

THE MIRROR

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Upcoming Retreats with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu



Photo: E. Del'Angelo

2009–2010

Italy
Merigar West
Oct. 2–10
Bepai Gumchung, The Hidden
Collection of Buddhagupta Retreat

Oct. 23–30
Shitro Khorde Rangdrol Retreat

Spain
Nov. 14–18
Dzogchen Teaching Retreat

Venezuela
Dec. 4–11
Dzogchen Longsal Longde Teaching Retreat

Dec. 26–January 1
Santi Maha Sangha Base and practice
Retreat

January 16–30
The Drubchen of Mandarava and Vajrapani

Argentina
Tashigar Sur
February 12
Inauguration of Tashi Sur's Gompa

February 14
Tibetan Losar festival with a Mandarava
practice

February 16
Sang and Serkyem Offerings

February 12–24
Dzogchen teaching and practice retreat

Venezuela
March 8–12
Tashigar Norte retreat

March 19–25
Teachers' trainings: SMS base, 1st Levels;
Vajra Dance, Yantra Yoga 1st and 2nd levels

Trinidad
April 23–25
Weekend teaching

Venezuela
Tashigar Norte
April 30–May 2
SMS Base Level Exam
May 3–9
SMS 1st Level training

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Rinpoche teaching at Merigar West.

Photo: R. Piro

The Marvelous Retreat

The retreat at Merigar West with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu
August 10–16, 2009

Maurizio Piazza

It is a summer day, the sun is hot and there isn't a cloud on the horizon, the smell of burning cypress drifts over the entire hill. We are at Merigar West and Rinpoche is seated in front of us – he looks like a strong powerful lion and from his eyes and his voice it seems that his health is quite good ... marvelous! It is August 10th 2009 and we are gathered here together once again: today another retreat has started ... marvelous! This year here in the Gompa of Merigar West, where a short time ago the final work was completed to cover the surrounding external portico not only to repair and preserve the building but also to offer more internal seating space – we received instructions (Nyams Khrid) on a Tantra of the Dzogchen Semde, the Mad du jyung, also called Madjyung (rmd du byung). These instructions were most probably written by the famous master Nubchen Sangye Yeshe and today we can find it within the texts of the Nyingmapa tradition. The Madjyung is a tantra

which is highly acclaimed by masters and frequently quoted and there is even a version that has been translated into a Western language that one can refer to.

In the Tibetan language *Madjyung* means “marvelous”: they actually say that if you manage to understand the meaning of this tantra when you read it, you naturally enter into knowledge of the state of Dzogchen ... how marvelous is that!

During the retreat we tried to understand how the *Madjyung* is not only a text to understand intellectually but as a very precious teaching to put into practice. Through these instructions, we tried to understand how the *Madjyung* has within it a whole series of indications to put into practice in order to comprehend and rediscover our real condition, that natural state that makes us and our master a single entity. According to the instructions of Nubchen Sangye Yeshe (we presume) first

of all we have the explanation of the Base – the point of view (*lta ba*) with its six points; then this is followed by the instructions on the Path – contemplation and its application (*sgom pa*, in this text *ting nge 'dzin*) explained in ten points; finally the Fruit is explained in three points, even though at the beginning of the text it talks about four.

By means of these instructions we realize how important it is to let purely intellectual knowledge become concrete. To begin with concrete means remembering that there is a *samaya* between us and our master, the *samaya* of the vajra, the same *samaya* that unites us all. Without acknowledging this, there is no base, no path and not even fruit.

These very valuable instructions were, however, not the only exclusive moment during our Merigarian retreat ... on August 14th the first international auction of the Dzogchen Community was held and

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Photo: E. Del'Angelo

Teachings on the Song of the Vajra

Merigar East June 16, 2009

So you see then, the Song of the Vajra is not only a prayer but is called natural sound. Natural sound means when Dharmakaya, which is beyond form and color, with its infinite potentialities manifests Sambogakaya manifestation. You remember how manifestations develop from emptiness, through sounds. For that reason that natural sound is also a natural mantra. Even though we do not have the capacity to be in that natural sound, we try to relax and we sound this natural sound to eliminate our potentiality of negative karma and particularly all obstacles that we couldn't understand for discovering how our real nature is. So for that reason we sing the Song of the Vajra.

Some people say that when they do something, it is better to know what the meaning of it is. This means that if you know, you always apply it or think about it using your mental judgment. You don't need to understand anything when you are doing practice of the Song of the Vajra. You remain in the non-duality of the space you are seeing and the space you are being. You are just this space, this space is just you, and you just remain a little this way, relaxed. This is called Namkha Arte. When you apply this practice more and more, later when you integrate, everything becomes easier.

It is, however, more difficult integrating, for example, some material things. You see, you hear, you touch, you feel that everything is concrete. You have your idea that you are not that, and that is not you. This sense of division we have is very strong and for that reason integrating is a little difficult. But many kinds of practice, visualizations etc., are much easier to integrate than objects. When you have more capacity to integrate, then the material level is also not so difficult. In particular when you have experience of instant presence then you can get into integration. So we should apply the Song of the Vajra that way.

When we are singing the Song of the Vajra, many thoughts may arise. You shouldn't go after thoughts but integrate

them into that clarity. When you are doing this practice, you see, you hear, all your senses are in contact with objects and you integrate everything with the sounds of the Song of the Vajra. The Song of the Vajra is very powerful and really helps our potentiality of integration very much. It is also said that when you have not discovered your real nature, singing the Song of Vajra and relaxing and integrating in the sound will awaken you.

The Dance of the Vajra

So the Song of Vajra is a very precious practice. All the sounds of the Song of Vajra govern our Vajra Body. For example, when we do the Vajra Dance, we have a Vajra Dance Mandala which is something related to our globe, to where we are in this dimension. There is also a medium Mandala that is connected to our Solar System and a bigger Mandala that is connected to the Universe. So all these Mandalas are connected to our physical body. This is not only in the Dzogchen Teaching but also in Chakrasmava different mandalas are explained. There they explain about many sacred places in this world and all these sacred secret places correspond to the different kinds of chakras and sounds in our physical body. That knowledge goes deeper and becomes vaster and richer in the Dzogchen Teachings.

All the syllables in the Song of the Vajra like E Ma Ki Ri Ki Ri etc., are connected with our different chakras and when we are dancing on the Mandala we can understand the way they are connected. So these syllables govern the chakras. In general we have five or six chakras – there are slightly different ways of explaining that knowledge in Vajrayana tantras. For example, in the Dzogchen way we have five chakras. From these five there are also secondary chakras and then there are still others that are smaller. All these chakras are mainly governed by the sounds of the Song of the Vajra. Also it doesn't mean they are only governed by these mantras, these words of the Song of the Vajra, but much more. However, the Song of the Vajra which is connected with the chakras is more important for the function of energy. For that reason we have the Song of the Vajra.

So it is important to know that meaning of the Song of the Vajra because it is very important for developing integration, all integration between subject and object and also integrating the way our energy level is connected with our physical level.

Vision of dharmata

In the Dzogchen teaching they say that realised beings can realise the Rainbow Body. The Rainbow Body means that at the material level we have the five elements of our physical body, which is produced by our karma. And all this material level dissolves into its real nature. This nature is the five elements. And they not only dissolve but at the same moment manifest the Rainbow Body. If, for example, we have purified all our negative karma, of course there is no reason for us to have a physical body. The physical body dissolves into its real nature, and there is no reason for a Rainbow Body to manifest, only to disappear.

There is a very precise reason for the Rainbow Body because in the Dzogchen Teaching there is a very precious method which is called the Vision of Dharmata. Dharmata means our real nature. And the potentiality of our real nature manifests something like an object in front of our eyes that we can really see. When we can really see that, then we say we have a Vision of Dharmata. But this is not so easy. For example in Sutra Teaching and also in ordinary Vajrayana teachings this knowledge does not exist. All teachings, even Sutra, can understand dharmata, or at least they consider it to mean the condition or nature of the individual. Dharmadhatu means the condition of all phenomena. So there is this difference in consideration [between Dharmata and Dharmadhatu].

In the Dzogchen Teachings, however, dharmata means our primordial potentiality manifests. Since the beginning all sentient beings have the potentiality of sound and light and rays, but we are ignorant, we do not know and so it has no function. In the human dimension we have teaching: by means of teaching the teacher introduces and transmits that [knowledge] to the students. Then the students understand that they have primordial potentiality. Then the teacher gives more instructions on how they can have that vision of dharmata.

In the Sutra and Vajrayana Teaching dharmata is not considered vision but only intellectual knowledge, only a consideration of our nature of mind. In the Dzogchen Teaching we give instruction [about it]. For example, we have the experience of looking into light. Sometimes when you look into empty space you can see a kind of very tiny thigle. It looks like a silver-coloured thigle, and when you observe it well, sometimes it becomes a little bigger. That is one experience.

In order to have still more experience in a precise way, then you should do this at sunrise and sunset. At these times you do not look into the sun but into the rays. The rays are not in the sun but you look [at the rays] a little below [the sun] and you do not open your eyes completely, it seems as if your eyes are closed. When you look into those rays, without moving and keeping your back straight, you can see a kind of thigle. Maybe you will see some thighs moving but you can also see some that are not moving. If you only see moving thighs, you shouldn't look at them otherwise the thighs will go away. You keep your gaze, your eyes, somewhere in an empty space in the rays and then the thighs do not go away. When you become familiar [with this] gradually you will see that these thighs remain.

When you see these thighs, sometimes you can see two or three of them connected. That means you are more fortunate and have more connection with teachings and methods. When you see this type of thigle called "chönyid ngönsum" in the Dzogchen Teaching, that means real dharmata vision. This is very important because the Dzogchen Teaching says that if you really see that dharmata then you no longer transmigrate in infinite samsara. You become free to follow and apply teachings in your life, being in a different kind of nirmanakaya dimension. Our condition is the nirmanakaya dimension of Buddha Shakyamuni so there are the teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni. If we are interested, there is always the possibility to follow teachings and do practice etc. If we have a stronger connection with teachings of course we will always be interested and that way we develop and can have total realization, so you see it is very important.

Yeshi Silvano Namkhai

The First Statement of Garab Dorje

An Excerpt from a Public Talk

Technical Library at University Vilnius, Lithuania,
July 24th 2009

Let’s go back to the beginning. How is our language structured? We have already said there is I am, I have and I do. All of our logic is based on this structure. First we define what we are and then we have the problem of what we have or don’t have. Then if we have, we feel proud, but if we don’t have we feel sad and then we need. But after we define that there is need, we have to do something to get what we need. Everything is connected to these factors, and our language is based on this. But if we introduce Dzogchen teaching, that this is not the key point. We don’t need to define the Dzogchen teaching in this scheme.

