We've been doing that ever since – until the aftermath of the retreat died down in mid-July, 2008.

Not knowing what to expect, we did P.R. as best we could with enormous help from the people in Conway and our local person who seems to know every inch of Toronto and to be connected with the whole Toronto-wide web of dharma practitioners. We thought perhaps 20 people would show up – maybe 50 or 60. In the end over 200 came to the public talk and about 120 to the retreat. Many are long-time practitioners of several teachers around Toronto. About 15 people came from Quebec. Others came from western Canada and the U.S. We had many volunteers and people on work-study who seemed to be always there when you needed them. A crew of experienced retreat organizers came from Tsegylgar to help. The coming together of the Canadian and American crews threw up a seismic wave of energy and everything got done with some minor glitches here and there.

Before the retreat we wanted to be sure that he and Rosa Namkhai were comfortable in the Grand Hotel and that Rinpoche himself would have time to rest and relax before the teachings. We heard he had the beautiful swimming pool almost to himself but that he met there a little girl from the place in Australia where Rinpoche has a Gar. One

beautiful clear, sunny morning before the retreat we went with Rinpoche, Rosa, Fabio, Naomi and most of the Tsegylgar and Toronto community helpers on a boat tour of Toronto harbour, and around the Toronto islands which are beautiful with great willows sweeping down to the margin of the lake. Something about it, perhaps the city skyline reminded Rinpoche of Vladivostok. He looked around at all the beauty, remarking that the trees show us the peace of Nirvana and that when we came full circle back to where we started, we could experience the cycle of Samsara. He talked about his idea of creating a floating Gar "The Precious Ship", which would travel around the world. We could go on retreat for months at a time.

The venue for the retreat, Trinity St. Paul's United Church, is a very venerable institution, home to the internationally respected Tafelmusik baroque orchestra and to an enormous variety of other groups reflecting the diversity of Canadian culture. During the Ganapuja there was an accompanying jump-up of salsa dance and music from the gym next door. It was very peaceful during Rinpoche's teachings in the main Sanctuary of the Church. Behind Rinpoche on his right was a huge banner of a tiger and on his left a balancing one of a toucan (both very apt). The atmosphere in the sanctuary was warm, inviting and redolent of many years of devotion as well as a sweet trace of incense. There were beautiful circular stained glass windows like mandalas diffusing light with strong clear colours. Rinpoche looked right at home in the setting. People were rapt as they listened and the strength and directness of the teaching expanded each day. Many remarked that the final session on Sunday was very special to them. They had gotten used to Rinpoche's language and the sometimes fuzzy acoustics in the nave.

Quite a number of Toronto's 5,000-strong Tibetan community came for the teachings.

There were demonstrations in the gym of Yantra Yoga with Fabio Andrico and of Vajra Dance by Anastasia McGhee, who had kindly agreed to come and teach the basics.

One of our Mandala enthusiasts sewed – at her farm in Eastern Ontario – an astounding portable Mandala out of nylon sail material in the five elemental colours. The Mandala took about 150 hours to make and required half a mile of thread. We were all blown away, especially Anastasia who requested one for

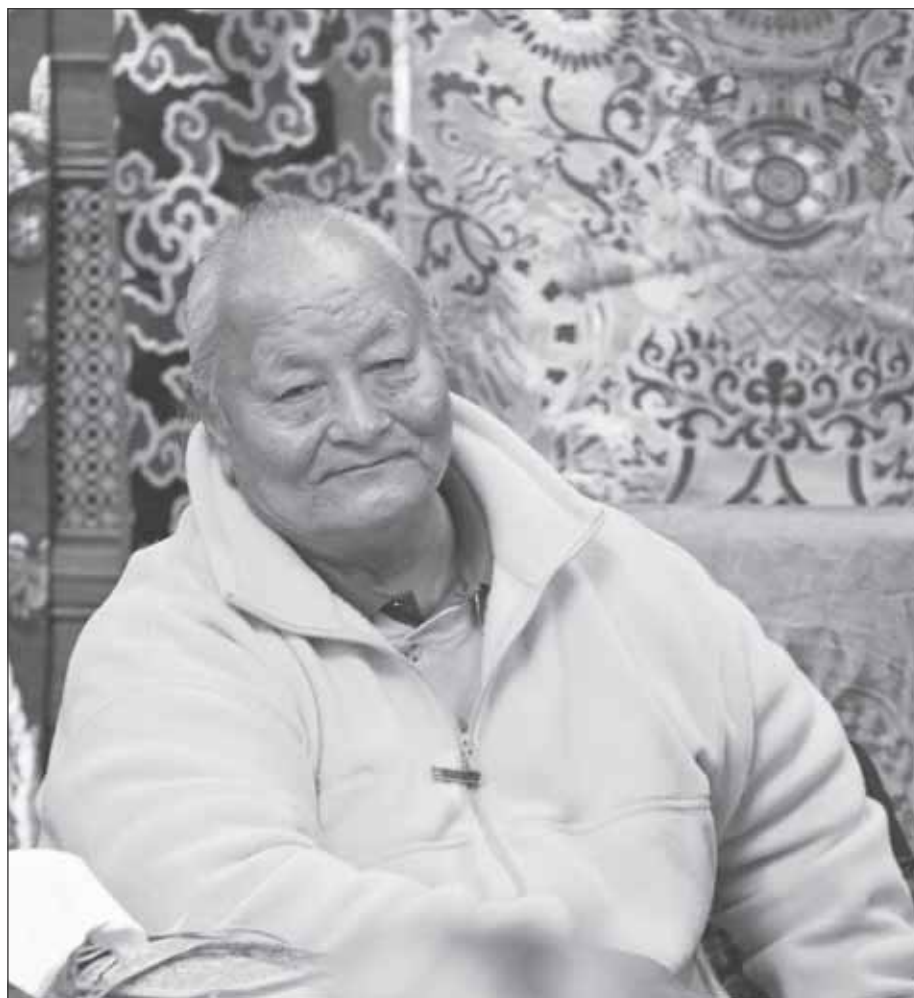


Photo: A. Wai

herself and her teaching travels. Again people were delighted. A woman who hadn't slept well for years said after Yantra she slept soundly. People wondered when they might have these teachings again and how soon they could come and practice together.

tion with the normal happenings of everyday life. He wanted us to fully understand that there is no comparison between mere intellectual understanding (to which we give too much credence) and experiential knowledge, which can only be gained by sustained

a Ling. This would be a place where people could listen to webcasts and practice. He gave the Community some Jnanadakini pills to be distributed. These pills, we feel will be of enormous benefit for our minds, our progress and our Samaya.



Chögyal Namkhai Norbu was happy with the retreat and the setting. He enjoyed being in Canada and joked about coming here if he wanted to see some snow!

Rinpoche was giving an introduction to Dzogchen and he talked about three main levels of the Buddhist path – Sutra, Mahayana and Tantra – or Vajrayana, stressing that strictly speaking, although the Dzogchen teachings fit comfortably with Buddhist teachings, they are also non-religious and can therefore be followed by a person within any religious tradition. He talked about people with different capacities, that of simply being able to hear the teachings, being able to understand and especially to be able to practice. He emphasized that practice does not mean separating oneself from normal life for a designated period, but being able to work with circumstances and in doing so to integrate the practice of contempla-

practice. Although this is indeed simple, it is by no means easy or effortless!

People who came to the retreat were so thrilled that Rinpoche finally came and over and over they expressed deep gratitude and joy over this. After the retreat there are roughly 100 new members. Now, instead of practicing quietly in someone's house we are moving into larger spaces in order to be able to observe auspicious days with practice with our new members. We are also planning for a 10-day Santi Maha Sangha retreat with Jim Valby in early September, 2008, a weekend of Introductory Vajra Dance teaching with Anastasia McGhee in November and another Yantra Yoga program, most likely in February, 2009.

On the last day Rinpoche made our Gakyil an offering towards finding a stable place to practice and he gave us a lot of encouragement to move towards becoming

The Gakyil and our team of dedicated helpers would like to express our profound gratitude to Chogyal Namkhai Norbu for coming to Canada and we will do whatever we can so we may see him here again in Toronto very soon.

We are very happy that Rinpoche and his teaching and practice has been introduced to so many in Ontario and Quebec – some of whom said, "What took you [so long]".

Our great gratitude to all from Tsegylgar East and Toronto who gave so generously of themselves to make our first retreat (Introduction to Dzogchen) a great success!

Yulia Jitkova, Vitaly Gritsenko and Jacqueline Hanley (Toronto Gakyil) and helpers Andy Wai, Ani Chodron, Marie Axler, Margherita, Matthew Simpson, Mark Sherman, Ron and Irene Fuchs, Paul kc.Ong. ©



Besides their work in Tibet, A.S.I.A. also promotes distance adoption projects in India and Nepal to support the diaspora. Every month hundreds of Tibetans arrive here, mainly children, who have escaped in the hope of being able to build a future in keeping with their native culture. Since 1959 when the 14th Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso escaped from Lhasa, a large number of institutions have been created in India, Nepal and Bhutan to safeguard Tibetan culture: schools, institutes of traditional art, monasteries. The Tibetan Homes Foundation is one of 11 centres that A.S.I.A. supports in north India. The scholastic institute has classes of all types and levels and supports and educates about 2,500 children.

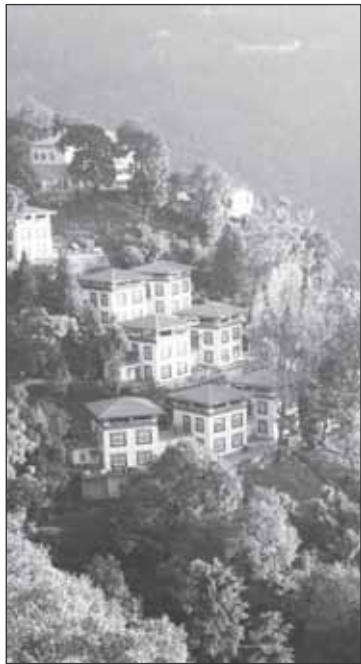
At this particularly difficult moment for Tibet, distance support for Tibetan children in exile is essential in order to help the new generations not to lose their cultural identity and to receive an education necessary for becoming part of modern society.

We would like to share with you the account of an Italian supporter who, during a trip to India, met the student he has been supporting since 2004.

Karma, Tenzin, Tseten - to meet and not to forget

Tashi Delek,
I have wanted to visit Tibet in India for a long time. In July I decided that the time had arrived for a trip to discover a different world, a world that would be new for me and which I had been particularly linked to for some time. But besides the touristic and cultural aspects, underneath there were more important things that led me to undertake this path: I am a distance sponsor to Karma Rapten, a 17 year old boy who lives at the Tibetan Homes Foundation in Mussoorie and this was the opportunity to meet him and get to know him first hand. The trip duly started with a visit to McLeod Ganj near Dharamsala in Himachal Pradesh, which is a small town at 1700 m where the Dalia Lama and the Tibetan government in exile reside.

Then from Dharamsala I had an interesting trip through Indian towns and villages to reach Mussoorie in the state of Uttaranchal. A thick fog perpetually covers the valley and town of Dehra Dun and you have the feeling that you are walking in clouds. But in spite of the adverse weather conditions and the necessity to climb up to 2200 m., I was strongly aware that I was getting closer to the long awaited moment and goal of my trip: meeting Karma Rapten,



his school, his home and his life. Thanks to Roberta's help at ASIA Onlus in Rome, I had already contacted Kalsang Nyamgal, the secretary at the Mussoorie school to let him know about my visit and asking to be able to visit the school where the Karma Rapten is studying. The meeting took place in his office where I received information about the organisation, the type of preparation that students receive, the activities they do, a copy of the results of Karma's last exams and the timetables for the holiday that start next December and finish in March. Well done, Karma. Top of the class!!!

Then I was handed over to Tsering Youdon who opened the door for the meeting with Karma. It was a really special moment. At first, both of us were very timid but then slowly our relationship started to open up in a spontaneous, relaxed simple way and as time passed, our conversation focussed on more and more questions, requests, information about our lives, our experiences, our future. Eight years ago, Karma had left his family who still live in Tibet. Today he is a healthy robust young man, cheerful and interested in all aspects of life. He has not met his little sister who was born a short time ago but he manages to communicate with his parents and he has an uncle who has been living in Dharamsala for some time and who gives him advice. It was this uncle who pointed out to him the possibility of reaching the THF where he would have an opportunity, a future different from what he would have had if he had remained in Tibet.

Together we visited the school, the music room where he plays his favourite instrument, on to the temple and then walked up to the highest point where the prayer flags were. The following day I was able to visit Home no.4 where Karma lives with another 20 girls and boys, meet his "parents", see how they all participate



"actively in the life of the house" and, most importantly, shake hands with Tenzin Chomphel, his best friend. After this we went to visit a park near his home and climbed up to the highest peak in Mussoorie in the midst of the most boundless landscape at the foot of Everest. I had never been up so high before nor felt the thrill of such a steep ravine below my feet, wrapped in the mist, soaked by the rain, but the presence of Karma and his best friend made me feel something I had never felt before that was difficult to describe. We wrote our names with a piece of brick on the wall of a tumbledown building and Karma wrote in different styles of Tibetan writing (there are at least 6 styles in their culture). I hope that writing stays there a long time as a memory of an unparalleled moment. Then we said goodbye to the family, to his housemates, took another photo in the area where his studies and the view of the jungle and mountains that surrounds the Home. A last photo together with Karma and hope to see you soon, very soon, I hope.

From each of my trips I have come back richer: each trip is an exchange, a discovery and growth even if the aim is not clear until I get home. But coming back from Mussoorie, from Karma and all the people I had met was a richer experience than I could have imagined. As a "comfortable" Westerner I had suffered to see and experience those situations that can be defined as incredible in our society or for people like us who live our luxurious lives in the pursuit of globalisation and where, to be frank, we lack absolutely nothing. No human being should endure the impossibility of having their cultural identity recognised, of not being able to travel outside set borders, of not being able to go back home or to see their family.

But in fact once more I was able to observe directly that only simplicity, goodness, willingness and generosity can bring about feelings and sensations of wellbeing and peace, strength and courage within ourselves. Perhaps we should really hurry before it is too late and not overlook a thought among the many that arose from this experience that every time you do something good for someone, you will find joy and peace of mind within yourself.

©

Mario Ciravegna

Pollenzo, July 25, 2008

For information on distance support projects:
adozioni@asia-onlus.org
0039 06 44 34 00 34

Khamdogar Project Update

History

Khamdogar is the ancient community of practitioners founded by **Rigdzin Changchub Dorje**, the master of **Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche**, in the early 1900s.

Rigdzin Changchub Dorje, a Dzogchen master and a famous Terton (discoverer of treasures) lived in this place with his family working as a doctor and transmitted his Teachings in a completely informal manner without creating monasteries or religious structures. Over the years monks and lay people came together around him in order to receive his Teachings and practice, creating a lay community to which each person contributed his or her work.

Near Khamdogar, in an area called **Dedrol**, there is a cave in which **Atha Lhamo, the daughter of Master Changchub Dorje**, lived and practiced. After a long period of inactivity due to the Cultural Revolution, the nuns have managed to build a small monastery and take up their spiritual activities again. At the moment there are 66 nuns who live in retreat for long periods without contact with the outer world.