Tibetan Buddhism or Buddhism is introduced through the Prajna Paramita for example, and this text of the heart sutra is one of the most famous. Emptiness is defined in this text. There is introduction to how this emptiness should be felt in terms of what emptiness is, what is its’ value, how we can enter into this knowledge, wisdom and so on. But still we are talking about something conceptual.

First of all we define what emptiness is. Then we say, “Ah, but I don’t have it”. It is written here, for example, that emptiness is beyond form because there are no eyes, no nose, no ears, etc. In the end it says there is nothing. Then it says this is the perfect condition and you should be in this state called shunyata, total emptiness. But we recognize that we are not like this. I define what is in emptiness, what the value of emptiness is, and I don’t have it. Since I do not have emptiness I have to do something to get it. So I should become Buddhist and meditate. And then I pretend to sit in lotus position with crossed legs and do something with my mind. But until now, this is a conceptual exercise. Because I have an idea of what emptiness is – I make a box called emptiness. Then I have a better, more beautiful box called ‘myself’.

Then at a certain point I decide to become Buddhist because I cannot relax. I have to do something because I don’t have and I have to get. Automatically that means I can no longer be Christian, I have to become Buddhist. Until now it is totally an invention of my mind. None of the books says you should do this. Then at this point I decide that from tomorrow I will become Buddhist and today I will go to the cinema. From tomorrow I start to be Buddhist.

What do I do? I find a group, a temple, and I go there. I have an idea that I don’t have something and I have to get it. From whom do I get it? From Buddha. Where does Buddha live? In the temple. So I go to the temple to fol-

low Buddhism. When I read this book I understand that I should get this wisdom. So my idea is still conceptual. Slowly, slowly this conceptual idea starts to develop. Everything that is in my understanding starts to be Buddhist-like, first it was Christian-like and now it is Buddhist-like. It is still like concepts or boxes where I put ideas.

The first box that looked a certain way now looks Buddhist, but somehow I am developing these boxes. At a certain point in this text you discover that there is no dharma. Dharma means there is no teaching, because dharma is a set of phenomena, whatever we perceive. And that is also teaching. If there is not this, where do we put this box? And where do I put the box of myself, which is the biggest and nicest in my mind? So for this reason, we find in the words of Buddha that ego is the cause of all suffering.

The first time Buddha Shakyamuni taught he explained the Four Noble Truths. He explained that our condition is the condition of suffering. At the end we discover that we create this suffering ourselves. Because there is a general misunderstanding, we develop these boxes. We develop boxes because we have an idea that there is limited space, just like our life. In our mind we fill this space with all these boxes. Then at the end, there are all these boxes filled with everything that we perceive from ordinary life, everything that we understand from the teaching, and whatever. Usually when we develop these boxes, as I said, the ‘our’ box is more important.

That is why we remember our feeling, because our feeling is more important and it becomes memory and then fear. What we don’t have, what we want, all actions that we want to do, they all become our hopes. This is our future. In the end whatever we have in our mind we already know. This means we cannot see what we don’t know.

I repeat something I said at the beginning. If I close my eyes I don’t have sight. I don’t see anything. I am limited on this physical level, I am a human being, I am a man. But if I have sight, I see something once, and at least when I close my eyes I have an idea of what I saw. But what I see I already know. There is nothing new. This is the key point of Buddhism. This is also the problem. In Tibetan Buddhism we talk about ignorance. The misunderstanding is that I create boxes and I am work with concepts. All these ideas and emotions and concepts that I packed, they become just like eyeglasses. They are filtering my vision. I recognize only through these glasses.



Every time we introduce the first statement of Garab Dorje, the key point is that we should understand what our real nature is. This secret world is looking and so we have the capacity to observe ourselves. We observe our physical level, our energy level and our mind level. That means we can observe how we are physically in relation to ordinary life. It means that we have a need to drink water. But we have also this level of speech or energy and we have the need to fulfill ego. But we should remember if I close my eyes, I do not see anything. If I die, I am not alive. If I don’t feel envy for my friend that has a better car, nothing happens.

The need for water is a totally different need; water is for surviving. Feelings about my friend are nothing. It means the nature of this [a bottle of water] is the need of drinking water. But the nature of how I feel about the brand of water is nothing because it is important that I drink, not that I buy one or the other brand. The key point is that I am alive, first of all. Otherwise I don’t have anything, not even vision, and not even the possibility to see. Then my life is like this, instead if I discover what my nature is, I have the possibility to go beyond this vision of fear and hope.

Why, for example, do we come here to listen a little to try and understand what the Dzogchen teaching is? We come because we recognize that we are in this vision and we are suffering. I can pretend I am happy, I have a better car and everything is fine for my life. But like Buddha said, at the end we become old, suffer and die. Because all sentient beings understand, all beings that have a little bit of understanding of themselves, understand this truth. Also animals understand and that is why they have the instinct to procreate.

We are not animals. We have mind. We try to understand how this mind works. Usually in Buddhism, the idea of karma is introduced. You have heard many times the law of karma and so on. It is important you understand

this capacity – you see something and you can invent whatever. Not only that you have the capacity of seeing things without feeling anything but also that you have the capacity of developing emotions, and that you also have the capacity to observe this.

For example, when we introduce meditation according to the Dzogchen teaching, we don’t talk about trying to be in an empty state. First we have to discover that we have this nature of the capacity to observe. So there is something outside, inside and secret or hidden. And this hidden part is called presence in the Dzogchen teaching. It’s called secret or hidden for a very simple reason - because there is no need to talk about it. There is no need to say I have and you don’t have. There is no need to say mine is better than yours. This is something absolute, not relative. The capacity we have since the beginning is real wisdom. Through this capacity then we can discover what we are. But always remember that whatever you see or perceive is through these glasses and these glasses are the glasses of ‘I already know’ and ‘I only want to see this’. It’s like science. When I do a scientific experiment I have a very closed environment where everything happens according to my rules. Then I provoke something and I say, “Yes it’s true” or “No, it’s not this way”. Then when it is confirmed I make a law.

In Buddhism when we talk about ignorance it means this. It means I am dealing only with what I already know. What I know is totally relative. There are things that are common and things that are not common. There are things that come from the outer world and things that come from the inner world. We don’t need to define and describe and define all the rules. First we need to discover that this is our real condition.

I always give this simple example. A child is playing with knives. At a certain point he cuts his finger and bleeds. We are parents and we worry and say don’t

play with knives. So the child has the experience of cutting his finger and it creates pain. Then the child understands the consequence of playing with knives. But we are expressing our emotion, don’t do it, it’s very dangerous. Then of course we are parents and the child understands that fear is useful. And through fear he will not hurt himself again. Then he starts to play with scissors and you say, “Look it is just like the knife”. As the child is not stupid, he gives up playing with the scissors.

At a certain point the child starts to be afraid of the dark. The child thinks, “Where does this darkness come from, what is in the darkness?” Then he can’t sleep without light. So this means there is not only the physical level. It is not only the need for water, it is also the brand of water in the bottle. Then, for example, if we are visiting these boxes and we start to believe it is important that we discover what the fear of dark is. Then we develop all signs possible in the scheme, I am, I have and I do. Just like with science we define the fear of dark as coming from some reason so there is I, super I, and so on.

We invent something, observing a specific situation. But we observe what we know, in a very small and miserable life, the life of man who is writing some documents that study this fear of dark who has probably had a terrible life, a lot of problems, doesn’t have family and so on. He is writing long articles about the fear of the dark. But we need to understand that this is relative truth. In that field, from that miserable point of view, what he is saying is true. Why do we call it miserable? Why did Buddha call it miserable? Because at the end it is something connected with time, our limits, and is something very fragile, just like a candle in the wind.

Our life is just like a candle in the wind. That is why we try to understand a little more how our condition is. Because today we are here, but tomorrow comes very fast. For example, the first statement of Guru Garab Dorje says it is important we discover this nature. We don’t believe we are able to go beyond our limits. Every time we try to overcome our limit with relative things, we never succeed.

Relative things mean with the tools that we have in our physical level. Just to end I give this example. If I ask you now to think about flying, a lot of people think to fly like angels. That means you have wings and then slowly, slowly you go up. Others think about an airplane or flying like a jet. But in the first case, we have the problem of religion and we have to grow these wings somehow. In the other case we need gasoline, technology and a pilot. If we are an artist, we think of flying like jumping and then flying, like poetry. Then we also start to think about jumping from the window and flying. At a certain point

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Teachings (continued)

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Guru Padamsambhava gave a very nice example of this. He said: “I will be in front of people who have devotion to me, particularly on the tenth day [of the Tibetan lunar month] I will be present”. He promised that and there are some invocations to Guru Padmasambhava. How did he fulfill this commitment? How can he be in front of a person who has devotion? He said *nyi zer char düd dang la chi ten chen* (*nyi zer ’char sdud ...*). That means that at sunrise or sunset, when the sun’s rays are weak, not strong – when the sun’s rays are strong it is not so easy to do that practice – then all these *thigles* etc. appear. Guru Padmasambhava said *nyi zer*, which means rays of sun. *’char sdud* means at sunrise and sunset, at these times he manifests through those rays. This means of course that he manifests in a *thigle*. And what Guru Padmasambhava manifests is the Rainbow Body.

In the Dzogchen Teaching we say that total realisation is related to that kind of knowledge. For example, when a *thigle* appears in front of us, it is not something like an object or something coming from somewhere. Even though there is the secondary cause of the sun’s rays, or the rays of the moon or light rays from a lamp, the rays are only a secondary cause, not the origin of the *thigle*. The *thigle* is something like a reflection of your potentiality. When you see a *thigle* you should not fall into the idea that you are happy because of seeing it, or that it is an object. If you create attachment, it will no longer appear and you will not be able to develop your practice. You know that it is your *dharmata*, your real nature. If you feel happy, it is because you see your real nature, your *dharmata*, not because you have just seen a very nice *thigle*.

Dark retreat

How can we understand that that *thigle* is really our potentiality? We have dark retreat. I told you that my woman teacher spent almost all her life in dark retreat. This is also a very special secret Dzogchen teaching. When we do a dark retreat, in the dark we can see that *thigles* appear. There are no sun’s rays, there is nothing. That is an example of how our potentiality manifests somehow. Now we only see, but to go beyond in order that this practice becomes more concrete, we should do the famous practice that is called *thögal* or *yangti* in which there are very precise instructions. There is also a specific way of introduction.

In the *thögal* teaching there are four levels of visions just to understand how the Rainbow Body is. When we are on the fourth level we have succeeded in integrating aspects of our physical level, dissolving them in the nature of the elements and integrating them with that *thigle*. That *thigle* is related to our primordial potentiality. When we enter this fourth level we are no longer in our ordinary physical body, and even though there is our physical body, sometimes it manifests as if it exists, other times as if it doesn’t. Sometimes when these practitioners go into the sunshine, they have no shadow. That is an example. But of course when they die, their physical body does not remain. Their physical body dissolves and sometimes it takes seven days. Sometimes it seems only like some type of ancient history, but it is not history, it is something concrete.

One of my uncles, Togden, who was a very good practitioner, manifested the Rainbow Body during the cultural revolution. Many people saw what happened to his physical body – only his hair and nails remained. Why did only

his hair and nails remain? Because they are an impure part of the physical body and that is the reason why hair and nails are always growing and we always need to cut them. We don’t need to cut other parts of the body, like ears and fingers. So you can see what the difference is. When the Rainbow Body manifests it means that everything completely dissolves into the nature of the elements. Nothing remains, only nails and hair. And the physical body not only disappears on the physical level but it remains as it is in the pure dimension. If someone manifests the Rainbow Body, their ordinary body can no longer be seen. But if you have more clarity and capacity to see the pure dimension, when you see you can recognise that individual. This is how the manifestation of the Rainbow Body is.

It is not like in some *thangka* paintings such as the one of Guru Padmasambhava which originally belonged to the Sakyapa tradition but was then copied by all traditions, particularly the Nyingmapa. They thought it was a very nice looking *thangka*. In it you can see a kind of physical form of Guru Padmasambhava, but not the whole body, just the outline. At the centre there is a small point which maybe they considered to be the real state of Guru Padmasambhava. And from that point there is a five coloured rainbow which spreads everywhere through that dimension. They consider the Rainbow Body to be something like that. But it is not that way.

Nyagla Padma Dündul

In any case, it is important to know that the Rainbow Body is something very important in the Dzogchen Teaching. There are teachers like Guru Padmasambhava and Vimalamitra who are considered to have successfully completed the fourth level. When they completed that, it is called the Great Transference. They did not even manifest death. Other Rainbow Bodies manifest death. For example, there was a very famous teacher called Nyagla Padma Dündul who was one of the teachers of my woman teacher, Ayu Khandro. She followed many teachings of Nyagla Padma Dündul, particularly the practice of *chöd* because he was a *tertön* and in his *terma* teachings there was *chöd*, Dzogchen teachings and many other things. And at the end, he manifested the Rainbow Body.

Before that he called together all his older better students and they spent almost a month together doing *ganapuja* and purification. He was very healthy and had no illness but he said that it was his last time, it was time for him to go away, and he wanted to spend his last days and die in the place where he had discovered many *terma* teachings. There was a secret place and all his students went there. He had a small tent which he used to use for sleeping when he was going around doing *chöd*. It was a very simple tent. So they set up the tent and he asked them to build a small wall of stones around it to stop wild animals from coming in. He sent all the students back to the *chögar* where he used to give teaching. He told them to go there and do practice of *ganapuja* and *guruyoga* and wait for seven days. He said that they could come back there after that time.

His students followed his instructions precisely and when they came back after seven days they saw that several rainbows were manifesting in that place. They went and opened the tent and found that only his hair and his nails remained. And this became very well-known because all the people in that area went to see. We also have one of the long-life practices of Guru Amitayus that is a *terma* teach-

ing of Nyagla Padma Dündul. So you see there are many Rainbow Body manifestations.

I heard that there were two or three different Rainbow Body manifestations recently. For one Rainbow Body manifestation some people, some Americans, went to do research in that place. That is an example because it is not just a kind of legend or part of history because there is this teaching, there is this transmission. Everything is alive. If someone is really seriously doing practice, of course they can have realisation. And that is also very much related to teaching with the Song of the Vajra.

The Song of the Vajra

The Song of the Vajra is called *drolwa drugden* which means that we have six senses, including our mind. We create a connection through the function of these six senses and then people who have a relationship with that connection can have final realisation from *samsara*. For example, the ‘Tibetan Book of the Dead’, the *Bardo Thödrol* – *Bardo* means the state after death, *Thödrol* means that we read or recite that invocation [to someone who is in the *bardo*] – gives a cause for liberation through hearing it. Hearing is one of our five senses. Seeing can also be a cause for liberation called *thongdrol*. We taste and that is a cause for liberation called *nyongdrol*. Then when we are concentrating or doing visualization with our mind, this can make a cause of liberation called *trendrol*. For making all these causes of liberation there is the Song of the Vajra so you can see how important it is. You can also learn the meaning of the Song of the Vajra. It is very profound and there is a translation but the meaning is not so easy to understand. So this is something else we can learn.

Also within the Song of the Vajra there are groups. *Ema-kirikiri* – *Masutavalivali* – *Samitasurusuru* – *Kutalimasumasu* – is one group. Then there is the second group, the third etc. These groups are all connected with the most important Dzogchen teaching methods. So with the Song of the Vajra we can learn so many things and it is really very important. This is why we sing it. So you can understand that it is not only a type of prayer. When we are singing it we are doing contemplation connected with our nature which is called *kadag* and *lhundrub*. *Kadag* means pure from the beginning, which is the condition of emptiness. *Lhundrub* means this emptiness has infinite potentiality. If emptiness does not have this potentiality, it has no value. So there are both of these qualifications. We sing, we use our breathing, we hear etc.

Moreover, in the *tantra* with the Song of the Vajra, it says that when we sing the Song of the Vajra, it seems that we are singing it alone but at that moment there are infinite *dakas* and *dakinis* surrounding us and singing together. Why are they surrounding us and singing together with us? Because we are applying the very important practice of the Song of the Vajra. It also says that the place where we sing the Song of the Vajra becomes a sacred place forever. What does this mean? It means that when any type of sentient beings are in this place, they naturally create a tiny connection to have the possibility to join the path at the end. That is an example of how important the Song of the Vajra is. ❀

Transcribed by P. Mai & L. Granger
Edited by L. Granger & J. Winkler

>> *The first statement* continued from page 3
some people start to think, well if I fall down and hurt myself? Slowly we develop problems.

In the real sense, if I ask you to think about flying, just like the nature of water, we can think about the nature of flying, the nature of flying as flying is moving, and can be like being omnipresent, like god, but since we do not have the idea we can be like god we never think about this. But we should go into the essence and nature of things, not into the form of things. So if we just understand that flying can mean being omnipresent everywhere, then we don’t have the problem

of how to fly, if we fall down and so on.

In Dzogchen teaching we say the first statement of Guru Garab Dorje is to introduce directly. That means we go straight to the essence or nature of things. So what is the ‘thing’ of this teaching? The thing for us now is mind. That is why we say we introduce directly into the nature of mind. Because as we have this vision that is connected only with what we know, maybe we need a teacher to discover, we need a teacher to be supported in this discovery. Then we once we discover that our nature is not what we see, it’s not what we feel, it’s not what we believe, but it is just

what we are. Not the *idea* of what we are, not we have or don’t have. Not what we need to do to have or not to have. For example, a brand of water does not represent us. Because it is very miserable not to think that having the best car or worst car makes me better or worse. But for some strange reason we can believe at a certain point that we have wings. But if it is already difficult to have an expensive car, how can we believe something like this. It is better we understand what our real condition is.

The key point of the Dzogchen teaching is to first open your eyes and with your eyes open you try to understand your condition. It

means you understand how your physical level is, how your speech level is and how your mind is. Then when you have this opportunity slowly, slowly you can develop your understanding. And then you should discover that you become freer, then when you think of flying you can think like a god, not like an angel or an airplane. No one is looking at your inner world. No one is keeping your inner world in a cage. No one is judging your inner world. No one is able to enter your mind.

So if we discover that everything is just a limitation that we create, then we have an opportunity to become freer. But to do this

is not very easy, it is not enough to discover and understand from an intellectual point of view. It is not enough that we create a nice box that says: “This is Dzogchen Teaching”. Now I understand and I understand Buddhism better. It’s not enough and to really apply, our life should change.

So if you are interested there are webcasts, for example, of the teachings. You can ask the Lithuanian Dzogchen Community for details and then you can go a little deeper into the understanding of your life. ©

Transcribed and edited by N. Zeitz

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

The Light of Kailash

Volume 1

A History of Shang-Shung and Tibet
Translated by Donatella Rossi
Shang Shung Institute

The following is an excerpt from the 'Light of Kailash, Volume 1', one of the major works on Tibetan history by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, to be published in autumn 2009 by the Shang Shung Institute. It is a well-researched study, in three volumes, which reconsiders the issue of the true origins of Tibetan culture. Donatella Rossi has worked on the translation of this extraordinary and voluminous work for several years and the Shang Shung Institute in cooperation with the Faculty of Oriental Studies of „Sapienza“ University of Rome will be launching the book at the Faculty of Oriental Studies in Rome on November 7th.

Chapter Four

The written language of ancient Zhang-zhung

ma [script], and from that form of handwriting all other [styles] were composed. So it is reported.

Thus, as it is clearly explained, the origin of the first written language is attributed to gShen-rab Mi-bo-che.

1. gShen-rab Mi-bo-che taught the written language of ancient Zhang-zhung

Concerning the way in which gShen-rab Mi-bo-che transmitted the written language, the *Rin chen gter khyim* (Thob, 12,6,5) reads: To the letter expert Yig-lha 'Phrul-bu, [the Teacher] fully explained the characteristics of the forty magic letters ['phrul yig bzhi bcu]. That was the origin of writing.

Thus, gShen-rab Mi-bo-che taught the characteristics of the forty magic letters to Yig-lha 'Phrul-bu, and that clearly points out the origin of the ancient written language of Zhang-zhung.

For what concerns the characteristics of the forty magic letters, the *brDa sprod nyi shu bdun pa* (Thob, 363, 2,2) says:

The form of letters surround the three realms. In principle, they hold the essential characteristics of the combinations; [their] essence is the forty magic letters. [The forty letters arose from] the succession of the great elements, which [in turn] originated from the five powerful seed[-syllables]. Ksha, Ka, Kha, Ga, Nga, Ha, A [and] Am originated from [the syllable] ŌM, which embodies the [elemental] sphere of Space. The same applies to those that come after: the eight [letters] E, Ṇa, Ra, Bhi, Shṭa [and so on,] originated from [the syllable] RAM, which embodies the [elemental] sphere of Fire. The eight [letters] O, Ta, La, Sa, Mhing [and so on,] originated from [the syllable] SRUM, which embodies the [elemental] sphere of Earth. The eight [letters] U, Pa, Za, 'A, A: [and so on,] originated from [the syllable] KHAM, which embodies the [elemental] sphere of Water. The eight [letters] I, Tsa, Ya, Sha, Zha [and so on,] originated from [the syllable] YAM, which embodies the [elemental] sphere of Air. Those [letters are in turn attributed] to five elemental subgroups. The group Ksha, E, O, U, I, Am, A, and Shṭa form the Air series; they are ubiquitous [chen po]. Ka, Ca, Ta, Pa, Tsa, Zha, Ra, and Ha [form] the Earth series; they are strong [drag pa]. Kha, Cha, Tha, Pha, Tsha, Za, La, and A [form] the Water series; they

are moderate [*'bring pa*]. Ga, Ja, Da, Ba, Dza, 'A, Sha, and Bhi [form] the Fire series; they are weak [*zhan pa*]. Nga, Nya, Na, Ma, Wa, Ya, Sa, and Mhing [form] the Space series; they are subtle [*rnub pa*].