At present, because of the difficult situation in Tibet, the entire complex of Khamdogar is in ruins and the local people live in conditions of extreme poverty. There is the very real chance that if adequate support is not provided, we will lose this irreplaceable spiritual heritage of our Dzogchen Community.

Concerned about this situation, **Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche** asked Tsegylgar East and ASIA to help this community in order to preserve the Teachings transmitted by his Master and provide aid to the practitioners there.

>> continued on next page

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ASIA America, in collaboration with Tsegyalgar East, had a successful fundraising drive during 2006 and 2007 in which many Dzogchen Community members participated. Thank you to all the many people who have already donated to this project! It is through your practice of Generosity that ASIA has been able to deliver aid to Khamdogar. These funds were used to initiate the restoration of the old temple, where the Chorten of Rigdzin Changchub Dorje is kept, and which desperately needed attention.

It is yet another year and our efforts continue to sustain Khamdogar. Several people have become new sponsors and there are **two new fundraising projects** for the building and restoration projects!

The chortens, temple with relics of Changchub Dorje and printing house where his Teachings are preserved on traditional wood blocks, are all in danger of collapsing. Please consider participating in one of our new fundraising projects!

Projects

- 1) Building a small study and practice college. Estimated cost \$66,121 USD. 45,000 Euros
 - 2) Construction of an aqueduct. Estimated cost \$51,427 USD. 35,000 Euros
 - 3) Restoration of the old temple where the Chorten of Rigdzin Changchub Dorje is preserved. Estimated cost 58,774 USD. 40,000 Euros
 - 4) Restoration of the printing house and the Chortens built by Rigdzin Changchub Dorje. Estimated cost \$51,427 USD. 35,000 Euros
- The total cost of these projects is **\$227,749 USD. 155,000 Euros**

The objective is to raise these funds as soon as possible.

Long Distance Support for the Nuns

ASIA has started a program of Sponsorship at a Distance for the 66 nuns who live in retreat at Dedrol Gonpa. The Sponsorship at a Distance Project, ASIA currently sponsors over 1,000 individuals, and is one of ASIA's most successful projects, bringing concrete aid directly to individuals and creating great benefit for them and, often, for others around them as well.

The objective is to contribute to maintaining all 66 nuns by 2008. This objective has not yet been reached.

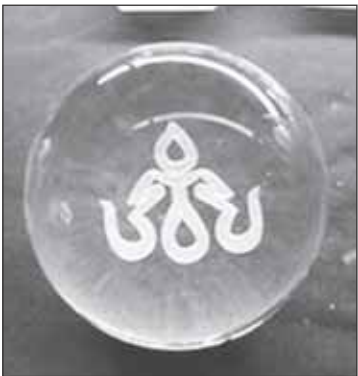
Our Vajra sisters in Khamdogar do not have enough food and water. **We are in need of 25 new sponsors by the end of 2008.** The Tsegyalgar Gakyil donated \$7,500, the funding to cover these 25 individuals through the end of 2008 because the situation is so desperate.

We need **23** new sponsors (2 people became new sponsors after the Ganapuja on the Anniversary of Guru Rinpoche at Tsegyalgar – thank you!) and there are another 19 individuals sponsored by a single donor through 2010 – we will need 19 additional people to start sponsorships by 2011. **Please consider starting a sponsorship at this time! The cost is just \$25/month or \$300/year.**

What you can do
Participate in the Khamdogar Fundraising Projects!
Longsal Crystal Spheres
Available now, only through the Khamdogar fundraising project, you can purchase a beautiful Longsal crystal sphere! Just make a donation of \$200 or more on our Khamdogar webpage.

PayPal can make payments easily and securely at www.khamdogar.com

These are made of clear quartz crystal, formed into a sphere. Then a 3D model of the Longsal symbol is laser engraved inside of the crystal sphere. Each sphere is 80 mm in diameter. They come with a seven color AC unit light base.



Kunye for Khamdogar

Would you like to receive a relaxing, healing Kunye massage treatment in exchange for making a donation to the Khamdogar Project? Who wouldn't! Please contact Marie Lascombes, at chuzham@gmail.com for all the details or to schedule a treatment at your next retreat. All proceeds to benefit Khamdogar. Enjoy!

Make a Tax Deductible Donation

You can contribute with a tax-deductible donation of any amount, to be part of the collaborative effort to save Khamdogar. Please consider joining us by making a donation according to your circumstances.

To make a donation by credit card please contact Asruh at secretary@tsegyalgar.org

To donate by check/money order mail to: ASIA, P.O. Box 124, Conway, MA 01341-0124.

For US, Canada, Mexico wire transfer/direct deposit: Include "Khamdogar Project" memo, Bank of Western Massachusetts, 134 Elm Street, Deerfield, MA 01373, Account #1236141502, ABA Routing #011802488.

For international wire transfer: Include "Khamdogar Project" memo, Via S. Martino della Battaglia, 31, 00185 ROMA, Conto Corrente n. 5622.72 Monte dei Paschi di Siena S.p.a. Filiale di Arcidosso (GR) ABI 01030 CAB 72160.

Become a Sponsor

To provide support to a person doing spiritual retreat is of great merit and benefit. With \$300 USD per year you can provide the basic needs for a practitioner at Khamdogar. That's only \$25 USD per month! Payments can be made in full by credit card to secretary@tsegyalgar.org, or monthly/bi-monthly/bi-annually/in full, etc. by check/money order/direct deposit/wire transfer. Please contact us at asia-usa@tsegyalgar.org or adozioni@asia-onlus.org if you have any questions. We will gladly email you the sponsor application and regulations.

Good news! Help spread the word about Khamdogar!

We are sending a 15 minute **Khamdogar DVD**, with footage of Rinpoche when he visited Khamdogar, to each Gar, and to each Gakyil/practice group throughout North America. We encourage you to share this inspiring film with anyone you think might be interested in helping with these projects.

Thank you very much for your kind collaboration. Together, we can ensure that our Dzogchen heritage at Khamdogar is not lost! ©

Sincerely,
The ASIA America board members and staff: Barbara, Jim, Nathan, Damien, Laurence, Miranda and Andrea

Association for International Solidarity in ASIA, Inc.

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www.asia-onlus.org

Longsal spheres for Khamdogar website: www.khamdogar.com

ASIA America is a non-profit organization with 501c3 status, registered in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. All donations are tax deductible in accordance with the law.

The Shang Shung Institute wants to inform you about new publications:

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu: Chang Chog from Shitro Teachings of Namchö Mingyur Dorje (DVD)

In our modern western world, when our father, mother, friends or relatives die, we remain helpless and disheartened witnesses of the transient nature of life without the possibility to help those who have departed and are moving on to another life.

Here, going beyond the delusion that our existence will end after death or will last eternally in some other world, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu presents, for the first time in the Western world, a ritual whose aim is to purify the negative karma and obstacles of the deceased, giving them a chance of accessing a higher knowledge.

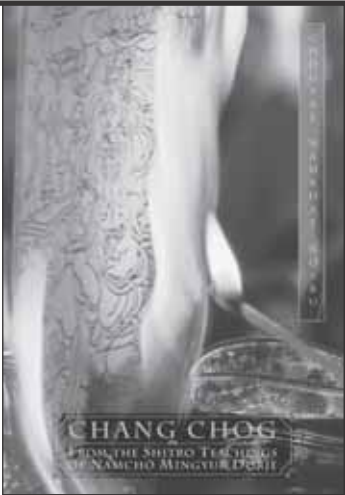
This ritual embodies a new and authentic approach to death which allows us to help the deceased thanks to the special relation we had with them in our life, while providing us with the strength to overcome the suffering of our loss.

Connected to the Shitro Teachings of Namchö Mingyur Dorje, this short form of the Chang Chog ritual can be performed by all those who have received the transmission and wish to help their dear ones who have passed away. It is equally valid and beneficial for those who died recently and those who departed years ago.

The DVD contains the explanation of the meaning of the different phases of the ritual along with the practice and related preparations, based on a retreat held by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in November 2007 in Merigar, Italy.

In order to be able to receive this DVD one must have received the transmission from the Master.

Shang Shung Institute, 2008 Euro 22.00
www.shangshunginstitute.org



New First Level Santi Maha Sangha Texts available!

The new edition of The Ati Treasury of Contemplation – The First Level of Santi Maha Sangha and the Santi Maha Sangha First Level Preliminary Practices are now available.

These books are restricted to those who have received transmission of their contents from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu during Santi Maha Sangha First Level Training.

To order these books, please write to: orders@shangshunginstitute.org, specifying your name and where and when you participated in SMS First Level Training. Then you will receive information on how to purchase the books.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu
The Ati Treasury of Contemplation – The First Level of Santi Maha Sangha
Euro 20.00
Santi Maha Sangha First Level Preliminary Practices
Euro 5.00

The History and Importance of the International Shang Shung Institute

A personal report

Oliver Leick

It was the year 1982 when Chögyal Namkhai Norbu invited various experts of Tibetan Medicine, particularly from Asia, to the First International Conference on Tibetan Medicine in Venice, Italy. This event was the first meeting and conference on Tibetan Medicine ever held in the West. At this time, very few people knew the value of Tibetan Medicine, and the complex topics of the immense treasure of Tibetan culture were almost completely unknown to Westerners.

This conference was the initial starting point for Shang Shung Institute, though it was not founded until seven years later. During this seven years, the conditions of the Tibetan people continued to worsen, and there was almost no protection for Tibetan culture, yet many did not realize this. Chögyal Namkhai Norbu was moved very deeply by this situation and several times mentioned a prophecy by Guru Padmasambhava. In this prophecy, it is said:

“The moment Tibetan people start to fly like ants, that will be the end of the Tibetan culture.”

In 1987, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu explained this prophecy to me in a private moment in Los Angeles: “You see, Oliver, now is the time when many Tibetans and Tibetan lamas are flying from Asia to the west in order to give Teachings and to spread the Dharma. But how do they come to the west? They fly with airplanes. This corresponds very much to the prophecy of Guru Padmasambhava. In the life of ants there is a certain moment in which some of them start to fly – this is just a sign that they will die very soon afterwards. So now we Tibetans are very similar to the ants – we started to fly from one place to another and we must remember the prophecy of Guru Padmasambhava. If we do not start to work immediately for the preservation of Tibetan culture, if we don’t try to do our best in that regard – the end of Tibetan culture will come very soon. It might be that in a few years all the knowledge and wisdom of Tibetan people and their culture will be completely lost and we won’t be able to have any access to that treasure which could be of such immense value for all human beings. If we don’t act now, it might be too late.”

I was so touched by Rinpoche’s words that I sat next to him without being able to say anything. It was most likely exactly at that moment that I made my inner decision to try to be active and do

my best to work for the maintenance of Tibetan culture.

Two years after this, in the year 1989, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu founded two separate associations which began to help to protect Tibetan people and their culture; A.S.I.A. and the Shang Shung Institute. While A.S.I.A. was to work mainly in Asia to try to better the living conditions of the Tibetan people by constructing hospitals, schools, and houses, the task of the Shang Shung Institute was to preserve all aspects of Tibetan culture in the West.

1989 was also the year in which H.H. the XIV Dalai Lama was given the Nobel Peace Prize. This award was a milestone for Tibetan people and Tibetan culture, because from that time on the topic “Tibet” was known to many people all over the world and there was great interest in the treasure of this culture.

In 1990, H.H. the Dalai Lama accepted an invitation from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu to visit Merigar, the European seat of the international Dzogchen Community in Italy, and officially inaugurated the Shang Shung Institute. Following this, several activities took place in Italy. An international congress on Tibetan language with many famous Tibetologists from all over the world was organized, some young Tibetans were invited to stay in Italy and received a scholarship to help in the archive and the library, photo-exhibitions about Tibet were shown in several Italian cities, and so on.

In 1994, the Shang Shung Institute of America was founded, and the Shang Shung Institute of Austria followed in 2000. Even though many activities and initiatives were taking place – translations of Tibetan texts into English, seminars and possibilities for studies in Tibetan Medicine, seminars on Tibetan massage – the existence of the Shang Shung Institute was relatively unknown. Many thought that the Shang Shung Institute was merely Shang Shung Editions, only producing books.

2002 was the next milestone in the history of the Shang Shung Institute. The Shang Shung Institute of Austria was officially inaugurated by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and we received a kind donation that made it possible to start new projects. The following year, in 2003, we started the Ka-



Photo: T. Dolkar

ter Translation Project, with two aims:

- to enable students of the Tibetan language to have several years of focused training under a qualified instructor, to develop their skills as translators of Tibetan into English, and
- to make excellent and accurate translations of ancient Dzogchen Tantras by offering the most qualified translators of the Dzogchen Community a kind of social security, so they would have a situation in which they could dedicate themselves to their translation work.

Also during this time, thanks to the untiring efforts of Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo from the Shang Shung Institute in America, the value of Tibetan Medicine was becoming more widely known and respected. Public talks, seminars and courses were offered and many people became interested in this unique tradition.

And in Italy, several people were working on the archive of the Shang Shung Institute. All the teachings and talks by Rinpoche, as well as by other masters who have taught at Merigar over the last 30 years, were digitalized and stored. Even if one does not understand fully the immensity of this undertaking, it is of great importance. If we did not preserve these unique recordings in a satisfactory way, they would have been lost in a very short time due to the natural aging of the recording materials. Thousands of working hours were necessary for this task, and it is ongoing, and will continue in the future.

People of the Institute have also produced all the extremely helpful practice supports we have, in the form of DVDs, CDs, and MP3s. Another example of this excellent work is the Video Journal. I am always looking forward to seeing the next issue, as it is wonderful and relaxing to see and hear Rinpoche, and the stories of Community life all over the world, while sitting comfortably at home in my arm-chair.

In three years – from 2004 until 2006 – a huge internal change in the structure of the Dzogchen Community and the Shang Shung Institute took place. Yeshe Namkhai and Luigi Ottaviani put enormous effort into the reorganization of the international Dzogchen Community and the Shang Shung Institute, as the old structures which had been used for many years no longer corresponded to the requirements of the new millennium. Things that were unthinkable some years ago suddenly were a part of our life; webcasts of the Teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu; buying books, DVDs, or CDs online from anywhere in the world. That would not have been possible without the internet, around which much of the reorganization of the Dzogchen Community and the Shang Shung Institute is based.

18 years have now passed since the foundation of the Shang Shung Institute, and 2007 was the year of our largest growth. Our various organizations now present themselves as one, in the form of the international Shang Shung Institute and its activities.

Some of our accomplishments this year include:

- launching the first website of the International Shang Shung Institute showing all the main initiatives and projects of the Institute in Italy, America and Austria;
- introducing just one set membership valid for all seats of the Institute;
- carrying out the first (on-line) raffle of the Institute, the revenues of which will be used for projects of the international Institute;
- publishing the first issue of Phonya, the international newspaper of the Institute, in English;
- publishing the “Foundations of the Shang Shung Institute” which is valid for all seats of the Institute.

Further highlights in 2007 were:

- Shang Shung Editions became a part of the Institute
- the Shang Shung Institute of America officially received its License from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Education

During numerous retreats this year, we also presented the work and activities of the Institute to large audiences, and the drawing of our fundraising raffle was even webcast. On several occasions, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu emphasized the importance of the Shang Shung Institute, and thanked everyone who participated in the preservation of Tibetan culture. He also stressed the importance of collaborating with the Institute as much as possible.

We hope 2008 will be a year with many highlights, as well. Here are only some of the projects we are working on:

- “Books of Wisdom for the Public” Our aim is to publish books by Rinpoche and other masters connected to Rinpoche in the widest possible way, making these books available in bookshops.
- A new local branch of the Shang Shung Institute is to be established in the UK.
- Courses and seminars on Tibetan Medicine will continue, and be expanded, in America.
- Production and distribution of new Tibetan herbal medicines based on authentic recipes will begin.
- Ka-ter Translation Project: the next training for translators will be held in Merigar this summer and we are hoping to publish a translation of a Dzogchen Tantra.
- A new accounting and administration system for members of the Dzogchen Community and the Shang Shung Institute will be completed.

You all know that the work of the Shang Shung Institute is financed by private donations and grants, and by the income of the membership fees. In order to continue our work, we need your support and your collaboration.

The best way to demonstrate your interest in our work for the preservation of Tibetan culture is to become a member of the Institute or to participate in one of our fundraising activities.

Thank you so much for the warm hearted and kind feed-back I have received in these last weeks. Thank you also for all your generosity and loving kindness. I hope that we can collaborate in a harmonious way again in 2008. ©

Very best wishes and Tashi Delegs,
Yours,
Oliver Leick



Doctors and class participants at the Tibetan Medical classes at Dondrubling, Berkeley. Photo: M. Kacurova

Summer 2008 at the Shang Shung Institute of America

Summer at Shang Shung Institute USA has been busy and successful. During the months of June, July and August, the Institute offered courses in moxibustion, mental illness, kunye massage and wound healing taught by Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo, Dr. Kunchog Gyaltsen, and Dr. Yang Ga, in Conway, Massachusetts. The

courses were successful and well attended. Concurrently, Dr Phuntsog Wangmo, Dr. Yangdron Kalsang and the dedicated staff and students of SSI America organized the first basic level course of the Tibetan Kunye Therapy Certification course at Dondrubling, in Berkeley, California. The current level ends in September, and will be followed by an advanced level in January. Last but not least, SSI America also welcomes the new class entering the four-year program this fall. We look forward to an intense, productive and fulfilling semester. ©

Shang Shung Institute
International Institute for Tibetan Studies

Tibetan Medicine Monthly Talks

with Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo

First Friday of every month from 7–9 pm in Northampton, MA at the Shang Shung Tibetan Healing

Seasonal Diets

Friday, September 5th, 7–9 pm
In Tibetan Medicine it is not considered that there is one diet that is good for everybody. In order to know what diet will benefit a person, the Tibetan physician will take into consideration the persons age, constitution, living environment, lifestyle and other specific conditions of the individual. One key factor for understanding an appropriate diet is the influence of the seasons. Based on the particular elements of each season different foods should be eaten to maintain good health.

Aging in Good Health

Friday, October 3rd, 7–9 pm
Every human wants to live a long and healthy life, but there are many factors that affect this possibility. In Tibetan Medicine the two main ways of staying healthy through old age are ones diet and lifestyle. In this talk, Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo will discuss this understanding and give key tips on how to maintain good health in the aging process.

Pediatrics in Tibetan Medicine

Friday, November 7th, 7–9 pm
Tibetan Medicine has many unique and practical methods of caring for infants and children. This talk will provide a basic background of this topic and offer everybody some helpful knowledge to support the health of children.

Recommended donation of \$15 per talk. Limited space available. Please RSVP for each talk by emailing matt@shangshung.org or by calling (413) 585-1081. Address: Shang Shung Tibetan Healing Center, Central Chambers Building, 16 Center St. Suite 323, Northampton, MA 01060.

Ask about our free introductory massage offer!

New! Free Consultations in the Student Clinic

The Shang Shung Institute's first class of four-year students, the class of 2009, is now in their last year of study. They will now be accompanying Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo in a clinical setting. If you are interested in a consultation and would like to participate in the student's learning process you can now come to the Shang Shung Tibetan Healing Center for a free consultation, normally \$75. The consultation will be lead and guided by Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo. Students will participate in order to deepen their practical knowledge. Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo will give herbal recommendations. The cost of herbs is \$50 for a one-month supply and is not included in the free offer. Call the clinic to set up your appointment. There are openings on Mondays between 2 pm–5 pm and on Wednesday from 4:30 pm–7:30 pm. To make an appointment call (413) 585-1081 or email matt@shangshung.org Shang Shung Tibetan Healing Center, 16 Center St. Suite 323, Northampton, MA 01060

NEW FROM THE SHANG SHUNG INSTITUTE
CHÖGYAL NAMKHAÏ NORBU
BUDDHA SHAKYAMUNI'S
TWENTY ONE PRAISES
TARA
EXPLANATION AND PRACTICE

The "Twenty One Praises to Tara", whose Sanskrit text is found in the Kangyur, were uttered by Buddha Shakyamuni and have been taught since ancient times. Their chanting, in which the 21 main manifestations of the Goddess are praised one by one, is the most widespread form of Tara practice.

The family of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu asked a lama to carry out a continuous recitation of these 21 Praises to propitiate the birth of a son, and it was after one year of this retreat that he was conceived.

The practice of the 21 Praises, as presented here for the first time by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, is special in many respects. Instead of the Tibetan translation which is normally used, the original Sanskrit verses are chanted according to a melody heard by Rinpoche in a dream. The commentary given is based on a text by the great Sakyapa master Jetsun Trappa Gyaltsen (1374-1434).



MP3 Audio
English with
Italian translation

THE SHANG SHUNG INSTITUTE
Organizza un Corso di Organizes a Course of

ASTROLOGIA TIBETANA
TIBETAN ASTROLOGY

Tenuta dal / led by
DOTTOR GENDUN DHARGAY

CONTENUTO DEL CORSO che è la continuazione del corso precedente (iniziato ad aprile, anche se chiunque ha la possibilità di partecipare).

- Spiegazione del Log-Men (Previsione degli ostacoli dell'individuo a seconda dell'anno di nascita).
- Come calcolare il Log-Men.
- Come calcolare il Me-Wa (Come conoscere il potenziale sconosciuto della persona e come utilizzarlo).
- Capire come utilizzare il Parika via via il risultato è positivo che negativo.
- Capire come si può utilizzare il Me-Wa affinché l'individuo ne tragga beneficio durante il proprio percorso esistenziale.
- Come calcolare i 12 Tar-Gul (Crescita o diminuzione dell'energia) durante la vita di tutti i giorni, come usarli e gestirli.
- Come conoscere e saper evitare gli ostacoli nella vita quotidiana.
- Come usare l'astrologia per prevedere il futuro del matrimonio.
- Come usare la carta astrologica della persona in caso di malattia.
- Come conoscere i Dus-Sar, posizione dei segni astrologici nel corso dell'anno, se sono favorevoli o opposti al nostro.
- La morte di una persona: giorni positivi per i funerali.
- Previsioni della vita di un bambino a seconda della data e dell'ora della sua nascita.

Il Corso sarà tenuto dal Dott. Gendun Dhargay, laureatosi in medicina e astrologia tibetana sotto la guida di Tringawa Rinpoche presso il Chagpori Tibetan Medical Institute (CTMI) a Darjeeling, in India, e specializzato successivamente in farmacopea e astrologia presso l'Istituto di medicina e astrologia tibetana Men Tse Khang di Dharamsala, India.

CONTENTS OF THE SYMPOSIUM which is considered to be the follow up of the course in April, although it is possible to participate even if one had not followed the first course:

- Log-Men explanation: how to predict individual obstacles according to birth year.
- How to calculate Me-Wa (How to know unconscious potentialities and how to utilize them).
- How to utilize the Parika, positive or negative it might be.
- How to utilize the Me-Wa so that it may bring benefits to the individual in the course of his life.
- How to calculate the 12 Tar-Gul (increase and decrease of energy) in daily life, how to utilize and manage them.
- How to discover and avoid daily life obstacles.
- How to utilize astrological calculations to determine if a marriage will be successful or not.
- How to utilize the astrological chart of a person in case of illness.
- How to know the Dus-Sar, position of astrological signs in the course of the year which may be favourable or contrary to ours.
- What to do in case of death: positive days for funerals, possible obstacles to overcome.
- To predict how a child's life will be according to his date and hour of birth.

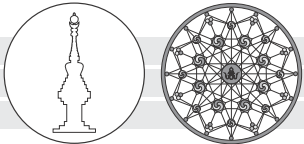
The course will be held by Doctor Gendun Dhargay who graduated in Tibetan medicine and Astrology at Tibetan Medical Institute (CTMI) founded by Tringawa Rinpoche in Darjeeling. He then deepened his studies of pharmacology and astrology at the Institute of Tibetan Medicine and Astrology Men Tse Khang located in Dharamsala, India.

25-27 OTTOBRE 2008
Sede Corso: Loc. Merigar, Arcidosso GR

Orario | Time : 9.30 - 12.30 e 15.00 - 18.00 | Quota di partecipazione | Participation fee : 150 euro
Per iscrizione | For registration : courses@istitutoshangshung.org | tel e fax : +39 0564 966940

IL DOTTOR GENDUN È DISPONIBILE per visite e consultazioni nei due giorni successivi al corso da prenotare presso la segreteria dell'istituto.
DOCTOR GENDUN WILL BE AVAILABLE for visits and consultations on the two days following the course. In order to book, please get in touch with the secretary of the Institute.

Merigar West



Merigar West

Arcidosso 58031 phone: 39 0564 966837 merigaroffice@tiscalinet.it
GR Italy fax: 39 0564 968110 www.dzogchen.it

Calendar of Events 2008

September
Sep. 26–Oct. 3
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu
Dzogchen Teaching Retreat
Training with the sound of the
elements from the Dzogchen
Upadesha root tantra “Dra Thalgyur”
Cost: 400 € discounts for members

October
October 4–8
Explanation and practice of the 1st SMS level with Jim Valby
150 € – discounts for members
4th–5th: 9.00–12.00 & 16.00–19.00
6th–8th: to be decided

October 6–9
3rd Level SMS Exam

October 10–17
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu
Training of the 4th SMS level
400 € no discounts

October 17–19
Yantra Yoga Course with
Explanation & Practice of Tsandul
Tiziana Gottardi
Participants should have already
attended a Yantra Yoga beginners course
Starts on October 17th at 5 pm
60 € with discounts for members

October 19–26
Vajra Dance Teachers’ Training
Reserved for authorized instructors only
Prima Mai, Adriana Dal Borgo
320 € no discounts
Starts the 19th at 5 pm
Finishes the 26th at 1 pm

Oct. 31–Nov. 4
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu
Teaching and Practice dedicated
to the Dead
Cost: 250 € – discounts for members

November
November 4–10
Vajra Dance Course, 2nd part
Margit Martinu supervised
by Adriana Dal Borgo
280 € discounts for members
Starts 4th at 5 pm
Finishes 10th at 1 pm

November 14–20
Closed Webcast Audio & Video
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu
Dzogchen Teaching Retreat
“Terma teaching Kunsang Jaku by
the great tertön Duddul Dorje”
Barcelona, Spain

December
December 6–8
Mandarava Long life practice retreat
Starts the 6th at 5 pm
Finishes the 8th at 1 pm

December 15–19
Yeshe Silvano Namkhai
Dzogchen Teaching Retreat
(title and time to be announced)

Dec. 26–Jan. 1 ’09
Closed Webcast Audio & Video:
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu
Dzogchen Teaching Retreat
“Dzogchen Tregchö Teaching of
Jigmed Lingpa from the Instruction
Yeshe Lama”
Tashigar Sud – Argentina

For Vajra Dance and Yantra Yoga
Teachers’ Training courses, please
ask the Merigar office for a special
application form.

New Gakyil

Blue:
Franca Fubini, Giada Manca – Director
Lella Guidotti

Red:
Gabriele Marazzi, Claudio Donadio,
Patrice Bricaire

Yellow:
Luna Lattarulo – Vice-Director,
Rosanna De Bastiani, Anna Pucci

Geköes:
Franco Cocco with his partner
Claudia Paltera



upcoming
Yantra Yoga Course with Explanation
and Practice of Tsandul
Led by Tiziana Gottardi
October 17–19, 2008

Who can attend? Those who have
already attended a beginners course of
Yantra Yoga.
The course starts on Friday 17 October
at 5.00 pm
The cost is 60 Euros with discounts for
members.
Important! Please register before the
course starts, by email or phone. It will
also be possible to register on the first
day of the course with the secretary of
Merigar.

Phone: +39-0564-96 68 37
merigaroffice@tiscali.it

upcoming
Mandarava Practice weekend in Venice
With Nina Robinson
Friday October 10–Monday October 13

The retreat starts on Friday afternoon
and finishes Monday morning.
Oct. 11(Saturday) and Oct. 12 (Sunday)
practice and explanation will be both in
the morning and in the afternoon. We
will learn the new melody and do the
practice.

The place: chez Marco Baseggio, Fonda-
menta de l’Abazia, n. 3556, Cannaregio,
Venezia.

Information: Marco Baseggio,
tel.+39-0410-99 40 79 or 34 83 43 20 69
marco@casabaseggio.it



Yantra Yoga, the 5th group and pranayama with Laura Evangelisti and Fabio Andrico at Merigar West in August. Photo: M. Piazza

New Generation at Work
At the past summer retreat at Merigar West, some Austrian and German young women helped to sell and clear away some of the old stock from the Merigar store rooms. All the money made was given as an offering to Merigar West. The lower prices made it easier for people to buy items and some people even donated items to sell! The young business women did a great job and had a lot of fun. In the end they made about 600 Euros!

*



Passages

Born: Congratulations!
Mattia Tsewang was born to Tsering Choden and David Surrichio in Foligno Italy on April 18, 2008 at 4:45 am.

*

Passages

Born: Anna Prisco and Filippo Resasco are happy to announce the birth of their son Michele who was born on Thursday 7 August at 5 am on an auspicious day.



This summer, 2008, we celebrated the 10th anniversary of Dejamling!

Jean-Francois Ayme

Dejam Ling, The Place of Infinite Bliss, was created in 1998 by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, as the center for the Dzogchen community in France. It rests in the Cevennes, a mountainous area in the South of France, about a one-hour drive from Montpellier. Surrounded by beautiful wild French nature, the land has an ancient house, and now a big room for the Gonpa and Vajra Dance mandala.

To celebrate, we had the pleasure to have a Santi Maha Sangha Base level retreat with Jim Valby, followed by an advanced Vajra Dance course with Prima Mai, a

course in breath training with Fabio Andrico, and a Dance of the Three Vajras course with Stoffelina Verdonk.

We celebrated, basking in the warmth of our Master's Precious Teachings, Transmission, beneath the French sunshine and the stars, with our Vajra brothers and sisters from around the world, and of course enjoying typical French meals!