The series of eight letters originated from the elements are subdivided into groups of five. The first five [letters,] Ksha, Ka, and so on, are generated from the throat. That also applies to the following seven. E, O, U, I, O [sic], A; and Shṭa are connected to the remaining groups of seven; they are generated in succession from the palate, the tongue, the lips, the nose, the teeth, the head, and the chest. The elemental succession is Wood [shing, Air], Fire [me], Earth [sa], Water [chu], Air [rlung], Iron [cags], Mountain [ri, Earth element], and Space [nam mkha']. The letters are read in eight series of four; together with the remaining eight vowels, they form a real alphabet of forty letters.

Thus, the origin of the written language of Zhang-zhung lies within the forty magic letters. These letters, as it is clearly explained in the excerpt above, originated from the five powerful seed-syllables “ÖM, RAM, SRUM, KHAM, and YAM”. In its commentary, the *brDa sprod nyi shu bdun pa* (Thob, 392,5,5) explains the causes that have brought the arising of the forty magic letters from the five powerful seed-syllables:

At a certain time, when dPo-bza'-Thang-mo was deceived by the Demon Khyab-pa, the gTo box [*gto sgron*] burned; the powerful seed[-syllables] were not affected, and forty magic letters appeared from within them; that was the blessing of the Teacher.

The mDo gZer mig, describing the deeds of gShen-rab, relates how the magic letters which originated from the five powerful seed-syllables appeared in the hands of gShen-rab, after the gTo box burned (Thob, KHA, 600,65,1):

The myriads of letters, quintessence of the Mind of Sangs-po 'Bum-khri, were bestowed upon Yid-kyi Khye'u-chung. They were placed in a still smaller gTo box of the Word, and sealed⁴ there. The innermost [aspect] of Bon amounts to that.

And having explained what the gTo box was, the text says (*Ibid.*, 65,6):

The Demon resided in the heart of the Queen[s]. A fire of poisonous brambles was lit; the tiny gTo box was thrown into the fire to be burned.⁵ Once Yikyi Khye'u-chung saw that the queens dPo-za [and] rKong-za and the Lord of the Demons, Khyab-pa Lag-ring had lit a fire of many poisonous brambles and were burning the tiny gTo box, he realized how much evil had been done, and was so shocked⁶ that his heart broke, and his body trembled. As soon as [he] shouted to save it,⁷ the Demon Khyab-pa escaped and fled to his country. Khye'u-chung reached into the fire and grasped all [the half-charred writings] he could, while the remaining ones were destroyed by the fire.

Thus, the demon deceived the two queens, the gTo box burned, and Yid-kyi Khye'u-chung tried

to rescue the writing. Then (*Ibid.*, 694,67,3):

Yid-kyi Khye'u-chung was able to rescue a half-burned fragment of writing from the fire of the Demon. He offered it to the Teacher.

And also (*Ibid.*, 695,67,3):

As soon as [they] looked at it, [they] clearly saw that the five powerful seed-syllables had not been destroyed.

And also (Ibid., 696,68,5):

From the five powerful syllables, [which are] the source of [all] letters, the thirty-eight magic letters [*phrul gyi yi ge sum cu rtsa brgyad*] emerged.

This is what is traditionally related about the origin of letters; yet, if we carefully examine the quotations, it is immediately evident that the myriad of seed-syllables contained in the gTo box burned by the demon were letters; and since at that time an original written language already existed, it was impossible to do without the magic letters that arose from the five powerful seed-syllables. Anyway, since texts that have been put into writing from the beginning of Zhang-zhung history are made of the magic letters originated from the five powerful seed-syllables, we can definitely consider this as the origin of the written language of Zhang-zhung, regardless of the fact that a written language existed or not before the Early Period.

The sources clearly mention forty or thirty-eight letters but contain no indication as to their shape and form. Nonetheless, the *gZer mig* relates the story of the birth of a king to whom gShen-rab Mi-bo-che transmitted his teaching, “rGya Kong-tse ’Phrul-gyi rGyal-po” (Thob, KHA, 717,78,4):

... [And] since thirty magic letters ['*ph-rul yig kong rtse sum cu*] were written in circles [on his hands], he was given the name rGya Kong-rtse 'Phrul-gyi rGyal-po. ☸

1 *spungs* is a Zhang-zhung word corresponding to the Tibetan *ston pa*, teacher; hence, even if in Tibetan *spungs yig* literally means “heaped up script”, it can also be interpreted as “the script [yig] of the Teacher” [*spungs*]. [tn]

2 sMar is a Zhang-zhung word meaning fine, excellent, corresponding to the Tibetan *bzang po*, good. [tn]

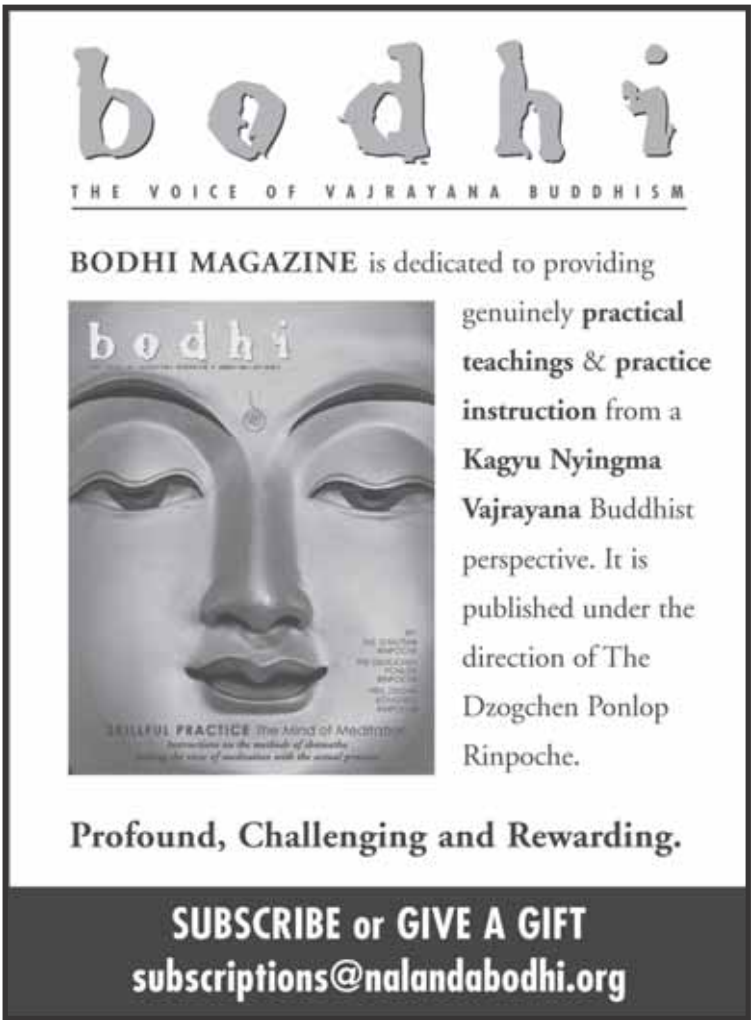
3 That is, capital or printing letters. [tn]

4 *tha ram*: an archaic term meaning sealed
[*dam rgya byas pa*].

5 zhugs la zhengs: i.e., burned in the fire [me la
bsregs pa].

6 phras kyis sad: I think that startled or shocked
[ur langs] may be the meaning of this expres-
sion.

7 *dmag bzlog brgyugs*: I think this may mean calling upon troops for help and dispatching them to avert the danger [*dmag mi rnams ra mda' sbran nas nyen kha bzlog tu phyin pa*].

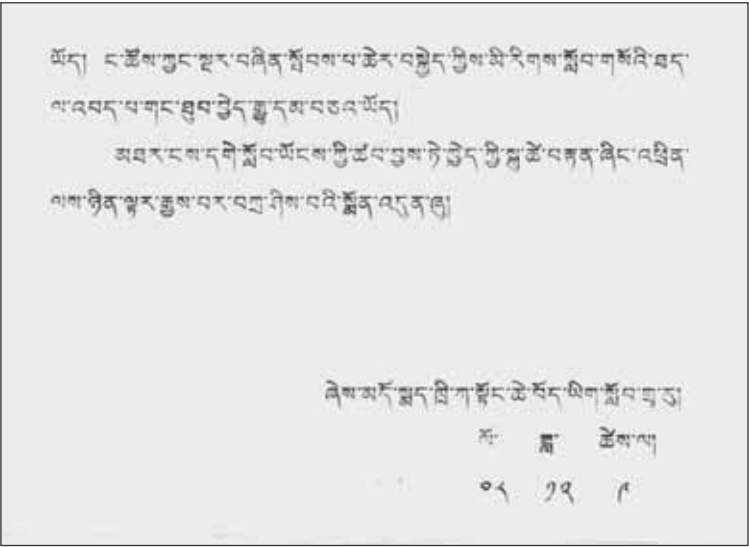
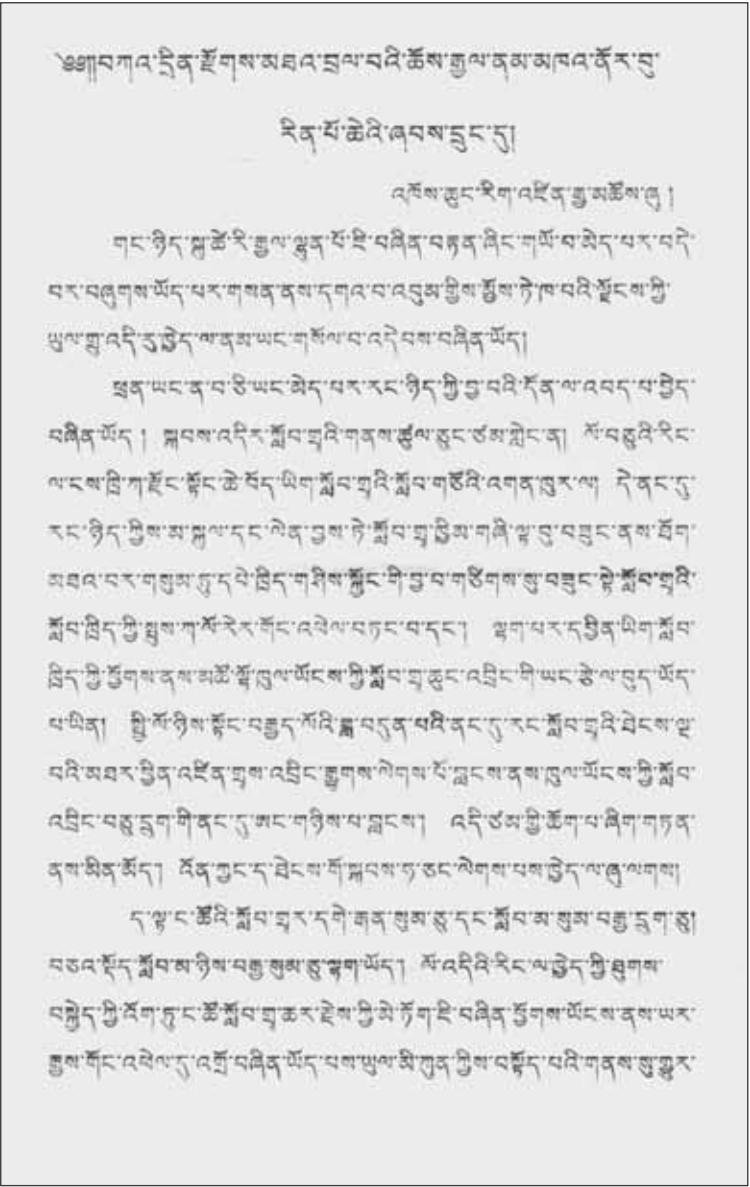