To prepare for these retreats, a program of karma yoga was organized particularly with the intention to repair the mandala, prepare the house and to further



develop a personal retreat cabin with DC members from Russia, England, Poland, Slovakia, Moldavia and Peru.

We would like to thank warmly our Vajra brothers and sisters

who came to help with these preparations, without whom it wouldn't have been possible.

It was an anniversary of practice, and a time of bliss, insight and enjoyment! ©

Impressions from Dejam Ling and Romania from three Santi Maha Sangha French applicants

About Jim and the SMS Exam!

We had an unforgettable one-week teaching in Dejam Ling prior to the SMS Base Exam. First, we met Jim which means big embracing. For those who do not know how it works, you start to disappear in his arms, then you can hear a voice saying that you do not have to worry about the exam. You think that these words are some kind of welcome but actually, Jim really means it. First lesson: generosity and compassion !

Many questions arouse during the sessions, leaving space for direct teaching from Jim, always pure and limpid. Jim is very fond of illustrations when teaching. Sometimes, when completely involved in explanations, he suddenly makes fun with daily situations making us laugh our head off. Jim knows that Dharma is difficult and that skilful means are necessary to help us liberate all the fantasies that our mind constantly builds.

Jim knows that the SMS Exam is very demanding, that it is a great commitment for each applicant who prepares it carefully and, even though examiners show great compassion, no one can feel certain about the final decision.

But whatever the result, one can say that SMS is the most prodigious experience one should live. And, as far as we are concerned, it did not only give us the opportunity to meet Jim, Igor, Fabio and so many other nice people, but also to receive such a golden nugget from our Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. We started a long journey to Enlightenment under the most precious guidance: a great Master and a fabulous teachings. Now, we better not hide the nugget under the pillow! We extend our profound gratitude to our Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and to all the people who helped us in so many ways. ©

Thank you
Nicole Morineau & Elisabeth Dong

Breathing course with Fabio Andrico at Dejamling France

August 4-8 August 2008

Lorraine Gaultier

We were 15 practitioners from France and one from Germany who were fortunate to participate in this interesting course which took place at Dejamling, a charming place in the south of France "auspicious for meditation and retreats" according to Fabio.

He was very patient and adapted his course to the young and not so young, flexible and less flexible. By means of simple yet profound exercises he taught us to feel the breathing in our body especially in places we do



not use habitually and that are closed. Through these experiences we became more aware of trying to make them breathe.

During the lunches (prepared each time by different people who helped us to discover new tastes) Fabio told us stories with

humor and joy about his trips all around the world.

A practitioner offered us a ritual tea ceremony under the stars.

Thank you very much to Fabio who gave his precious time while he is so busy taking good care of Rinpoche and of the web cast. He spent his free time between 2 retreats giving this precious course.

He gave us a series of simple exercises that last a few minutes in order to help us to continue on a daily basis.

We very much hope to be able to invite him next year. ©



Vajra Dance Course held by Prima Mai

Giada Villa Hermosa

At the end of July I moved from the island of Elba to the island of Dejamling. Of course, Dejamling is not an island in the geographical sense, nested as it is among the Cevennes mountains in the south of France, but it is a marvelous island as a feeling. A Ling is a

place where we live with other practitioners so we get to know each other quite closely and can get the feeling of Sangha beyond friendship. Dancing on the Mandala, for many hours morning and afternoon, increased this feeling. Prima put special stress on the timing; one slowly discovers how following the right rhythm brings you to more fluidity and continuity of movement. As Prima suggested, it is a bit like being underwater where abrupt movements become impossible.

The other important point was to 'recognize' one another on the Mandala and acknowledge each other's presence by opening the attention usually self-focused to the global movement on the Mandala.

Every time one takes a course in the Vajra Dance there is something new to discover; a deeper experience of one's inner and outer energy, and a different connection between movement and sound. ©

House For Sale

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Contact: Mara Sangiorgi Tel: 0039 34 95 40 22 70
Email: sangiorgimara@tiscali.it
or Tuscanary: ritarenzi@tuscanary.it





SMS First Level participants at Merigar East, Romania July 2008.

Photo credit: Aleksky Novgorodtsev

Santi Maha Sangha Base Exam and Level One Training

Merigar East, Romania
July 21-31, 2008

Artur Skura

As I know how important is the Santi Maha Sangha training for Rinpoche and for the continuation of Dzogchen teachings in its pure form, I was very happy that Rinpoche would give the first level training this year in Merigar East. The training was immediately after the summer retreat, separated by four days of examinations of the Base Level.

These four days of examinations were very intensive, both for the participants as well as examiners. Around 154 people from different countries took the exam, mostly from Russia and the ex-Russian countries, some coming from places far away like Buryatia and Vladivostok. This was the largest group of SMS Level One Training participants ever. There were two examiners: Jim Valby and Igor Berkhin, sitting in a separated space of the tent that usually served as the canteen. The candidates were waiting in the other part of the tent, most of them with a copy of The Precious Vase or their personal notes.

I was serving as a translator for my wife, Kasia, and I have to admit I was even more nervous than she was. We knew that it doesn't

matter, that these long months of studying and practice are valuable in itself, but still the perspective of being rejected seemed a bit upsetting. And, of course, we hoped Jim would not ask about the thorough explanation of the four phases of approach and attainment or the great accumulation of the chakra of the letters.

We entered the examination corner and saw Jim and Naomi sitting there with joyful faces and making jokes and that helped to relax us a bit. But the beginning was hard; when asked about the Four Immeasurables, Kasia couldn't even remember the names, even though I remember her doing these practices for days! But when Jim started with the first one, it somehow triggered something in her mind and

the rest followed automatically. I was very pleased to see her smiling face and the faces of all the other people passing the exam.

At the end of the fourth day we all knew the results; almost everybody passed. It seems that the new system of applying three months earlier and answering the questions regarding the understanding, practice and attitude really works very well and helps people understand what really needs to be done in order to prepare well for the exam.

When our Vajra Brothers and Sisters gathered in the tent for the first day of teachings, I was very surprised how many people attended. By far the most numerous group was from the Russian-speaking countries, but there

were also several people from the Czech and Slovak Republics, Europe, North and South America, and even Japan – 250 people altogether. It surely shows that many people took to heart the words of Rinpoche regarding the importance of Santi Maha Sangha and somehow decided to prepare for this challenge.

This year for the first time the retreat of the First Level lasted seven days, instead of five. Rinpoche said in the future it will take ten days, but even if it took two weeks, it would be difficult to explain everything in detail. We received all teachings and transmissions, while Rinpoche tirelessly explained the more difficult points.

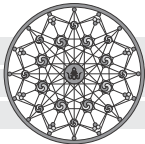
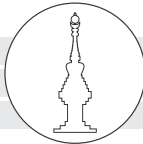
In the afternoon we had explanations by Igor and Jim, learning and practicing together. What is interesting, Jim collects precise statistics of all Santi Maha Sangha retreats and he shared some of them with us. There have been 21 SMS 1st level trainings so far, with 1174 Vajra Brothers and Sisters participating. Almost 40% of them (467 people) were from Russian speaking countries. Another numerous group comes from English-speaking countries, with 20% (237). Not surprising the Italians come next, with 16% (184 people), then the Germans, Polish, French, Czech, Japanese, Dutch, Slovakian, Hungarian, Finnish, Serbian, Tibetan and so on. Jim reminded us of impermanence saying that 27 of them are no longer with us.

We finished the retreat with a sense of responsibility and commitment, being aware that the main part is just starting: studying and applying the profound practices of the First Level, integrating it with the daily life, dealing with various challenges. And we hope to meet again, more mature and relaxed, for the training of the Second Level. May the Master stay with us, allowing all us fortunate students to gain experiences and realization! ©

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MerigarWest



First Time Training for Yantra Yoga Instructors

Sergio Quaranta

From August 20th to the 24th 2008 in Merigar's Gonpa, ten certified Yantra Yoga instructors and two on their path towards the exam (see photo) met with the two international teachers, Fabio Andrico and Laura Evangelisti.

The aim of the meeting, the first of its kind, was to carefully check each person and deepen the aspect of the breathing, especially, and also to exchange information on how Yantra Yoga is developing world-wide. Before, this kind of activity had always been part of a teacher's training or seminar. The relatively small number of participants made it possible to do thorough work on all these aspects and allowed Fabio and Laura to see the participants more clearly and work with each person more closely.

First the good news, which is that the complete text on Yantra Yoga will be published in English and released by Snow Lion Publications in early October. One of

our instructors living in the USA, Oni McKinstry, will be going on a national tour to present the book. (see page 17)

A new web site dedicated to Yantra, www.yantrayoga.org, is under construction with the help of Thinley Koblensky and Gabriele Marrazzi, coordinated by Naomi Zeitz and the Shang Shung Institute. It will soon be available on the net. It will contain all the information about Yantra Yoga in relation to Rinpoche and the Dzogchen Community, programs from all over the world, the profiles of the instructors, video clips and more.

As the book release approaches, an aspect that is becoming a bit worrisome is that the number of active authorized teachers is not very high. It seems that not very many practitioners of Yantra, especially younger people, are willing to engage in the task of becoming certified instructors. Yantra Yoga, to ensure its continuation in the future, needs new and young dedicated people. It is a very important issue. Laura and Fabio asked that each of us interested in Yantra Yoga become aware of this and try to get the local Gakyils involved. Since Yantra is a resource for all the Community and not only for those who



Photo: C. Storch

practice it, the Gakyils should help encourage young practitioners to take this responsibility, and maybe even help support them financially towards participation in training and courses when possible, if it is really needed and worthwhile.

We were able to complete and review only the first level of Yantra, actually the "old" first level, that used to include the yantras up to the second group. Recently, in fact, Rinpoche suggested that the Yantra Yoga instructors of first level should also know the main yantras of all five groups.

This means that all teachers should update their diploma regularly. Next year, most likely, there will be a training for this special purpose.

The atmosphere of the meeting was very nice and relaxed, we enjoyed Fabio's funny faces and laughed a lot, but we also did a lot of good work, correcting, clarifying, receiving advice on how to teach some tricky aspects, and exchanging experiences about our local situations. Besides these very practical aspects, we were also able to get to know each other more deeply, develop a real closeness and get

a sense of a wider Community and the goal ahead of us.

I want to personally thank Laura and Fabio for encouraging me and helped me to feel my limitations in a less heavy way. I am sure that all the other participants share the same sense of gratitude. We are very fortunate to have received such a wonderful teaching from our Master, and to make it available in the most pure form possible to interested people. This is not only a duty, but an immense pleasure for all of us. There is a lot to do ahead of us, but it is also an exciting challenge! ©

Accommodation Service at Merigar

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:

Accommodation Service

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

Christina von Geispitzheim

Email: accomodationservice@libero.it

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.

MerigarEast



Merigar East

Asociatia Culturala Comunitatea Dzog-Chen

23 August 907005

Constanta

Romania

phone: 0040 746 26 08 61

office@dzogchen.ro

www.dzogchen.ro

Merigar East Gakyil & Geköe

Merigar East is happy to announce new Gakyil members:

Blue: Tereza Starkova (CZ),
Fijalka Turzikova (CZ/I),
Elisha Koppensteiner (AU)
blue@dzogchen.ro

Yellow: Abel Paizs (HU),
Maria Mironova (RU),
Geogre Tender (HU)
yellow@dzogchen.ro

Red: Gabriella Schneider (D/RO),
Greg Ladra (PL/D), Ondrej Stefik (SK)
red@dzogchen.ro

Geköe: Greg Ladra
geko@dzogchen.ro



New Merigar East Gakyil and Gekö with International Gakyil.

Photo: N. Zeitz



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Europe

Czech Republic Passages

Married: Olga Shmulovich (Israel) and Ales Ryznar (Czech Republic) were married on July 11, 2008 in Horni Berkovice, Czech Republic.



France
upcoming
Vajra Dance Course of Six Spaces of Samantabhadra
led by Stoffelina Verdonk
Cannes
September 19–21, 2008

Location: Maison des Associations 9, rue Louis Braille 06400 Cannes (South-East of France)

Price: 120 euros with usual discount for members

Registration: Please contact Helene Lafage: hmsmf@hotmail.com

*

upcoming
Yantra Yoga Course Intermediate level (1st and 2nd series)
with Laura Evangelisti in Paris
October 9–12, 2008

This is a course for all people that have already received transmission and have already practiced the eight preliminary movements of Yantra Yoga.

Place: Forum 104, 104 rue de Vaugirard, 75006 Paris

Timetable:
October 9 evening: 18 h 30–22 h 00
October 10 evening: 18 h 30–22 h 00
October 11 afternoon and evening: 14 h 00–22 h 00
October 12 morning and afternoon: 9 h 00–18 h 00

Fees: 120 Euros (ordinary membership)
70 Euros (low budget membership)
Free (meritorious membership)

How do you apply?
Send the application form and check (to Association Dzog Chen France) of 50 % of fee corresponding to your membership to the following address:
Elisabeth Dong
14 square Dunois, Apt 260, 75013 Paris

Application Form
Name:
Address:
Telephone number:
Email:
Membership:
Contact: Arianna De Toni
Tel: 06 78 82 59 51
ade_toni@hotmail.com

Germany
upcoming
The German Dzogchen Community is happy to announce a course of:
Santi Maha Sangha 1. Level
with Jakob Winkler and Alexander (Sasha) Pubants in Höfen near Neustadt Aisch/ Germany
24–26th October 2008

Information and registration:
Barbara Schwesig
0049-170-914 75 32
nuernberg@dzogchen.de

Italy Kunsalling, the place of total luminosity

The Ling in Brescia, Italy, is trying to become bigger

A practice retreat of the Guruyoga of the white A was held at Kunsalling with Costantino Albini from August 1–3. Kunsalling is a retreat place situated in Valvestino, in the province of Brescia, in the Alto Garda Nature Park between Garda Lake and Idro Lake. It is a wonderful place at 1350 m. above sea level, in an isolated valley, surrounded by woods and protected by cliffs. It consists of a large barn which is used as a Gonpa (and at night becomes a dormitory) and a smaller house with a kitchen and a room that can be used even for dark retreats.

The place can only be reached on foot with a 20–30 minute walk and does not have all the comforts



Photo: Enrico Dell'Angelo

of modern “civilisation”. For this reason we have decided that the maximum number of people who can participate in a retreat should not be more than 10–15 people. We were 20 participants at the retreat, which was guided by Costantino with his great capacity and helpfulness in putting into practice the wonderful teaching transmitted by Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. Collaboration and the very relaxed atmosphere that was immediately created between participants did the rest

and, for those who had not been here before, Kunsalling was an exciting discovery.
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu visited this place in 1991 and stayed here for 3 days. He sang the Song of the Vajra on the highest mountain in the valley from whose peak you can see a view that goes from the Alps to the Apennines and after giving some precious advice to his disciples gathered there, he consecrated the place calling it Kunsalling, ‘the place of total luminosity’ and explained the char-



Photo: Enrico Dell'Angelo

acteristics of the place that are especially suitable for personal retreats. Since then practitioners from all over the world have used it. The Kunsalling gakyil takes care of the Ling so that it is always ready for practitioners who are interested in going there.
Then Rinpoche advised us to buy the bordering land on which there is an old barn in order to guarantee total privacy which is indispensable for practice. In this way the small valley in which the retreat place is situated would

become the exclusive property of the Community. Today the time is ripe to start buying this land.
The cost of buying it is 35,000 euro and up to now we have collected about 15,000. ©
For further information, you can contact:
Alberto Benassa – Yellow gakyil tel. 333-251 99 32
benassa@med.unibs.it (only Italian)
Fulvio Ferrari – in charge of retreats tel. 0365-82 51 65
fulgidi@tele2.it

The new Adzamling in south Italy

The new Adzamling was founded recently in south central Italy near the sea and has already hosted several Vajra Dance and Yantra Yoga activities. The Mirror spoke to Enzo Terzano, a practitioner who has dedicated a lot of time and energy to the Ling to find out how the situation is developing.