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A Letter from the Headmaster of the Dongche School in Amdo

Khöchung Rigdzin Gyamtso,
The Tibetan School of Dongche in Trika County, Amdo,
The first of December, 2008

To the feet of the infinitely kind
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche.

Having heard that your life is stable like the king of mountains and that you are in steady good health, I, who live in this district of the Land of Snow, am extremely happy about this; continuously I pray to you.

Also I, without any illness, am endeavoring to continue with my projects. Now, concerning the situation of the Dongche school, for ten years I have been responsible as headmaster of the Tibetan School of Dongche in the Trika district. I have voluntarily treated the components of the school like a family and have always considered the teaching activity

of utmost importance, so that the quality of teaching has increased year after year. In particular, regarding the teaching of English, the students of Dongche are the best among all the primary and middle schools of the whole region of Tsolho (Hainan). In July 2008, our students of the fifth class passed the final intermediate exam very well, as the second best among the sixteen middle schools of the whole region. Although this is not enough, it has been a very good opportunity, and therefore I report this to you.

At present, in our school, we have thirty teachers and three-hundred and sixty students. There are more than two-hundred and thirty resident students. This year, thanks to your kindness, our school is developing and blooming in all aspects like flowers after the rain. Therefore all the local people praise you. On our side, as before and with great courage, we are committed to the education of the people as much as possible.

Lastly, in the name of all the teachers and students, I want to wish you a stable life and continuous success in your activities. ©

Translated by A. Clemente

ASIA in the Khri ka Valley, north-east Tibet

Andrea Dell'Angelo

In 1993 ASIA was there in the Khri ka valley in north-east Tibet in what was once the region of Amdo and today is Qinghai Province, according to the government's sub-division of Chinese territory.

ASIA arrived here together with Prof. Tsering Thar, who is a real expert on Tibetan culture. We came to a very poor village where the people live mainly from agriculture in an area that was arid and surrounded by bare mountains that look almost like a lunar landscape. Besides the difficult economic conditions there, what struck us most about this valley, and in particular Dongche village – where we started to work – was the extremely difficult social-cultural situation. Over 50 years the Han population has increased from 3 to 60 % resulting in the impoverishment of Tibetan culture, traditions and language. It was a real cultural emergency just like in all the rest of Tibet and ASIA decided to assist with a multi-sector project. And from this our adventure in Tibet started.

Our first intervention was in the field of education which is of

fundamental importance in order to initiate a real process of development, providing the new generations with a strong cultural identity and giving them all the instruments necessary to become part of modern society. Seeing the high rate of illiteracy in the valley, we decided to build a primary and middle school in Dongche village. Thanks also to the collaboration of the Dzogchen Community which supported the project financially as well as with human resources (the architect for the school, built with local materials according to Tibetan tradition, was actually Tony Laurent who is currently the coordinator for ASIA in Australia), we inaugurated the school in 1997 with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu present, welcomed by the local people with a wonderful ceremony.

The boarding school has more than 500 students and serves 8 villages with a total population of 12,000 people. Over the years it has become a model for the whole prefecture. As the Headmaster of the school, Rigzin Gyamtso proudly said, “I am certain that if this school hadn't been here, the



Dongche school.

children would have forgotten their own language”. Since 1998 ASIA has organized courses of English and computer studies at the school with foreign teachers with the result that the students of Dongche have been classified in first place at the English exams taken by the schools in the entire prefecture of Hainan. There have also been training courses for teachers, not only in English but

also in Tibetan language and philosophy and in traditional teaching methodology.

In addition since 2002 thanks to distance adoptions many children coming from families that are too poor to pay the school fees have had the possibility to attend the school and to have the same educational opportunities as other children. At the moment there are 73 children who have

been distance adopted by supporters of ASIA.

Since 2008 the government's education policy in China has changed. The so-called “Combining Education Policy” – which was tested as a pilot project right in Hainan prefecture where the Khri ka valley is – plans to eliminate all the Tibetan primary and

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Children's day at Dongche school.

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middle schools spread over the territory. Children from the village primary schools from the 4th to the 6th grade (more or less from 8 years and up) will be put together in gigantic structures in the districts (an administrative unit covering several villages), students from the middle schools in the counties and students from the secondary schools in the prefectures. In this way children will be uprooted from their land and their environment, their families, traditions and customs and put together with thousands of other children in what are practically cement barracks.

The other projects that were set up in the Khri ka valley are directed towards sustainable development in this community, while promoting traditions. A petrol pump started up an activity to generate an income for the poorest families in the village and to support the costs of the school. With the construction of a traditional Tibetan medicine clinic and a College of Bönpo Studies, ASIA intervened to improve the health conditions of the people and to safeguard the cultural roots of the Tibetan population.

At the Dongche clinic two doctors of traditional medicine visit and treat the village people with

county, the clinic contributes to keeping alive a medical science whose roots stretch back into the ancient past and whose effectiveness is now recognized all over the world. In fact, in this area, as in many other areas of Tibet, after the cultural revolution, doctors of traditional medicine disappeared and most of the population now resorts to western medicine.

The most recent intervention carried out by ASIA in Dongche village is the Khyungmo Bönpo College. The first phase of construction (classrooms, dormitories and bathrooms) was finished in 2007 and we are planning a second phase of extension to meet the rising requests for admission.

master to spread the Bön doctrine, arrived in Dongche valley and built the Khyung mo lha kang monastery, in traditional architectural style. The monastery was active for centuries and destroyed during the cultural revolution.

In 2005 Khyungmo Topden Wangshulk, the current abbot of the monastery, the 23rd reincarnation of Yeshe rgyal mtshan, asked ASIA to help to give the young monks a place in which they could learn about ancient Bön traditions.

After building the Study College, this year ASIA started up a distance adoption project to guarantee support for the monks and the children of the primary school linked to the monastery. All these students come from very poor families, or are orphans or abandoned children who have been taken in with great compassion by Master Khyungmo. The Master cares for them as if they were his own children, but in spite of his great efforts, he has not managed to find funds for food and for the costs of his students.

The Khyungmo Bönpo College is an important educational opportunity for young Tibetans from Dongche village. Here, besides learning about spiritual teachings (Sutra, Tantra and the Great Perfection), students also learn philosophy, history, writing and grammar, prose and poetry, different art forms, medicine and astrology, all aspects of learning of the very ancient and highly developed culture of Tibet.

The people from the village, most of all the elderly, visit the monastery frequently and every day rituals and religious practices are carried out there.

Despite the great difficulties that the Tibetan people have been living in and that all the foreign NGOs are going through particularly in the last two years, these projects are going ahead, entirely managed by local people. This is an important result which encourages us to continue and to renew our commitment to this people and the great knowledge that they preserve. ©

What you can do

With 25 euro per month you can start a long distance sponsorship and support:
· a Bönpo Monk in Khyungmo College
or
· a Student in Dongche School providing them food, teaching material and basic health care to let them live and study in a dignified way.

To start a long distance sponsorship you can consult our web www.asia-onlus.org or write to Roberta to adozioni@asia-onlus.org

Contributions can be made through:
· Bank transfer in the name of ASIA Onlus
IBAN: IT 06 F 01030 72160 00000562272
BIC/SWIFT: PASC IT M1G99
· Credit card on www.asia-onlus.org



Headmaster Khöchung Rigdzin Gyamtso with ASIA staff in the new library.

The children from Dongche village who go to the primary school will remain there. In fact, ASIA has managed to get this promise for the primary school from the county Department of Education, while the students from the middle school will have to be transferred to Guide county.

Tibetan medicine produced by them and particularly effective for chronic illnesses that cannot be cured at the hospitals.

The clinic has two objectives: besides improving health conditions within the community by giving the possibility for the needy to receive treatment at low costs without having to go to the

The College is part of Khyungmo Monastery which belongs to the Bön spiritual tradition, the oldest tradition in Tibet that existed prior to the introduction of Buddhism. An ancient legend recounts its origins which date back to the 14th century when a Bönpo monk, Yeshe rgyal mtshan, sent by his

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broadcast by webcast with Community Gars and practitioners participating around the entire planet. The auction managed to raise an enormous amount of money and was a positive result not only for the tangible benefits

it provided but also because the result was like a sign – Rinpoche said – an awareness of the necessities and needs that the Community has to cope with. Even Yeshe Silvano Namkhai's car was generously put in the auction and the first model of "retreat cave on

four wheels" was sold for a goodly sum to one of our practitioners who not only does not have a driver's licence but actually lives in China.

Besides the auction we were also able to organize a lottery and

even this was an occasion for us to become aware of where we are and of how we participate in the Community. At the end there was entertainment with dancing and singing: Tsewang, Nyiden Tenzin and Tenzin Yangdon provided some wonderful moments

with their beautiful voices and the sounds of the dranye. Then it was the turn of the Merigar children who with their little songs and their vocal acrobatics managed to leave an impression on the biggest and the smallest of those who were present... ©

The International Shang Shung Institute

Luigi Ottaviani



I would like to take this opportunity to respond to the many people who have asked for general information about the Shang Shung Institute, the relationship between the Institute and the Dzogchen Community, the activities of the Institute and how they are supported.

The Shang Shung Institute was founded in Italy about 20 years ago by Prof. Namkhai Norbu with the aim of preserving and spreading Tibetan culture.

Later on, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu decided that the Institute should also be in charge of producing practice supports, preserving his teachings for future generations and protecting his work and his image (copyright).

Over the years in order to support these activities other branches of the Institute have sprung up abroad which, in addition to the general determined projects, have gradually undertaken specific projects. Some of these are about, for example, the translation of ancient Tibetan texts (Kater) and the setting up of a school for Tibetan medicine in the USA. In the last two years, the Institute has also created two branches linked directly to the Italian office, one in Argentina and the other in Russia. This decision arose from the need to be able to spread the Teachings in other languages.

We can say with certainty that over the past years the Shang Shung Institute has been the main centre of activity linked to

Tibetan culture in Europe, setting up events of worldwide interest: conferences on Tibetan Medicine, on Tibetan Language, conferences, international shows and exhibitions as well as many other activities.

Regarding the current situation of the Institute, however, I can only speak about the period in which I have been directly involved (the last four years).

In 2006 the Shang Shung Institute had in total about 7–8 people working both part-time and full-time. The foreign branches worked almost completely autonomously and there were few links between them and the central office. There were few people within the Community who knew about the existence of the Institute and its work.

In recent years, thanks to the hard work of all the staff, the Shang Shung Institute has grown and developed in many ways. The directors of the three main offices decided to start active and constructive collaboration in order to improve the overall work situation and to share resources and skills so as to really work as a single organism.

Moreover, the Institute has recently extended the number of services it offers and its influence on the international scene. Since

the workload has increased, the staff consists of almost 20 people (including those employed at all the branches), while the current financial situation is sound and stable and the accounts are in order.

Even though it seems that the staff is made up of many people, in actual fact we are hardly able to cover all the work that needs to be done. Therefore we receive a lot of help from dozens of people who assist us in karma yoga, locally and in the towns, in almost every aspect of our work.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all those who offer their help and support to our activities. Thanks to their commitment, the Shang Shung Institute is growing and going ahead.

Sincere thanks also to the staff who have dedicated themselves to this work for years with responsibility and enthusiasm.

Here is a brief summary of what the Institute does today

There are really a great number of activities but the main ones are cultural projects including:

- the archives of the Teachings
- the production of practice supports
- the translation and publication of books (both 'internal' and for the public)
- transcriptions

- courses on Tibetan language, medicine and related topics (astrology, moxa, kunye etc)

In addition, we support the Dzogchen Community by providing services such as:

- The Mirror
- the membership database
- management of the Santi Maha Sangha
- management of Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance courses
- the webcasts of the Teachings and retreats of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and Yeshe Silvano Namkhai
- organizational and technical assistance at various levels.

Then there are other 'standby' activities, that is, activities that are waiting to receive sufficient resources, in the form of project managers who want to help us set up projects such as the Tibetan Museum, the cinerary, the photographic archive, the historical archive of the Institute, etc., and many other proposals to be put into action on direct instructions from Rinpoche.

It is important to state clearly that the activities that the Shang Shung Institute undertakes for Merigar are 'operating' activities, or rather, the SSI does not make the decisions but carries out suggestions that come from Rinpoche and from representatives of the Community (such as the SMS coordinators, teachers, IPC, etc.).

I repeat that the SSI does not make any decisions regarding these activities but simply carries out the instructions it receives.

From this viewpoint, the Italian office of the SSI and the Gar of Merigar West are closely integrated. The SSI contributes its services and Merigar West supports the

continuation of the SSI and hosts SSI Italy in their offices.

In addition, it should be pointed out that many of the activities of the SSI for the Community are carried out voluntarily by the Institute as its commitment towards the Community (in particular the membership database and the management of the SMS).

Support for the Institute comes mainly from:

- donations
- the sale of books and audio video products, courses
- SSI membership
- Services for Merigar West.

Therefore, any form of support for the Shang Shung Institute is a direct and concrete way of helping to carry out the projects that Rinpoche has entrusted to us in the course of time; a precious help to preserve this marvelous cultural tradition that we all value and hope can be handed down to future generations.

Finally I would like to invite everyone who would like to know more about the activities of the Shang Shung Institute, or who would like to participate in projects, in courses or simply communicate with us, not to hesitate to get in touch with us (possibly more than once because we take care of something like 150–180 requests every day and unfortunately the emails do not always arrive!)

We are always happy to receive feedback (and obviously constructive criticism), to answer questions about our work, to receive suggestions for improvement or new projects. ©

Warm greetings to you all,
Luigi Ottaviani
Director of the Shang Shung Institute

SSI Digital Archive

Project Updates

We are very happy to announce that we have already received 5 donations for the project of the Digital Archives! This was a very important result since we were able to buy the first module of the new archive and start the work! We really would like to thank all the donors and supporters for this great result!

The system was installed a few days ago and we were able to set it up and have it working in 2 days. The actual net storage available in the present configuration is 7 TB, with high security level of redundancy and hot spare disks ready. The total space that this machine can keep is a maximum of about 35 TB (net of security) so there's plenty of upgrade possible!

We have already been able to fill the first 5,3 TB of the space now and in a week or two we will fill the other available space. The

material we acquired right now was about Argentina (1989–2007, 2 TB), beginning of Merigar (1983–1985).

For this reason please continue to support this project so that the archiving work can continue without interruptions.

The Project Summary

With your help and support we can continue for the digital preservation of all our video materials and make it available for the future generations!

As you may remember, we are looking for 20 donors who can give 5000 euro each. We are organizing a raffle among the donors. Each of them will get a special edition of new publications from Shang Shung Editions. The luckiest one will also receive the laptop that our Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu used every day for three years.

The Digital Archives of the Shang Shung Institute are dedicated to ensuring that all information related to the life and teachings of

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, as well as all manuscripts, books and documents on Tibetan culture present in our Library, are digitally preserved so as to remain available and accessible for generations to come.

The SSI office premises located at Merigar (Arcidosso, Italy) have been restructured to host technically advanced installation. A climatized room has been designed and built specifically for the data storage system. Some years ago we started the project of indexing contents of video material and we created a new database.

Now, we are entering into a new phase of digitizing all the video material in our archive and the data storage we have is not enough for this. We need 2 twin storages for maximum security with a size of 85 TB each to include all the video material we have (around 7000 hours). To start this project, your support is indispensable! ©

For any information, please, contact Shang Shung Institute
info@shangshunginstitute.org



Final stage of the Ku-nye course May 22–24 at Kundusling Barcelona during which diplomas were given to 8 new Ku-nye operators.



The final weekend of the Ku-nye course with Aldo Oneto was held in Florence, Italy May 30–31 during which diplomas were conferred.

The First Graduating Class 2009 of the Tibetan Medical School, Shang Shung Institute, USA in Xining

Matt Schmookler

The Shang Shung Institute’s Tibetan Medicine School Students, class of 2009, upon just returning from Tibet, have come to the end of our four-year journey into the study of the rGyud Bzhi, the four Tibetan Medical Tantras. Under the profoundly patient and generous guidance of our dear teacher Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo, we managed to spend the last four years thoroughly immersed in the study of this precious text and the living experiential knowledge of our teachers that accompanies it. Together we have gone through many pains and joys as the first formal class of Western students to attempt to learn this great tradition in equivalence with our Tibetan brothers and sisters in India and Tibet.

Our teacher and seven students spent four years in one classroom together, in twenty hours a week of lecture, going line by line through the four medical tantras, translating each and every word into English. Bridging the gap between the deep and essential classical medical language and modern English can be a challenging task. Fortunately our wonderful teacher was able to express the most complicated concepts in simple, easily understood language.

Upon the completion of our formal class lectures, language classes and weekly clinical labs, we had the fantastic opportunity

to conclude our studies with three months of study at the Qinghai University, Tibetan Medical College and the Mtsho Sngon Tibetan Medical Hospital, located in Xining in the Qinghai Province. Amdo has become a strong foothold for Traditional Tibetan Medicine in Tibet. The university, hospital, Arura pharmaceutical company and Arura research company, all work together under the Arura Group for the development of Tibetan Medicine.

While in Tibet we had the great privilege to meet and learn from many of the foremost Tibetan medical scholars including Professor Karma Tsognyis, Sman pa Tingzin and Tadrin Gyal. In classes with these teachers we studied commentaries on the Rgyud Bzhi, specialized anatomical knowledge of the channel systems, splints and bandages, and the inner winds. We also received the entire lung transmission of the Rgyud Bzhi from Aku Nyima, the most famous doctor in all of Amdo, who is a simple monk. In the hospital we had the rare opportunity to learn from very experienced doctors such as Aku Nyima and Aku Padma and see their living practice of alleviating the suffering of countless people day in and day out. In the countryside, we scaled the mountains with herbal specialists, identifying herbs and then were tested on their proper identification.



Left to right: Nashalla Gwyn Nyinda, Mira Weil, Anasuya Weil, Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo, Matt Schmookler, Malcolm Smith, Joseph Mella, Slawomir Kosciuk.

We were treated with incredible respect and dignity; it often felt like we were undeserving. Nevertheless, these great Tibetan scholars of the modern era were pleased that Western people showed true interest in the fruits of their culture and helped us in any way they could. They were surprised at the depth in which we went into this study, as they have seen many who are interested only in skimming the surface.

At the end of our time at the University, we took an examination equivalent to the examination that their students undergo. This was given upon the request of our teacher so that the university could then grant us paperwork stating that we had finished our four years of studies equivalent to the Tibetan students of Tibetan Medicine. Upon the successful completion of the test, Qinghai University, Tibetan Medical College, held a graduation ceremony for us in which they granted us certificates stating we had successfully completed the

requirements for the degree of “Doctor of Tibetan Medicine”. [see photo]

After our graduation we escaped to Lhasa where we visited our teacher’s family, the Potala, the Jo Khang, Samye Monastery, the 6th Dalai Lamas secret practice chamber and the practice cave of Yeshe Tsögyal in South Tibet. It was fantastic!