Mirror: Enzo, you have been closely involved in the creation of the new Adzamling, could you tell us about its beginnings?
Enzo: The Ling was created in September 2007 when a group of practitioners from Molise went to the Master and received his blessing to renew the tradition of the old Adzamling. In the past the Ling was in the Alps in north-west Italy but now it is located near the sea in Campobasso province.

Mirror: Why was the area of Molise in particular chosen for the Ling?
Enzo: I came back to Molise in 1998 after living at Merigar for seven years. I was on my own at first then we became three practitioners. Then the group grew some more and in 2004 we had our first Gakyil and there was an increase in the number of people participating in the activities. Now we are 19 people who have received the transmission of the Teaching and together with the people who have come to the open courses we are 32. Considering the amount of interest in the area, I would say we have quite a large number of practitioners. In 2006 we rented a gym where we practice Vajra Dance, we drew up a statue and that is how the Ling came about.

Mirror: How do you explain this sudden increase in the number of practitioners in an area with such a small population?
Enzo: I think it really depends on the openness that practitioners have towards new people and perhaps developing an awareness of how important it is to have a cohesive and harmonious group. Practitioners give special attention to their Vajra relationships. As the Master has taught us, many things depend on this relationship such as the liberation of oneself and others and also how the Community is going ahead. If our Vajra relationships are based on lovingness, kindness, solidarity between practitioners, the warmth of this kind of relationship fills everyone with joy and enthusiasm for the practice and for activities. If, on the other hand, we are indifferent, like a stone on the bottom of a river (in the famous example given by the Master), our brothers and sisters

will always be strangers, at times to snub, to compete with, other times to manipulate ... and in this case things in the Community will not go so well.
Mirror: So you believe that developments at Adzamling are due to this Vajra relationship?
Enzo: I think that respect towards the life of each practitioner and participation in important moments in it create cohesion in the Community. We practice together several times a week and so there is a mutual respect for the transmission and we listen to each other carefully. I believe this reciprocal kindness and respect is the basis for the development of Adzamling and the attraction that the Community has for newcomers.

Mirror: Doesn't the arrival of new students depend on their connection with the Master and the Teaching?
Enzo: If we take a wider view of things we understand that there are countless beings who have a relationship with the Master and the Teaching. A Vajra relationship which is correct and governed by presence means that the relationship becomes a net of light which catches beings in samsara who have a connection with the Teaching and it puts them on the path to liberation through direct contact with the Master. A retreat doesn't go by in which the Master does not ask us to be kind and welcome new people. This kind of welcoming lasts a few hours and then everyone goes back home and closes himself up in his house. This is the reason, I think, why some situations are basically static for years. Fundamentally it is not difficult to understand that compassionate attention or sim-

Europe >> continued

ply the feeling of love can be an important cohesive factor.

Mirror: Does Adzamling organise activities for people outside the Ling?

Enzo: We publicize open courses with posters, invitations and e-mail. Then we had an intense campaign on behalf of ASIA and

got about 500 signatures. The activity that was most moving for us was the liberation of about 10,000 sea snails and clams into the sea in Abruzzo for the benefit of people who were ill. And then we have created a website which you can visit at www.adzamling.it

Mirror: In what ways does Adzamling interact with the Gar?

Enzo: First of all there is close contact with the Gar through a

channel of communication which is always open. Then we contribute to the Gar with our memberships, book sales, donations and directing people in our area who are interested towards Merigar. Besides this we also want to open channels of direct communication with others Lings just like the Santi Maha Sangha symbol in which the Gar communicates with many Lings, the Lings with the Gar and also between them-

selves, one to one, one together with another, creating a network of golden threads and a perfectly integrated geometric figure. ©

Poland

The dark retreat cabin project – a message from the Polish community

We are happy to inform you that we have finished laying out the foundations, and a protective vase from Rinpoche has been placed in it during a consecration ceremony. You can track the status of the whole project at the web page: <http://dzogczen.pl/darkretreat/status.php>

Till now thanks to generous donations we managed to get ca. 8,000 euro. We need another 6,000 euro by the end of August in order to finish and close the building. All your help is very much appreciated. We especially invite you to get the “Virtual Bricks” that you can order online:

<http://dzogczen.pl/darkretreat/vb.php>
You can get 14 days of free retreat time with each brick.

Also, if there is anyone who could lend us the missing amount of 6,000 euro for a period of 6–9 months that would help us a lot and give us enough time to gather the necessary funds. In this case please contact: darkretreat@dzogczen.pl to discuss the details.

Thank you very, very much for all your support!
With Best Wishes,
The Dark Cabin Project Team

Santi Maha Sangha Base in Paldenling

May 9–18, 2008

Marek Macko



In the last years there have been several Santi Maha Sangha retreats in Paldenling. Paldenling is situated in Southeast Poland and is very good place for such retreats because is quite far from main roads and towns and is isolated in the mountains. This past May we also had such a possibility. It was only a pity that there were not so many participants from Poland and Slovakia. Igor had to travel a great distance from East Ukraine, but maybe it happened like that because we had to change the date in short notice.

When Igor arrived, he announced that the retreat would be more dedicated to practice than to lectures and

explanations. Igor started by stating that if we really want to study a book like The Precious Vase, we should look into it, not outside, but instead as if we were looking in the mirror and then what we study is really helps us to recognize our own state.

So in these days we mainly practiced Dzogchen methods like *rushen* of voice and mind, for separating the mind from the nature of mind, and also the seven main *semdzins* for discovering our own state and finding shine and *lhagthong* simultaneously. We did these practices not only in one way, but we tried some variations as well. For us it was a rare occasion to go more deeply into the essence of Rinpoche’s precious teachings, and prepare for further study and practice of the Base Santi Maha Sangha ourselves. ©



Dream Yoga with Michael Katz, Warsaw, August 20–23.



Dream Yoga with Michael Katz, Krakow, August 24–25.

Russia

Passages

Died: Alexander Vyaznikovtsev died on July 30th 2008 in Ulan-Ude, Buryatia. He was one of those who first invited Rinpoche to Russia in 1992.



Spain

New Gakyil Spain

Yellow Gakyil:
olaya_amarillo@dzogchen.es
montse_amarillo@dzogchen.es

Blue Gakyil:
sachiko_azul@dzogchen.es

Red Gakyil:
carles_rojo@dzogchen.es
pablo_rojo@dzogchen.esKundusling

*

2008 Program Barcelona

October 8–12
First part of Dance of The Song of Vajra with Ludmila Kislinchenko
Contact:
olaya_amarillo@dzogchen.es
gloriapinsach@yahoo.es

Nov. 14–20
Dzogchen Retreat with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu
Dzogchen Upadesha transmission and instruction Kunsag Jaku, Rainbow body of Samantabhadra “Terma teaching of the great Terton Duddul Dorje”
320 euros

Contact:
olaya_amarillo@dzogchen.es
montse_amarillo@dzogchen.es
sachiko_azul@dzogchen.es
gloriapinsach@yahoo.es

Nov. 21–23
Yantra Yoga Base level with Laura Evangelisti
Open to all
Contact:
olaya_amarillo@dzogchen.es
sachiko_azul@dzogchen.es

Nov. 27–30
Yantra Yoga 2nd series with Laura Evangelisti
Contact:
olaya_amarillo@dzogchen.es
sachiko_azul@dzogchen.es

December 5–7
Advanced Dance of the Six Spaces of Samantabhadra with Adriana del Borgo
Contact:
olaya_amarillo@dzogchen.es
sachiko_azul@dzogchen.es

SMS Base Retreat with Elio Guarisco
Kundusling, July 27–30, 2008

The first Course of Santi Maha Sangha Base at the Spanish Ling, Kundusling, took place on July the 27–30 with Elio Guarisco. We were a group of 12–15 people eager to go into the Teachings in depth. It was also a great opportunity to get ready for the exam of the Santi Maha Sangha Basis next July. Thanks to Elio’s ability to synthesize and his scholarly view, we were able to understand the vision of the book The Precious

Vase. Elio clarified for us as well some points of Santi Maha Sangha Basis using pertinent examples, like the story of Naropa and Gampopa to illustrate the chapter of the Refuge. We look forward to have him again soon at Kundusling.

We thank him for his kindness and patience and for transmitting to us the idea that the most important of the study of The Precious Vase is to assume an authentic commitment with the Teachings and with the Master.

Thanks to our Precious Master for his infinite compassion and for the Santi Maha Sangha! ©



Europe >> continued

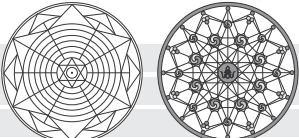


This was the first 10 days of a 2 part course on Ku Nye given by Aldo Oneto at Kundusling, Barcelona, Spain, July 21–20 2008. Photo: C. Janez



Dance of Three Vajras June 13–15, 2008 with Yolanda Ferrándiz in Barcelona.

TsegyalgarEast



DCA Tsegyalgar East

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Conway, MA 01341 USA

Phone: 413 369 4153
Fax & Bookstore: 413 369 4473

secretary@tsegyalgar.org
www.www.tsegyalgareast.org

Schedule Conway 2008

October
October 20–24*
Long Life Practice of the Dakini
Mandarava with Tsalung
Instructor: Elio Guarisco

For more information contact
Tsegyalgar East:
Tel: 413 369 41 53, Fax: 413 369 44 73
Email: secretary@tsegyalgar.org
* These dates are subject to change to include a weekend

Ganapujas are at 7:30 pm
at the Schoolhouse.

Yantra Yoga activities TBA.

Vajra Dance every Sunday at 11:30 am
at the Schoolhouse.

Contact our secretary
(secretary@tsegyalgar.org or
369-4153) or Geko (geko@tsegyalgar.org
or 413-230-8305) to sign up for
courses and inform of participation in
karma yoga

September
Saturday 20th and Sunday 21st
**Green Tara Practice
and Karma Yoga Weekend**
9:30 am Green Tara
10:30–1 pm Karma Yoga
1–2:30 pm Lunch
2:30–3:30 Green Tara
3:30–6:30 Karma Yoga
6:30–7:30 Break/Dinner
7:30–8:30 Green Tara

Wednesday 24th – Dakini Day **Ganapuja**

Sunday 28th, 4–6 pm
Guardian Practice in Guardian Cabin

Monday 29th – New Moon **Ganapuja**

October
Saturday 11th and Sunday 12th
**Green Tara Practice
and Karma Yoga Weekend**
See Sept. Karma Yoga Weekend for schedule

Thursday 9th – Guru Rinpoche Day
Ganapuja

Tuesday 14th – Full Moon **Ganapuja
with Namkha**

Thursday 23rd – Dakini Day **Ganapuja**

Tuesday 28th – New Moon **Ganapuja**

Yantra Yoga Book Tour

We have confirmed two stops on the book tour and two Yoga Journal Trade Shows:
Berkeley California November 1–2, 2008
Portland Oregon December 4–7, 2008
Yoga Journal Shows:
Miami Florida Mid November, 2008
San Francisco California Mid January, 2009

For information on these events please
contact Naomi Zeitz
mirror@tsegyalgar.org or
mirrornk@gmail.com

Dear Dzogchen Community, North American
Gars, Lings, Communities and interested
individuals,

I am writing on behalf of the Yantra
Yoga instructors, practitioners, the
Dzogchen Community of Tsegyalgar
East, and the Shang Shung Institute.
As you all know, our Community has a
wonderful, precious, and long awaited
book called *A Stainless Mirror of Jewels*.
This book is the comprehensive com-
mentary by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu
on the original Yantra Yoga text, *Nyida
Kaljyor, The Union of Sun and Moon Yantra*,
which was written by Vairocana in the
8th century. Snow Lion Publications
plans to release this unique book in
the first week of October 2008. This
marvelous text is a great boon not only
for practitioners, and but also for all
beings able who will have the possibility
to have contact with these teachings.

As part of the joyful occasion of the
release of this text, the Dzogchen Com-
munity of North America, in conjunc-
tion with the Shang Shung Institute,

is planning a 10-city North American
tour with Oni McKinstry. Oni is a 1st
level YY instructor certified by Chögyal
Namkhai Norbu. This tour is aimed to
help promote the book, and also give
the general public the opportunity to
have contact with Yantra Yoga and the
Dzogchen Teachings. The tour will con-
sist of a series of free, 2-day introduc-
tory weekend workshops with Oni. Each
weekend will consist of 4, 2-hour ses-
sions. At each location Oni will give an
overview of the history and principles
of this system of Yantra Yoga. She will
also teach introductory breathing and
movement, and disseminate promo-
tional materials such as the book, CD's,
and Yantra Yoga manuals.

The great value of such a tour is
not only to use Yantra Yoga as an en-
try point for people to learn about the
Dzogchen Teachings, but also to pro-
mote Yantra Yoga as a method that can
provide tremendous benefit to society
by helping facilitate relaxation, har-
mony, and coordination of energy of the
individual, as well as bring new people
to our local Communities and stimulate
more activity in our Lings and smaller
Dzogchen Communities throughout
North America.

In order to pursue this avenue of
development of our local Communities,
city centers and Lings, there needs to be
some stimulus of activity and program-
ming. We at Tsegyalgar East strongly
feel that a Yantra Yoga promotional
book tour could be an excellent means
to bring in new people and interface
with society in a broader way than we
traditionally have.

We would like to ask all the Lings,
the 10 chosen locations, and the local
Dzogchen Communities to collaborate

together with energy, activity, support,
and finances to help promote this tour,
which will be of great benefit to all
members of the International Dzogchen
Community and beyond. In the end,
this activity could be inspirational for
the Worldwide Community as a model
they may want to try in their respective
places.

At this point in time we have decided
to begin the tour with 3 test cities. Port-
land, Berkeley and Los Angeles. We have
already had a very positive response
from Darren Littlejohn in Portland and
the Blue Gakyil of the West Coast Com-
munity, and we hope to hear from the
other location, as well as all the other
cities mentioned and maybe some not
mentioned for the future. We intend to
start on the West Coast in late October
into December. It seems the best time
for Portland is early December. Since
there will be a beginners course in
Berkeley in December, it may be ad-
vantageous to have the Berkeley visit by
Oni in mid to late November and maybe
Los Angeles in late October.

We would like to ask all members of the
Dzogchen Community, and particularly
the people in the 10 chosen tour lo-
cations, to collaborate to make this won-
derful opportunity a reality.

Below, you can find many ways to
help with this project. The list is pre-
sented in order of chronological need,
and NOT in order of importance:

- A graphic designer to help design a
promotional brochure and other mate-
rials that will also be posted to a Yantra
Yoga website established by SSI-Italy. If
someone is able to help with the website
design this is also highly desirable.

- Professional or competent amateur
photographers in various locales to
take professional-style photos of some
local Yantra Yoga instructors that we
can use in our promotional materials.
We especially need photographers in
the UK, Russia, Australia, Brazil and
Italy.
- We need committed Community
members from the local areas at the
tour sites and near by to participate by:
 - A. Finding appropriate venues for
the workshop. Some suggested venues
can be: bookstores, gymnasiums, yoga
or martial arts studios, and lastly uni-
versities. The reasoning for this is that
the gyms and martial arts studios have
more space and present to a broader
audience. They may able to offer free
space in order to promote something
free, bring new people to their business,
and also maybe discover something
unique to promote in the future. We
will provide promotional materials for
the people researching and finding the
venues such as brochures, DVD's, and
manuals.
 - B. Researching different yoga con-
ferences in your area and finding out
entry details.
 - C. Offering housing for Oni and pro-
viding teacher care for the 2 or 3 days
of her visit, including transport to and
from the airport, housing, food, and
transport to and from the venue.
 - D. We would like to ask each loca-
tion on the tour to participate by giv-
ing financial support towards the tour
activity. The tour will be costly due
to airfares. It will be much less costly
since we can participate by offering
places and transport for Oni within the
Community, but the airfares will still be
high. Therefore if we all share the bur-

den of cost as well as the benefit of the
fruit, everything will be much easier!

E. Here is the list of cities we are
currently considering. Depending on
response and commitment, we will see
which places can be actual participants
in this wonderful opportunity! If your
city is not on this list, and you feel it
should be, please let us know where
and why!

Here is tentative list of more than 10
places to be worked with and culled
down depending on response, possibil-
ity, and cost.

- Northampton (also to test the waters)
- Boston
- NYC (Kundrolling)
- Berkeley (Dondrubling)
- Baja (Tsegyalgar West)
- Portland and/or Seattle
- Chicago
- Ann Arbor, Michigan
- Toronto
- Miami
- Santa Fe
- Washington, DC
- Mexico City (Padzomling)
- Los Angeles

If anyone is interested to give much
needed financial support to this great
promotion of Yantra Yoga, please con-
tact Asruh, the secretary at Tsegyalgar
East and she can help you!

Tel: 413 369 41 53
Fax: 413 369 44 73
secretary@tsegyalgar.org

Thank you!!!
Thank you for your time and participation.
We look forward to hearing from you!
Naomi Zeitz for The Yantra Yoga Book
Tour

Tsegyalgar East

Khandroling

Spanning 220 acres (89 hectares) of picturesque hills, streams, a pond, meadows, fields and forest, Khandroling, or “the Land of the Dakinis,” offers Dzogchen Community members a place to deepen their connection to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu’s Dzogchen transmission. Through the clarity of his dreams, Rinpoche received many teachings on this land, including the Dance of the Vajra. It was also here, that Rinpoche painted the first Vajra Dance Mandala in 1990. In 2003, Rinpoche declared that Khandroling was the Seat of Dzogchen Master Gomadevi. He has also said that in this special place, it is possible to realize in 6 days of practice what it would take 6 months elsewhere.

Development

In 2005, Rinpoche instructed the Dzogchen Community of Tsegyalgar to construct a pavilion to protect a Vajra Dance Mandala of the Universe that will be located on the crown peak of the mountain retreat land. In addition he said that Tsegyalgar must prepare for the pilgrims that will come by constructing a guesthouse.

Tsegyalgar East has begun fundraising for the construction of the Vajra Dance Pavilion, a guesthouse, and a home for Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. Retreat cabins available on Khandroling now include: Rinpoche’s personal retreat cabin, a retreat cabin dedicated to Guardian practice, and a cabin dedicated to the Long Life Practice of the Dakini Mandarava. In addition, Tsegyalgar will fulfill Rinpoche’s request to

construct 3 separate cabins dedicated to the Practice of the Dakini Gomadevi, the Practice of the Dakini Sinhamukha, and the Practice of Todgal.

Collaboration

These projects are important to the continuation of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu’s precious transmission. Everyone who is connected to Rinpoche’s transmission is also connected to this special land. In order for these important projects to be completed, we need the collaboration of the whole mandala of the Dzogchen Community. The completion date for the Khandroling development project has been decided by Rinpoche to be 2011 to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of Rinpoche’s very first dream of the Vajra Dance while on Khandroling, July 7th, 1986.

Showing Support

There are a variety of ways to show support for the projects on Khandroling. People who are interested to participate in the Khandroling projects in any way can contact the secretary at Tsegyalgar East at secretary@tsegyalgar.org

We accept donations by check, money order or credit card:
Send a check or money order to:

The Khandroling Project
Tsegyalgar East
P.O. Box 479
18 Schoolhouse Rd.
Conway, MA 01341
USA

For credit card contributions, please call the Tsegyalgar East secretary at 413-369-4153 or donate through our website at www.tsegyalgareast.org/participate/donations.php

Recognizing Support

Tsegyalgar East has created a number of gifts to show their thanks and recognize all donations.

- \$50,000 & up: Model Stupa with relics of Changchub Dorje
- \$25,000–\$49,999: Large Deity Statue: Gomadevi, Jñanadakini Yab Yum, Mandarava
- \$10,000–\$24,999: Small Deity Statue: Gomadevi, Jñanadakini Yab Yum, Sinhamukha, Ekajati
- \$5,000–\$9,999: Large Thanka of Gomadevi
- \$2,500–\$4,999: Small Thanka of Gomadevi
- \$1,000–\$2,499: Nice print of the Universal Mandala created by Ans Swart or Prima Mai
- \$500–\$999: Print of “Gomadevi” calligraphy handwritten by Rinpoche, silk-screened on rice paper



\$250–\$499: Cotton shoulder bag with embroidered Longsal Symbol
\$100–\$249: Cotton Pecha Bag (to carry practice books) with embroidered Longsal symbol.
Any donation at any level (even less than \$100) also receives a picture of Rinpoche dancing the Vajra Dance on Khandroling. ©

New Gakyil and Geköe

Red Gakyil:

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Cindy Thibeau (Vice-Director)
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Terre Satterthwaite
padmaman@gmail.com

Blue Gakyil:

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centerplay@hotmail.com

Ed Hayes (Director)
edhayes13@yahoo.com

Jeff Wood, jefyogi@yahoo.com

We are also very happy to welcome and announce Tsegyalgar East’s new Geköe, David Hayes, who can be reached at geko@tsegyalgar.org or 413-230-8305.

*



Dance of the Six Spaces with Bodhi Krause at Tsegyalgar East August 2008.



SMS Base Level Retreat with Jim Valby at Khandroling August 2008.

Photo: B. Krause

THE MIRROR



Newspaper of the International Dzogchen Community of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Main Office: PO Box 479, Conway, MA 01341, USA * Tel: 413 369 4208 * Fax: 413 369 4473 * mirror@tsegyalgar.org * **European Office:** The Mirror, Merigar, Arcidosso, 58031 GR, Italy * Tel: 39 32 98 86 52 92 * Fax: 39 05 64-96 81 10 * lizmirror@tiscalinet.it * **Editorial Staff:** Naomi Zeitz, Tsegyalgar, Conway, MA, USA * Liz Granger, Merigar, Arcidosso, Italy * **Literary Editor:** John Shane * **Advisors:** Des Barry, Adriano Clemente, Anna Eid, Barbara Paparazzo, Jim Valby * **International Blue Gakyil Advisor:** Fabio Andrico, International Publications Committee * **English Language Advisor:** Liz Granger * **Layout & Design:** Thomas Eifler * **Web Site Managers:** Thomas Eifler, Malcolm Smith * **Printer:** Turley Publications, Palmer, MA, USA * **Distribution:** Tsegyalgar at Conway, MA, USA * **Subscription Rate/6 Issues:** \$35 US available through Tsegyalgar; 35 € through Merigar * **Visa and Master card welcome** * **Online Mirror:** www.melong.com * All material © 2007 by The Mirror * **Reprint by permission only** * We reserve the right to edit all submissions.

His Holiness in NYC

July 17, 2008
Radio City Music Hall

Naomi Zeitz

His Holiness taught the teaching of The Four Noble Truths to a full house at Radio City Music Hall in the center of Manhattan Island, New York City, on Thursday July 17, 2008. Radio City Music Hall houses approximately 6000 people and it was packed. On the way to the Hall, it became evident that somewhere there was an important event for Tibetan and Himalayan people as the numbers of traditional attire and *kadags* increased in the subways, on buses and on the street.

The Himalyan Buddhist Community, a non-for profit organization, hosted this event. It is a union of all peoples from the Himalyan region, and was founded to preserve and nourish Himalayan culture and heritage and to promote harmony among the thousands of Himalyan people scattered a round the globe living in Diaspora. It is an umbrella organization comprised primarily of people from Nepal and Lhadhak, but also the following groups: Chum, Dolpo, Gyalsumdo, Manang, Mustang, Nupri, Sherpa, Tamang, Thakali, Walung and Yolmo, and is based in New York City. There could be no better place to host such an event, since NYC is known for its capacity to embrace all peoples living far from their native lands and providing refuge from persecution.

After an impressive multi media exhibit of the Himalyan region, a few members of the organization introduced the event and explained that at this crucial and difficult time in history for the Tibetan people and their land, the Himalyan Community wished to show its solidarity with

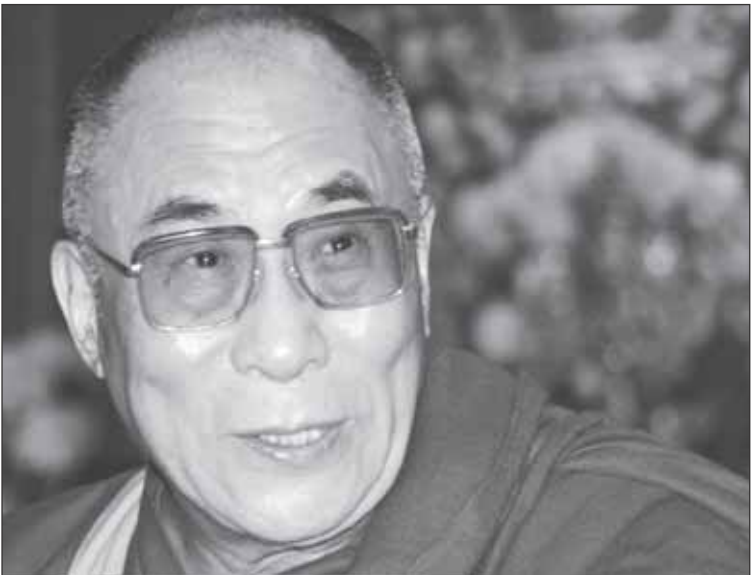


Photo: S. Ross

the Tibetan people. There was no better way to do so than to invite and receive teachings from the Living Buddha, His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

After an introduction by Robert Thurman, His Holiness entered the stage and received mandala offerings from the various representatives of the Himalayan Communities. His Holiness asked each person which region they represented.

His Holiness opened the teaching by saying, “There are more than 100,000 Tibetan refugees and many live in Nepal and India. The Buddhist culture is one of peace and compassion and now we have lost our freedom. Now in America the people of Nepal are meeting with me and I feel their support. Tibetan and Nepali Buddhists are very close. In the lineage of the Tibetan tradition there are many Nepali masters. In modern America, they are showing their concern and interest in their cultural heritage and asked for this explanation of The Four Noble Truths. The Tibetan cultural heritage is now dying. It is a sad period. So it is wonderful the Himalyan Community wants to maintain its cultural heritage.”

Then His Holiness, together with the monks and Lamas on the stage, recited the prepara-

tory mantras. His Holiness then gave extensive teachings on The Four Noble Truths, the truth of suffering, the cause of suffering and the path. His Holiness began with the basic principle that the creation of happiness for others gives oneself happiness and that is based in the law of cause and effect.

His Holiness closed the teachings with questions and answers from the audience. The first question was how the Himalyan people can help the Tibetans in their struggle. His Holiness said that the best way is to promote understanding of the Buddhadharm and not to rely on magic of the lamas for enlightenment. He said that study is important and that Tibetan ecology is very delicate and needs to be protected. He also said that people need to be educated about the reality of the Tibetan struggle and that Buddhist tradition should be preserved through modern education.

The second question was about the practice of Dorje Shugden. His Holiness said that he once practiced this practice and then became suspicious after reading the biography of the fifth Dalai Lama and hearing other stories. He gradually started to notice

that something was wrong. His Holiness said that the creation of this spirit was perverted and done through wrong prayers, so its aim is to harm Buddhadharm. He himself stopped the practice and became more public about it, and most Tibetans follow his wishes. Contrary to what some people say, in reality Shugden is a very sectarian practice and His Holiness felt he had no religious freedom when he practiced this practice. He said that the 5th and 13th Dalai Lamas both made restrictions on this practice, so he felt he must continue and do the same.

The third question was what is the best and quickest way to serve other beings? His Holiness said that this depends on the circumstances, but to keep in your mind the more compassionate way and minimize a self-serving attitude. He then said, “At least smile.”

The final question was, “What makes you the most happy?” His Holiness replied that we are all the same. Communication and friendship are most important. All beings are a part of your family. He summed it up with, “I love sleep!”

As always happens when His Holiness graces any place with his presence, the crowd wished him farewell with a mixture of great joy for the opportunity of receiving teachings from the mouth of the Living Buddha, but



New York City
Kundrolling Fall Program

Special Courses by Visiting Teachers
— outlined below, visit website for more information:

September 20–21
Dream Yoga Retreat with Michael Katz

November 7–9
SMS Base Retreat with Jim Valby

December 13–14
Yantra Yoga weekend with Naomi Zeitz

Ganapujas:
Week nights @ 7 pm,
Weekends @ 5 pm
August 16, 26, 30; September 10, 15, 24, 29; October 9, 14, 23, 28;
November 8, 13, 19, 27; December 7, 12, 21, 27

Next World Wide Transmission:
Anniversary Adzom Drugpa:
Sat Nov 22nd at 7 am precisely

New York Dzogchen Community
151 West 30th Street, Level 4
New York, NY 10001
Hotline: 212-564-1024
nydzogchen@gmail.com
www.nydzogchen.com

.....

also some tears, as the knowledge of impermanence became concrete and we realized that we must develop within each and every one of us the magnificence of the mandala of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. ©

Passages

Died: Taktser Rinpoche, the eldest brother of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, passed away on September 5 at home in Indiana, United States, after having been ill for several years. He was 86 years old. We heard that he was sitting up, much improved from his hospital stay, gave a deep breath and passed away.