Here is a speech the Anasuya Weil delivered at our graduation on our behalf:

“Tashi Delek! On behalf of the Shang Shung Institute’s School of Tibetan Medicine, class of 2009, I would like to thank the Tibetan Medical College of the Qinghai University for inviting us to spend three months here in order to complete our clinical internship. I would also like to extend our thanks to the Qinghai Tibetan Medical Hospital for hosting our internship training. In particular I would like to thank ’O Zochen, the president of the Arura Group, for sponsoring our trip here. I would like to thank

the dean of the Tibetan Medical College, Professor Lusham Gyal, for coordinating the program on our behalf. I would also like to thank Aku Nyima for generously bestowing the reading transmission of the rGyud bZhi with great personal effort over the last three months. I would like to thank all of the professors of the college and all of the directors of the hospital departments for their kindness and attention. Finally we would like to extend our deep gratitude to Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo, our dear teacher, whose dedicated perseverance and immense patience has led us to this occasion.

We, the Shang Shung students Class of 2009, are not only profoundly grateful for having this opportunity, but also feel the full weight of the responsibility of carrying the tradition of Tibetan Medicine forward into the future in the United States and beyond. The 4,000 year-old tradition of Tibetan Medicine has produced great beings and masters who have helped countless beings maintain and restore their health. Today we are honored that you bestow this great tradition upon us. Although this ceremony marks the end of our four years of study, every one of us realizes that we have only just dipped our toes into the vast ocean of knowledge that is Tibetan medicine and that in truth this is just the beginning of a lifetime of learning. We promise to do our best in carrying forth this profound teaching and to treat everyone with the same compassion and generosity of spirit that has been shown to us.” ©

Many Tashi Delegs and very best wishes,
Oliver Leick
Director of the Shang Shung Institute Austria
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www.ssi-austria.at ©

Supporting publications projects

Dear Vajrasisters and Vajrabrothers,

The translation of Tibetan texts and Teachings into a Western language is one of the crucial points of the international Shang Shung Institute. We see it as our main responsibility to make these precious texts available so that our children and grand-children, too, will be able to read these teachings. If they remain without translation only in Tibetan, in a few generations nobody will have any benefit from them since there probably will not be any more living language experts like those we have today.

To translate these texts is a very delicate task and a translator needs to have very special qualities to bring the real meaning of these scriptures from Tibetan into English. One cannot just translate word-by-word, one needs to understand the content of the text or of the teachings and one must have experienced the real meaning of the words in order to translate them in their complete meaning. So you see, in order to translate a text like a Dzogchen

tantra you need to have a qualified translator. But all that effort is not enough, because without the help of the Master, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, we just could not make precise translations. In all these years Rinpoche has been working many, many hours with the translators to clarify certain unclear aspects of each text.

We have two main translation projects, the “Ka-ter translation project” and the “Complete works of Chogyal Namkhai Norbu”, and many books have already been published in these series – just think about all the Longsal books for example.

Here is some information about our work:

- In the next few days you will be able to purchase the latest book of the “Ka-ter series”, the “Biography of Shakya Shri”, translated by Elio Guarisco.
- During the retreat in August at Merigar, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu will be giving Teachings on the “Mejung Tantra”. This is one of the very important Dzogchen Tantras. In the last 3

years Elio Guarisco, Adriano Clemente and Jim Valby have been working on the translation of the entire text from Tibetan into English, and Chögyal Namkhai Norbu has helped very much and clarified numerous parts of the text that were unclear. The translation has been almost completed and could be going into its final phase. Now, as Rinpoche has decided to teach on this text, we will include Rinpoche’s Teachings, so that by 2010 we will be able to publish not only the complete translation of this marvelous Dzogchen Tantra but also Rinpoche’s commentary.

- Adriano Clemente is currently working on the translation of the book “The Precious Light”. This is a commentary to the Tantra of the manifestation of the Vajra Dance that liberates the Six Lokas in the Six Dimensions, and includes its history. The book contains the root-text, the dreams of Rinpoche, and the description of the steps. Adriano has worked on the translation of this book since March 2009. He hopes that the translation of this book will be ready in the first half of 2010, so that afterwards it could be given to the editor. We hope that the

book can be published in the second half of 2010.

- One of the major books on Tibetan history and a real milestone for understanding will be the publication of “The Light Of Kailash, Vol. I” in autumn 2009. Donatella Rossi has worked on the translation of this extraordinary and voluminous work of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu for several years. She is continuing her translations as this work of Rinpoche’s contains three volumes. The translators and editors, the illustrators as well as those in charge of Shang Shung Editions are permanently working on books and translations and in 2009 you will be able to purchase some other new books published by the Shang Shung Institute.

There is the possibility that one group of the Dzogchen Community sponsors one book. The Dzogchen Community Brazil, for example, decided to sponsor one specific book of Rinpoche’s that hopefully will be published in 2010. It would be great if we could find a sponsor for one of the announced books.

In order to support the Shang Shung Institute with all the translation programs, you are very wel-

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

From The Precious Light

Note: what follows is a partial transcription of a verbal summary of the original text, recorded in Italian by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in 1992. It is not a proper translation of the original Tibetan text and therefore there can be no assurance about its accuracy.

The secret tantra *The Union of the Sun and the Moon*, transmitted by Vajradhara Samantabhadra, includes instructions for the Dance and the Song of the Vajra and how to integrate with them in the state of contemplation. [...] It says:

Listen *thubpa togpamed* (realized one), the scope of the secret Song of the Vajra is to block birth in the inferior states; this is the right activity of the Enlightened ones.

When a yogin with the good fortune to have this knowledge wanders in solitary places, a cemetery for example, he does well to sing the Song of the Vajra again and again.

The Song of the Vajra is a companion that helps one enter the state of *mitogpa*, beyond all thought, a Song to be used at the beginning of any sacred activity.

Entering the *mandala*, or during initiations or *ganapujas*, in these moments sing the Song of the Vajra. When practicing or continuing in the state of *mitogpa* beyond thought, one should sing it.

This is the significance of the Song of the Vajra.

When one wants to reach the wisdom beyond thought, one should sing the Song of the Vajra.

When a person cannot find stability in the state of contemplation, with this practice he or she will discover the natural state.

When a practitioner is drowsy, he or she will awaken with the Song and find a good state of contemplation.

In the state of *rigpa*, governed with the seal of bliss, one is in the total state of the symbol, *Mahamudra*, and enters the deep meaning of the instructions of the Master.

Also when entering the state of emptiness, *shunyata*, you will find yourself in your natural state and in this way all your concepts are self-liberated in their own nature. Also all concepts linked to



Rinpoche working on the steps of the Dance of the Vajra with students in the early 1990s [Prima Mai to the left of Rinpoche].

the material and mental level are purified. These are the reasons for which the Song of the Vajra is sung.

Also always practice the Dance of the Vajra.

Those who always practice both the Song and the Dance of the Vajra will obtain the realization of the Vajra.

Thus Vajradhara explained. [...]

The Transmission of the Dance through Dreams and Visions
In the year of the Earth-Serpent, the fourth day of the fifth month, that is, July 7th, 1989, I was at Tsegylgar, the principal location of the Dzogchen Community in the United States, in the place of the Dance of the Dakinis. During the retreat, I slept in a small tent and in it, early that morning, I had a dream:

I found myself in a round temple in the center of the place of the Dance of the Dakinis; in the four directions

there were four glass doors and to the sides very large windows of colored glass. I was facing East, seated on a throne about 2-1/2 feet high. All around me, both inside and outside the temple, there were throngs of people, maybe thousands: they were all singing, very slowly, the Song of the Vajra. I could see everyone distinctly through the doors and windows of glass.

Moreover, I could see this place was poised on top of a vast white thigle. Outside the thigle was a yellow hexagram luminous as gold, and beyond the hexagram was a double red triangle, surrounded by thighs in rainbow colours, infinite as the waves of the ocean, which seemed to fill all space and were sufficient to cover an entire country. On these thighs thousands of young people, men and women, were dancing.

Among them, I could see that some were doing a dance normally performed on the tenth day, that of Padmasambhava, where the dancers are called kin: there were male kin and female kin, many carried drums and were leaping, singing and dancing. In addition to these people, there

“The Precious Light” - the story of a text

Adriana Dal Borgo

“The Precious Light” is Chögyal Namkhai Norbu’s original text containing explanations of how the Master received the transmission of the Dance of the Vajra from the dakini Komadevi and the instructions for applying the practice.

In particular Rinpoche received this Teaching through a series of dreams of clarity in 1989 and 1990, at Tsegylgar and at Merigar. Immediately after writing the text, while he was in personal retreat at Merigar, Rinpoche translated it into Italian and recorded the translation on audio cassettes. Over the years that followed some practitioners (Yuchen Namkhai, Rita Bizzotto and myself) transcribed the recording and others (Enzo Terzano with the collaboration of Stoffelina Verdonk and me) coordinated the publication of the transcription which came out in 1994 edited by Edizioni Shang Shung under the title “La Luce

Preziosa La manifestazione simbolica della Danza del Vajra che libera le sei classi di esseri nelle sei dimensioni pure”, but which everyone referred to as “the green book” (because of the colour of the cover).

For a long time this was the basic text on which the Dance of the Vajra developed, of course together with the experience and the explanations of the authorised instructors. Nancy Simmons and Anastasia McGhee started to compose an English version of the text based on the Italian edition of the transcription. Soon, however, we realised that there were some discrepancies between the descriptions of some of the movements in the transcription and the way in which Rinpoche danced and taught.

Rinpoche himself had pointed out to us that since the terms ‘right’ and ‘left’ were similar in Tibetan, at times they might possibly have been mixed up in

his oral translation. He also explained to us that it had not been easy to translate the dynamic movements of the Dance into clear-cut set words.

And so the long job of comparing and of in-depth study began thanks to the collaboration of some dancers and most of all thanks to the patience of Rinpoche who answered all our questions during numerous meetings over the course of the years. For each question or doubt, Rinpoche consulted the root text or tried to remember how the movements were in his dreams. Other times our questions were the cause of further clarifying dreams.

Khandroling in particular, the retreat place at Tsegylgar, is a place where the Master continued to receive the most important dreams linked to the Dance of the Vajra.

One of these meetings with the Master to resolve our doubts took place at the Chitwan national park in Nepal: at the end Prima Mai, Stoffelina, myself and others started to dance and among the spectators there were the elephants (used for tourist trips) who began to move in perfect

harmony with the music and our steps!

Other meetings with Rinpoche took place at Namgyalgar but mainly at Merigar West. Most of the work was recorded on video and is now precious documentation and a constant source of information.

One of the questions we are repeatedly asked is: why has the Vajra Dance changed? In actual fact the Dance has not changed but over time we have tried to improve and dance in a more precise way.

For example, at the beginning Rinpoche taught mainly the steps and some of the arm movements but not the mudras like we do now. Studying the text we discovered the existence of the mudras and of many other small movements and details that we tried to integrate with the main movements.

Reading the text we found Tibetan terms such as ‘tshom’, ‘korbeb’, ‘chun’ and by asking Rinpoche’s advice each time, we tried to understand the meaning of them.