Upcoming Retreats with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu
>> continued from page 1

Australia
Namgyalgar, Tilba Tilba
Feb. 9–15
Retreat

Feb. 17–19
Santi Maha Sangha Base Exam
Feb. 20–26
Santi Maha Sangha I Level Training

Caloundra
March 16–21
Teaching retreat

Melbourne
April 3–5
Weekend retreat

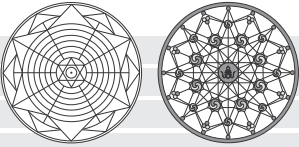
Namgyalgar
April 10–15
Retreat

April 17–22
Retreat

Singapore
May 1–3
Weekend retreat

(See International Contacts page for info)

Tsegyalgar West



Tsegyalgar West
Baja California Sur, Mexico
ejgon@hotmail.com
At Tsegyalgar West itself: betilupema@hotmail.com
<http://jardindelosnaranjos.org/>

Save these Dates!!!

Teaching of Rigbai Kujug or “Six Vajra Verses”

Yeshe Namkhai comes to Tsegyalgar West, Baja, Mexico
November 21–24, 2008

Paula Barry will teach an introductory Yantra Yoga course during these same dates.
For more information, please contact: Elisa Gonzalez, the Gar Secretary at ejgon@hotmail.com (Habla Espanol).

Red Gakyil Member wanted for Tsegyalgar West

The Gakyil of Tsegyalgar West is looking for a Red Gakyil member. The person interested should be willing to visit the Gar in Baja Sur, Mexico at least once during the year. The ability to speak Spanish is an important asset. If interested, please contact Michael Hass at mhass@socal.rr.com

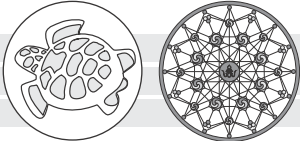
Yeshe Silvano Namkhai will visit and give teachings

at Dondrub Ling,
Berkeley California USA
November 2008

The basics of the schedule so far are as follows:
Dondrub Ling Teachings
November 14–16, 2008.
Topic: Explanations about The total space of Vajrasattva (Dorje Sempa Namkha Che), is the main lung or essential text of the Dzogchen Semde.
Note: Other activities may be scheduled and further details will be announced as they become available. Check the websites frequently. Information will also be posted on Norbunet.

Dzogchen Community West
www.dzogchencommunitywest.org
2748 #D Adeline Street, Berkeley, CA 94703
Phone: 510.644.2260

Tashigar Norte



Tashigar North /Finca Tashigar

Prolongación de la Calle Bolivar
Valle de Pedro González
Isla de Margarita

Tel: 0058 0295 2580332
secretary@tashigarnorte.org
www.tashigarnorte.org

Living in Tashigar Norte

Paola Civile

Practice

All Saturdays we practice the Sang after a Thun, depending on the date of calendar. Every evening the Mandala is alive with the Vajra Dance. Every day, from today, we practice Guru Dragphur in a very intensive way to help the health of Jean Francois.

SMS Study

Each Sunday morning in the churuata, we meet to study the Santi Maha Sangha Base level. We are 12 people and some have passed the exam, and some not. Every one chooses a paper with a question and they must explain it to others. Anyone can ask for clarification if they have some doubts.



The SMS study group.

In the Gonpa

The carpenter is working hard and we hope soon Migmar and his team come to paint. This is a wish of Rinpoche and also ours.

Agriculture work and Karma Yoga

Some months ago we have organized the collection of lemons and mangos. We're selling the lemons in supermarkets and restaurants. We wash and take off the skin of the mangos we collect, and put the pulp in a big pot.



Karma Yoga.

Then, we weigh it and we make many bags of 2 kilos. Our gekö Rolo is a very creative chef and he prepares mango ice cream, jelly of mango, mango jam, and all they very delicious. And, finally, some practitioners look for restaurants interested to buy our products.

Every Wednesday there is a "Tashimarket" and Ashe sells our products to residents in Tashigar Norte: lemons, mangos and her

products made of tamarind, papaya, etc.

This is hard work, sometimes there are only three people, sometimes more, but when we meet together with many people, we enjoy with beer and a fantastic dinner that some volunteers have made.



Passages

Married: Rolo Carrasco and Eliana Iannece were married on Margarita Island, Venezuela, August 11, 2008.

Caracas, Venezuela

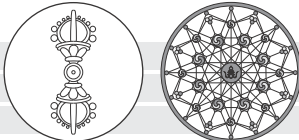
New Gakyil

We are pleased to announce the new members of Gakyil Caracas 2008/2009.

Blue: Eliana Iannece Civile
Yellow: Berthnelly Pacheco
Red: Jamilette León

elgakyilcaracas@yahoo.es

Tashigarsur



Tashigar South

Comunidad Dzogchen Tashigar
Calle pública S/N

Tanti 5155

Pcia. de Córdoba
Argentina

Phone & Fax: 0054 - 3541 - 498 356
tashigarsur@gmail.com

7th Lojong Retreat at Tashigar South

by Ana Garcia

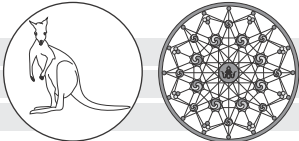
During the months of June, July and August SMS teacher Ricky Sued and

Yantra Yoga instructor Marisa Alonso led three-day retreats focusing on the three types of experiences described in the 7th Lojong to help practitioners get in the state beyond thoughts. Each

month an enthusiastic group of practitioners got together at the small Gonpa in Tashigar South ready to follow the instructions given by the teachers. These retreats have been very successful, and

we have invited Ricky and Marisa to lead a weeklong retreat on this mind training again in January 2009. Everyone is welcome!

Namgyalgar and Pacific Rim



Namgyalgar
Dzogchen Community in
Australia

PO Box 214 Central Tilba
NSW 2546
Phone/Fax: 61 02 4473 7668

namgyalg@acr.net.au
www.dzogchen.org.au

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Australia & Asia Pacific Schedule

January to May 2009

Auckland, New Zealand

Weekend Teachings; 23–25 January

Australia, Sydney, NSW

Weekend Teachings: 30 Jan.–1 Feb.
Friday night Public Talk / Weekend Seminar

Namgyalgar, Tilba Tilba, NSW

Dzogchen Retreat: 9–15 February

SMS Base Level Exam: 17–19 February

SMS Level 1 Training: 20–26 February

Caloundra, Queensland

Dzogchen Retreat: 16–21 March

Melbourne, Vic.

Weekend Teachings: 3–5 April
Friday night Public Talk / Weekend Seminar

Namgyalgar, Tilba Tilba, NSW

Dzogchen Retreat 1: 10–15 April:
Dzogchen Retreat 2: 17–22 April

Singapore

Weekend Teachings: 1–3 May

For detailed information about the events and for Registration please go to the Events page at:
www.dzogchen.org.au

upcoming

Namgyalgar Santi Maha Sangha Spring Retreat

Saturday September 27th
to Sunday October 5th
Led by Elise Stutchbury, authorized SMS teacher.
Developing Prajnaparamita, the Paramita of Discriminating Wisdom, Understanding View, Meditation and Behavior.

Inquiries and registration:
Namgyalgar Secretary
Tel/Fax: 02.44.737668 / Email:
secretary@dzogchen.org.au

upcoming

The Complete Harmonious Breathing Courses with Fabio Andrico in Australia 2009

Sydney: 2–5 February
Melbourne: 27–29 March

further details at:
www.dzogchen.org.au

New Gakyil in Singapore

July 2008 – June 2009

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bodhi

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If any of this information is outdated or incorrect, please send the correct information to lizmirror@tiscalinet.it
Thank you!

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A Tender Heart

Elio Guarisco

May all beings be free from suffering and its cause.

Even if we try to be loving and kind most of the time our heart remains hard, like a stone that, lying at the bottom of a lake, does not become softer. We do not feel the suffering of others, nor do we participate in it. We just pursue our own self-interest without any care for others.

Certainly some conditions and circumstances can make our heart tender. For example when we fall in love with a woman or a man, we are willing to accept the other person in their entirety, with his or her faults and qualities. That total acceptance acts as a catalyst that opens our heart and there emerges in us a tender heart, a compassionate feeling that wants to protect the other person from dangers and fears.

It is as if our being melts by the power of that feeling, we become less concerned with what

happens around us and that feeling permeates all our being. It seems we are at the centre of the universe. We feel well and renewed, as if we were stripping ourselves of our habits, and new world opens to us. We think this wonderful feeling of wellbeing has arisen because of the external presence of the woman or the man we like and thus we start to desire that person more and more. When our thoughts come and go following the images of our beloved, attachment arises and with attachment comes a strong longing for that person and the desire of wanting to possess that person and make them “mine”. At that point we have fallen into the trap of “having” as opposed to “being”.

What ensues is common knowledge. Our desire to possess eventually comes in the way of a good and healthy relationship with the other person and suffocates the space that fosters the relationship. Jealousy comes to replace the feeling of affection for the other person. Suspicion comes to replace the sense of full trust in our beloved. Ownership comes to replace pure love. Anger comes to replace patient

acceptance of the other. What was once a loving relation slowly becomes a series of quarrels and misunderstandings and our tender heart is lost.

Having lived such experiences, many people close themselves and do not allow that kind of love to emerge. They always live in the suspicion that the “other” man or woman is going to take advantage of them so they shut the door to the possibility of even enjoying healthy worldly pleasures and become idealists. But this kind of reaction is similar to a person’s refusal to eat after having food poisoning.

In any case, a real tender heart does not depend on an external conditions, it is not something we acquire from outside, it is always part of our nature. It is part of the nature of every living being, it is the nature of every living being. Also a tender heart does not have only one focus, in fact, it does not have any focus at all, it is aimless. A tender heart is the heart of one who does not defend him or herself, it is the heart of one who accepts everything as part of him or herself. It is a heart that can receive harm.

Sometimes in India we can see people with a curious genetic malformation begging on the street. Usually they are physically underdeveloped youths that lack the ribs above the region of the heart so their heart can be seen beating under a thin layer of skin, almost nakedly exposed. The tender heart is like that, a heart that does not have any thick cover on it, it is vulnerable, it can feel easily as it is touched even slightly.

How, then, can we unearth this treasure that exists within ourselves? Some say that we have to cultivate an altruistic intention through the methods explained in the path of the Bodhisattvas. But the methods for developing altruism in the bodhisattva paths are mostly conceptual and however much effort and struggle we make in applying them, such a tender heart will never arise in a genuine way. A true tender heart is not the result of training. What results from training is always within the domain of the working mind and of concepts, thus artificial.

It is only when we come to understand our real nature, that is ineffable, beyond definitions, and come to dwell in that nature, that

a true tender heart can emerge. It emerges spontaneously, when one witnesses ordinary people who are ignorant of their authentic nature. At that point the tender heart is not artificial, it is not a result constructed by an effort of the mind. A tender heart itself is not different from knowledge of one’s real nature, it is just an indistinguishable side of it.

One’s real nature seems to pervade everything without distinction and similarly the tender heart pervades everything without any object or person to rest upon. It is beyond attachment and aversion, beyond feeling close to some and distant from others.

When being with others, one is the tender heart. When being alone, one is the knowledge of one’s natural condition. Like butter added to fire, the tender heart makes one plunge into one’s real nature even more and with the increase of the knowledge of one’s real nature, the tender heart waxes like the full moon. In Buddhist terminology these two are what are called conventional and ultimate Bodhi-chitta, the two legs of the path to self-realization. ©

How to make a Dadar

Nina Robinson

“Da” means arrow. A *dadar* is a ritual arrow decorated with silk ribbons. It is used in many Long Life practices for recalling all the aspects of our vital energy that are damaged, lost or stolen. The manifestations of Guru Amitayus and his Yum hold *dadars* and so do Mandarava and all the Dakinis in her mandala. Also we can use a *dadar* when we do the Long life Practice of the Immortal Dakini Mandarava.

The *dadar* can be constructed in a more or less elaborate way, according to one’s wishes and possibilities. It represents our life. Its main features are a stick and five silk ribbons or scarves, jewels and a *melong* or mirror. The stick symbolizes our *yab* aspect; it is stable and represents form, *thab* (method). The silk ribbons represent our *yum* aspect: they are light and move in the air and symbolize *sherab*, wisdom and energy and the essence of the five elements. The jewels attached to the *dadar* represent concentrations of energy. The *melong* is a symbol of our primordial potentiality. So these are the essential features.

The stick should be a little longer than one cubit or the length from your elbow to your fingertips, but it doesn’t matter if it’s a bit longer. We usually use a bamboo stick because it is light and strong. If you can find one with five joints or knots that is good because they would symbolize the five main *chakras*. But if that is not possible three knots is also



Nina holding Dadar.

Photo: N. Zeitz

fine. When Rinpoche gave the Mandarava initiation he used a *dadar* that had amber and coral threaded onto the whole length of the stick.

The ribbons should be one of each of the colors of the essences of the five elements: white for water, yellow for earth, red for fire, green for air and blue for space. They can be tied on near the top of the stick making a kind of loop at the top of each one. They can hang down almost to the bottom of the stick. You can also tie silk threads of the five colors on the stick below the ribbons.

The *melong* can be tied on at the top of the arrow, at the point where you tie on the ribbons, using a short, narrow piece of ribbon or strong thread. It can be the same ribbon or thread that is used to tie on the ribbons. Rinpoche has used quite a few different *dadars* when leading practices in the Community and on the one he used last August (2007) a small *melong* was attached at the bottom of one of the strings of jewels. The *melongs* sold at Merigar, made by a member of the community are always made using five metals: gold and silver, copper, tin and iron.

A *melong* of the previous batch is always included in the alloy. The first batch contained a gold *melong* that was made for Rinpoche and which he wore for several years. So there is always a small part of that original *melong* in every new one.



How to hold the Dadar.

An arrow also needs a point. You can make it in any way you like. For example, I used a crystal but many other people had points made of gold or silver or other metals. But it is also possible to just cut the stick to a point. Anyway it’s better not to make it too sharp or it will bother you when you practice. At the very top an arrow usually has feathers. We can use any feathers we like. I used peacock feathers because they look like *tigles* and have Tantric and Dzogchen symbolic significance.

If we want to make our *dadars* even richer and more elaborate we can tie strings of jewels onto

the stick. When Rinpoche did a month long personal retreat of Mandarava practice in Merigar in August 2007 he had dreams clarifying some aspects of the Mandarava practice. In the first dream he discovered that 3 lines were missing from the *terma* he wrote down in 1984. One of them, from the description of the visualization, was that the *dadar* was decorated with five coloured jewels. So we can use turquoise (blue and green), lapis lazuli, amber, coral, pearls or any others jewels we may have.

If you can’t find the materials described here you can make a *dadar* with whatever suitable materials are available to you. Some people buy an arrow from a “sports” shop, or you can cut a straight stick from a tree or any other plant. You can buy a small round mirror from a pet shop: the kind they use in birdcages. And if you have no jewels you can use glass or plastic beads. I haven’t heard of any rules for making a *dadar*. As long as we keep in mind the main features and symbols we can improvise as much as we like, but remember the *dadar* symbolizes our life so let’s try to make it as beautiful and as perfect as we can! ©

How I met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

or, How I found my Family

Christina von Geispitzheim

Many of the stories of “How I met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu” end up being small life stories. In a certain sense the meeting with the Master is a culminating point to which one’s whole life is pointing, only that in the early stages one maybe does not know why he or she feels compelled to go in a certain direction. Then one starts to glimpse a direction, maybe starts to think concretely that he or she is looking for a Master, than they have to go on, some the hard way, and some the smooth way. All in all, it is really a big adventure!

As a child I was living in Vienna, Austria, and somehow I often had the idea that I was Chinese, in reality for me Chinese meant ASIA or the Orient as a whole, and I saw myself with almond eyes on the part of the globe where I had seen China written. Obviously my parents did not take any of those ideas seriously and meanwhile sent me to the French school to study, or even better, to soon meet and marry a nice young man from some exclusive family. (Maybe it would not have been so bad after all, who knows?)

As soon as I finished college, I decided to leave my home and family and go to Paris. I did not tell anybody of my plans, as I was still legally a minor, and I was sure they would not let me go. Luckily I had a passport from previous holiday trips. I left a note on the table saying I would visit friends in the mountains and went to the national highway going West, from where it took me three days and three nights to arrive in Paris as I had no experience of hitchhiking and did not even have a road map. I did not really have a plan or a project. The decision to go to Paris was intuitive, a short cut to be on my own and to take my life in my own hands.

Paris in the early summer seemed enchanting to me, it was in the sixties and there were less cars than now and one could just walk around for hours, so that’s what I did. I explored the city on foot and landed in the Quartier Latin, the Boulevard St. Germain, and got a small room at the Hotel de Sports on Place de la Contrescarpe, which seemed a really very interesting place. There were people living there from all over the world – painters, writers, musicians, actors, British, American, Swiss, German, Scandinavian, Irish and many others from all the neighboring European countries. Paris was fascinating for a teenager like me, and so I decided I would stay. I wrote a letter to my parents to inform them of my

whereabouts so they would not worry, in fact they were not, and I received a reply saying ok, stay there if this is what you want.

So now I had my freedom; nobody to tell me what to do or what to think. I had found a corner in a new type of society, much more adapted for shedding a bit of cultural and social conditioning; in short I was at the “starting gate”. I spent the following five years in Paris, in the summer I would go to St. Tropez where the scene moved, and enjoyed the company of international friends, just listening to their discussions on philosophy, politics, religion, psychology and you name it. A new world opened to me – before that it had never occurred to me that there could be more than one vision or point of view to explore. I listened and listened, nearly never said a word for months and years, just listening to the discussions of these people from all over the world. I had the opportunity to observe many types of manifestations of human nature; this was quite different from what I had known from Vienna. I tried to make myself more international, sometimes through books, even already in the sixties in Paris libraries and bookshops all over had books, even second hand, on all topics, which in Vienna would be available only to a small academic elite. I started to read all the books I could get on philosophy and religions from all parts of the world. Some of those books quite impressed me, but most did not touch me too much and seemed a bit complicated to me. Then I discovered the booklet “101 stories Zen” compiled by Paul Reps. This one I read hundreds of times, and I loved the stories and had the feeling that there was something in these stories that touched me deeply. My preferred was the one of the dirt road:

“The monks Tanzan and Ekido are walking together on a dirt road. It rains. After a turn they see a young girl, nicely dressed in a silk kimono. She could not cross the road because the mud was too deep. ‘Come dear girl’ said the monk Tanzan, who took her in his arms and carried her like this over the mud hole. Ekido didn’t say anything until evening when they reached the temple where they would stay overnight. Here Ekido couldn’t keep it to himself anymore: ‘We monks do not go near women, and less to young women who are good looking, it is dangerous, why did you do it?’ ‘I left the girl there on the road, are you still carrying her with you?’ replied Tanzan. I thought about that over and over,

and there is actually a lot to this koan about compassion, attachment, and clarity, to mention only the most obvious.”

Now my reading focus took an Eastern direction. I discovered the books of Alexandra David-Neal and Anagarika Govinda, and in a certain way they showed me the direction of where I wanted to go, to travel to these fascinating places like David-Neal and study the way of life of the people there. Probably it came also from a longing for adventure to project my thinking so far from my origin, but I definitely felt drawn to these people in the Himalayas and on the roof of the world and wanted to meet them.

In the meanwhile I had married Stan Tomshinsky, a New Yorker of Russian origins, in Paris. He had quit his journalistic career to become a painter. He also had great interest for Buddhism and for Zen. After a few years in France and traveling around in Europe, we settled in Milano, Italy, in the artists’ quarter of Brera. I organized shows at art galleries throughout Italy and abroad, traded the paintings of my husband, and as this was the pre sixty-eight era, the economy was prosperous, people in Europe still had faith in the future and bought art work and paintings, and so in those years life was fairly agreeable.

At this point a quite important event was to happen. One of the French connection, Betrand, came to visit us. We had left him in Paris very sick and miserable and here he was in good health and like new. He had cured himself with Yoga and a Zen diet. Obviously it was macrobiotics, but at that time macrobiotics was totally unknown in Italy. I knew that I had to try all that out, this was for me: Yoga and a Zen way of living. I tried it all out on my husband and me, luckily he liked that too, and then I stocked up in books on those topics. After experiencing and studying, I followed stages of macrobiotics in various countries. In Gstaad (Switzerland) I met my first Master, Itsuo Tsuda. He was Master of Aikido and Seitei and also introduced us to Za-zen. Seitei, known in the western world as “Regeneration movement”, is a marvelous practice to keep body and mind in a natural state and balances disequilibrium. I did a six-week retreat with Master Tsuda on the Cote d’Azur to deepen the knowledge on Seitei. We also did Za-zen sessions every day and chanted the Sutras in Japanese. Itsuo Tsuda certainly was a great master, but it was clear that he

did not want pupils. He always answered all questions of technical nature, but general questions or such on philosophy only got some sort of smile but no comment. When Master Tsuda left, to my surprise, he authorized me to teach Seitei in Italy. So now I had a Master, but one who did not want pupils. Here I was now connected to the “oriental” world, the Far East, like I had seen myself as a child.

It was quite interesting; after I started macrobiotics and Seitei everything was on the move. I met many new people, all looking for something to improve their life style. The many connections I had in the art world were interested to regain their health and youthfulness. I met Francesca San Felice and family who were also interested in working with macrobiotics and had opened a macrobiotic center in Milan where I could give talks, cooking lessons and personal advice and where I also conducted sessions of Seitei. I wrote a book on how to practice macrobiotics European style and knew that it would be much in demand, because so many people needed to go back to a more natural way of eating. The after war economic boom and abundance had made people forget the quality of natural food.

In the Brera quarter in Milan I had met a few interesting people who would help determine the next events to come. Piero Cerri and Claudio Cipullo, young men from Milanese families, sometimes came to visit us and told us about their meeting with a Tibetan Lama in Nepal and that they were going back there to deepen their knowledge on Tibetan Buddhism at a retreat center. From then on I tried to convince my husband that we had to go to India and Nepal soon. After a few months we were on our way to a big pilgrimage through northern India to visit all the holy Buddhist places. Then we went to Kathmandu, because Piero and Claudio, who later on were the co-founders of the Tsong Kapa Institute of Pomaia, had given us the address where we could find their Master, a Tibetan Lama. All it said was Bodanath, Kopan. We had to ask our way many times, Kopan was not known yet, and finally after about one hour of an uphill walk, we arrived on top of the hill and could see a few houses and a nice garden with Bodhi trees. A few people were sitting around two tables.

I went straight to one of the tables where I saw a man who seemed a monk, and it was Lama Thubten Yeshe. Lama Yeshe smiled to me and said: “Hello, do you want a cup of rice?” This was it, for me it was the coup de foudre, I was feeling so happy, and Lama Yeshe emanated such joyfulness that it seemed contagious. He had such warmth and understanding and I never had met a person like this before so I just felt won-

derful in his presence. I felt that I had found what I was looking for. Somebody brought rice and tea and there I was sitting next to Lama Yeshe having a comfortable and relaxing lunch. Lama Yeshe asked a few questions on our whereabouts and after a while, after we had finished lunch, he got up and went into one of the houses. I would never speak to him again.

After three months our visa expired and we went back to Italy. Somehow the priorities for my husband and me were drifting a part. I was weary of the art scene and galleries, and we separated, remaining good friends for all the years to come. My macrobiotic lessons were always on demand and I decided to open a vegetarian restaurant. I bought a Pizzeria in the center of Milano and with the help of a few sponsors, people who had found better health thanks to the cooking lessons, and of my now ex-husband who mobilized for me architects and suppliers of furniture, I succeeded in raising the capital and restructuring the place completely. It became quite cozy. The name of the restaurant was called, “IL DORJE TIBETANO” (The Tibetan Dorje). I did not know that the place would be host to a number of great Masters in the years to come. Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche gave teachings and Yantra Yoga lessons there in September 1977. Khamtrul Rinpoche and Dugu Choegyal Rinpoche came to visit and have meals, Itsuo Tsuda, and Baba Bedi as well, and many of their pupils. The Dorje Tibetano was a bit the information center for a number of spiritual groups operating in Milano.

Piero and Claudio, who in the meantime had become monks, announced the First Tibetan Meditation Course of Italy that was to be held near one of the lakes north of Milan. Lama Yeshe would give teaching. At this retreat I met some of our Vajra brothers and sisters who are now students of Norbu Rinpoche too, like our vajra brothers the Desole family from Sardegna who soon after would organize Retreats with Norbu Rinpoche in Sardegna (Costa Paradiso, Lu Cumitoni).

Back in Milano I met a number of people interested in the Buddhist Teaching, one of them Aldo Oneto, who had connections with people following other schools of Tibetan Buddhism. They were following the Kagyupa Tradition. So together with Aldo, we went to France and made a kind of big tour of Dharma centers from Paris to the Dordogne to Aix and the Cote d’Azur. I met Kalu Rinpoche who impressed me deeply, received a big number of initiations, and I liked the general ambiance.

Somehow it seemed that the teachings tended to be a bit mysterious, or difficult to access, and

>> *How I met* continued from last page
not everybody could receive them. Some people I met were always looking for new occasions to get teachings or initiations; it seemed they were hunting lungs and mantras and proud to get new ones. However, the teaching we learned was not easy to realize in daily life in a city in the 20th century, and to me there seemed to be a cultural barrier. I tried to do prostrations as we had learned when back home. After a few weeks I told myself that I really did not want to go on doing prostrations, it made me feel like having to punish myself for some bad behavior, so I tried a mantra, and this seemed more natural. This was a major issue for me; they all said you should meditate, practice, make pujas and so on, but this would take hours every day. I had no inclination of dedicating hours and hours to meditation, as the priority for me was to live and see what came up. Also I had just opened my restaurant, it worked fine and I liked it and had a myriad of things to look after and organize. So I put my energy in the restaurant, which became kind of meeting place for people from northern Italy who were interested in Buddhism, Yoga, Zen and various healing practices.

Lama Ghendun held a historic meditation course of the Kagyupa Tradition at the Non-Libreria, translated from Tibetan to English by his accompanying Anila (nun) and in Italian by Mario Maglietti. We moved the weeklong meditation course for about 40 participants into a quiet little hotel of a friend of mine in the mountains, to Marzio, north of Milan. This Kagyupa meditation course would remain unforgettable and significant for most people who were there, several who are now pupils of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche: Giuliano Casiraghi, Enrico dell'Angelo, Muriella Colajacomo, Stefano Pirovano, Paolino Perrela, and Massimo Moncelesan. However, on the occasion of the Kagyupa meditation retreat in Marzio, I made the most

important connection for future steps forward in meeting Norbu Rinpoche. I met Laura and Costantino Albini. Right away I felt drawn like a sister to Laura, she was somehow the kind of Austrian I could understand, and so I found that we had certain aspects of our education in common. I went to visit Laura in Rome and learned from her that she knew an important Rinpoche who actually was living in Italy and spoke Italian. The important Rinpoche she mentioned was none other than Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche.

A few months after the Kagyu retreat in Marzio, then Spring 1976, Laura Albini made a phone call to us at the Dorje Tبتano and announced with great joy that Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche had agreed to give teachings in Italy. She would rent a big villa situated in the Roman hills, the name of the township nearby was Subiaco, and that we from north Italy who were interested in Buddhism were welcome to participate. She said also that it was to be a group of 21 people, and the retreat would start the last week of June and go on the whole summer until the first week of September. Laura Albini took care of all the preparations, and wanted to construct a throne for Rinpoche as she had seen in Nepal in the monasteries. So she entrusted one of our Vajra brothers to construct a big throne before the arrival of Rinpoche to receive and place him with due honor as by tradition. The throne did not grow much in height, and somehow the wood was not enough, so when we arrived we saw just a podium about 30 centimeters high. However Laura had brought smooth carpets and furs and placed them on the podium for Rinpoche to sit on. People had arrived from various parts of Italy and everybody had high expectations. Rinpoche had arrived by car with his son Yeshe and a man from Naples named Gennaro who seemed to act as his factotum.



Christina on the left with Rinpoche center and Bianca Dessole 1998 in Porto Cervo, Sardegna.

Rinpoche entered the sitting room on the scheduled day and took his seat, not even on the wooden seat, but on the floor, on a cushion, with Yeshe next to him. This was the moment when Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche in his great compassion started to officially give teachings in Italy.

From this historical day on we had than the privilege to receive teachings every day, not following a fixed timetable, but more according to daily circumstances, sometimes in the sitting room, sometimes in the garden, or in the dining room, and sometimes in the morning or at night. As this was such a small a group, everybody could ask questions, and they did, hundreds and hundreds of questions were answered by Rinpoche on all topics: specific clarifications of texts, questions on the history of Buddhism and of Tibet, on Rinpoche's personal life in Tibet, on pronunciation and melody of practices, as well as questions on conduct and ethics.

After a few days I understood that now I had found my Master, the teachings and explanations were so clear and understandable,

one could apply them in all possible life situations. No need to go away from society to live the Dzogchen teachings. I felt that Rinpoche knew about our actual efforts and difficulties in coping with daily life and that he could show us the possible and true path to self-liberation. I felt also that in case I would have a specific question on how to resolve some personal impasse, I could ask Rinpoche, and that his advice would be helpful and authentic. I was feeling like on a cloud and protected by a circle of fire, I knew that now nothing could really harm me any more. This was the link; I had finally found my own real family. And this was only the beginning; many retreats were to follow, from California to Sydney. For a few years now I have lived near Merigar and the adventure goes on. ©



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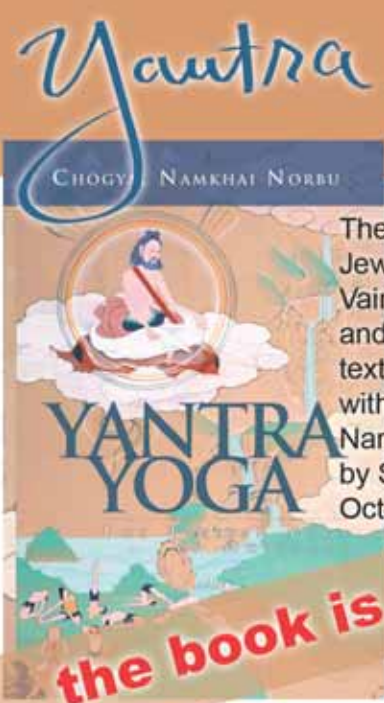
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