In this way our experience on the mandala grew simultaneous-

ly as we discovered new details and the Dance became richer in details.

The ‘green book’ then became obsolete. Many points were perfected and others added and there was a growing need among dancers and most of all among the teachers to have access to a literal translation of the original text.

Last year Adriano Clemente finally started work on the translation.

At the moment, together with Adriano Clemente, Maurizio Mingotti, Prima Mai and Rita Renzi, we are doing a thorough check and comparison, step by step, of Adriano’s translation of the root text, the explanations and clarifications we have received from Rinpoche over the years, the way we dance and the transcription of the ‘green book’.

It is a very useful job of revision after which there will be another meeting with Rinpoche to finally clarify some movements and meanings.

We expect that next year the translation, including the part to be checked with Rinpoche, will be concluded and the text will be ready for publication. ©

Focus on Vajra Dance



Three Vajra Dance instructors demonstrating the Dance of the Vajra in the Gonpa at Merigar West.

Photo: Gianni Biaggi

were many musicians with diverse instruments: bells, tambourines, clappers, cymbals, large and small gongs, tabla, dranyen, pivang, and various flutes, trumpets, *jyal-ings*, *tinshakgs* (cymbals), *shangs*, large and small *damarus* and different kinds of round small bells. Attached to the tip of a stick, a string of *tinshakg* formed a circle inside of which was a double triangle made of tiny bells. All the instruments, some of which I had never seen before, were being played as accompaniment to the simple movements of the dance.

The instruments, the sounds, the movements were linked harmoniously with the Song of the Vajra, sung by all of us. While we were singing *Naranaraitapatalam*, in front of me danced a female kin, recognizable by her red mask, whereas male kin wore white masks on their faces. She leaped high into the air, synchronous with a strong vibration which resembled the sound of the syllable “bam,” a sound not created by the kin but self-arisen. In that instant the kin transformed into a circle of light, a thigle large as a tent in which a dakini manifested. Slowly this manifestation, the thigle as well as the dakini, came toward me. Having neared the eastern door of the temple, the dakini communicated teachings to me which can be found elsewhere in this text.

★

In the year of the Iron-Horse, the nineteenth day of the sixth month, that is, August 10th, 1990, I was in my retreat cabin named by me “The Fortress of the Dakinis” at Tseg-ylgar. I was in retreat, doing the practice of the dakini of long life Mandarava. Early in the morning I had a dream:

I found myself in a place with white rock crystals underfoot everywhere, and among the crystals grew trees full of brightly colored blossoms. It was an enchanting place and I took a stroll in the forest. As I walked, at a certain point I heard high-pitched voices, which sounded like a chorus of school children. The melody resembled the Song of the Vajra: the melody stopped, and after a moment began again, alternating sound and silence like the waves of the sea. Listening with attention, I recognized with certainty the Song of the Vajra, accompanied by the tinkling of bells, and I thought whoever was singing was also dancing.

I climbed a small hill and thus I was able to see, behind the hill, among the rocks made of crystal, in a place surrounded by many trees and full of flowers, numerous young men and women singing and also dancing the Song of the Vajra. Among them a girl was giving explanations. When they saw me they stopped dancing.

Observing the features and clothing of the young people, I thought that they were Nepalese or maybe from Kashmir. Over their shirts and their thin trousers, to the bottoms of which were attached many little bells, they wore a kind of sleeveless coat with an elaborately embroidered border which hung to the knees, Tibetan-style. They were all dressed in the same way, though the young women were richly ornamented with jewels. Both males

and females had long hair, one part of which was bound at the nape of the neck and decorated with flowers, the rest left loose over the shoulders. The girl who was instructing the others seemed a little older, possibly twenty years of age. She was very beautiful, her face resembling an Indian woman, her hair black and long. Her dress was red with brilliant golden designs among shimmering rainbow-colored bands. She wore many ornaments, flowers in her hair, jewels covering her body. On a small raised seat, she was explaining in a language unknown to me.

As I neared the group, they had again begun dancing, to the line *Suryabhatharaipashanapha*, and seeing me approach, they started to speak among themselves. It seemed they recognized me and with much respect they came to greet me. Even the young woman had risen from her padded seat, and advancing slowly, smilingly, she said in perfect Tibetan, “We are very happy that you have come to us today. Here we are practising the Dance of the Vajra for the Liberation of the Beings of the Six Lokas into the Six Pure Dimensions. Make yourself comfortable.”

I responded, “But who are you?” When I asked this question, all of them exploded with mirth, and the woman in the red dress who had been giving instructions said to me, “You did not recognize us? We are the *pawos* (dakas) and *pamos* (dakinis) of Oddiyana.” In that moment I remembered that Oddiyana is a Muslim country: how could they be dakas and dakinis or pawos and pamos? Maybe they meant that Oddiyana is a pure dimension, and for this reason there are pawos and pamos. With this doubt in mind I asked: “Where is the place you call Oddiyana?” All the pawos and pamos seemed amazed by my question: they stared at me and laughed. The dakini girl who gave explanations replied with a smile, “Oddiyana can be found in the pure dimensions in all directions of the universe. In this moment, this site where we now are is called the country of Oddiyana.”

I wanted to ask other questions, but she was already pointing out to me her seat, saying to me, “Please sit. Now we will offer you a Dance of the Vajra.” Taking the seat, I asked: “How many persons are necessary in order to do the dance?” “Today, we are twelve altogether, between the pawos and the pamos, so we are able to do only the brief Dance, the one of the small *karrà*. To dance on the *karrà* of medium size, twelve pawos and pamos and twelve kins, male and female, are needed, in all twenty-four dancers. Instead, for the larger *karrà*, thirty-six dancers, twelve pawos and pamos, twelve female kin and twelve male kin, called *jorkin* and *drolkin*, are required. The *karrà* is the space where we dance. There are always six levels of thigle, seven if you also count the center. In the large *karrà* which is called the *gyepa chenpo*, each dimension possesses eight levels. There is no need to limit the number of individuals who dance, since there is room for many.

Thus the girl spoke to me. I asked her who she was. She looked at me intensely and with a slight smile she said, “It seems you do not remember me. I am an emanation of the Dakini of Wisdom, I am an action Dakini. Now watch this Dance we are about to offer you and remain in the state of

contemplation.” After she spoke in this way, each took his or her position on the mandala. At that moment I looked at the ground, and indeed there was, as in the dream I had had the year before at Tsegylgar, a mandala with circles of different colors.

Now I was able to remember that earlier dream very clearly: I was exactly at the center of the mandala on a white thigle and around my throne was a yellow hexagon, its points corresponding to the six dimensions. Inside the hexagon was a double *chonsyun* (triangle), then a green base and then all the circles or thigles : one blue, one white, then yellow, red, green, blue, yellow, red, green, blue. I saw a red triangle and a white triangle on the outside.

Each dancer had taken a place on the red thigle : all the males were faced outside the mandala, the females turned toward the center. Their bodies were erect, their arms at their sides. The girl who gave instructions had begun to sound A and all the pawos and pamos, chanting together, raised their arms and then slowly united their hands at the navel. Singing *Emakirikiri*, they began to dance.

While they danced the verses *Samuntacaryasughayai*, *Sambharathamekhacantapa*, *Masminsaghulitayapa*, the principal pamo interrupted at three different points in order to clarify something. Because she was speaking in the language of the dakinis, I could not understand her words. I did understand however that she was correcting the movements of some of the pawos and pamos and sometimes she seemed to be explaining the meaning of the Dance. After the verses *Ra Ra Ra*, each one danced on his or her own.

The principal pamo came over to me, and I asked her if she could teach me the Dance of the Vajra. She indicated the position of the pawo on the mandala and began to demonstrate the Dance, explaining the movements in detail, until *Masutavalivali*. She then requested a pawo and pamo couple to teach me the successive steps; thus they showed me many times and in a clear way how to dance the verses *Samitasurusuru* and *Kutalimasumasu*. After I had learned the movements we danced together many times.

We were still dancing when I woke up. In that moment I thought that I must truly understand the Dance of the Vajra of the Liberation of the Beings of the Six Lokas into the Six Pure Dimensions, but how was I to do it? I tried in vain for a long time to fall asleep again. The moment I succeeded, I found myself in dream in the same place, dancing with the pawo and the pamo, seeking to learn the steps of *Samitasurusuru*.

I asked them, “Among Dzogchen practitioners in Tibet, I never met anyone who knew how to dance like this and I really want to learn this Dance of the Vajra well. Will you teach me all of it?” The pawo answered, “Do not worry. We will teach you it, slowly, verse by verse. Now we will dance *Ekarasulibhatayai* and *Cikirabhulibhatayai*.” They had just begun to demonstrate these two sections when I awoke.

>> continued on the following page

Interview with Prima Mai

Prima Mai is one of the main teachers of Vajra Dance in the international Dzogchen Community and has been practicing and teaching the Dance of the Vajra since 1992. Prima Mai met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in 1988.

The Mirror: Prima, can you please tell us about your first contact with the Vajra Dance?

Prima Mai: I had had experience in daily life of how body attitudes can alter mental and energetic states and vice versa and I was very interested in paths offering methods integrating movements. I was also very wary of religion or paths with strong dogmas or limitations. I did not really look around much and having made up my mind to meet a teacher, pretty soon met my first spiritual teacher, a Sufi master who specially worked with sacred healing sounds and mantras and movements. I had some interesting experiences, but still felt my mental search had not been satisfied or somewhat left blank.

When I met my Master, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in Marcevol, in a place in the Pyrenees close to the French/Spanish border around November 1988, I had no doubt,

from the first moment, that I did not have to search further. The first time we sang the Song of Vajra together with Rinpoche – me reading from the kindly lent incomprehensible text – I had such a joy and several visions evolved inside me, that the same day, after the teachings, I hid myself in the little forest next to the retreat place to learn these sounds by heart, in order to have more experience of this moment the next time, which I then had.

There was not yet the Vajra Dance and the main practice integrating movement was Yantra Yoga which I also tried to study and practice. Even though I had no doubt that I had found my root teacher, I tried to figure out of how to integrate these teachings by also following the teachings offered by my Sufi Master, because of the very strong experiences I had with integrating sounds and movements. I wanted to follow



Rinpoche indicating some of the coordinates for the Dance of the Vajra Mandala on a world map.

Rinpoche’s teachings fully, but still did not understand everything very well and sometimes felt it was too much sitting for my taste. The Dzogchen Community also scared me off a bit in the early days. Overwhelming as well were all these words in Tibetan which I could not understand.

It was my first time in Merigar and I got very sick in a somewhat interesting way and could not leave and finished being sick in the old dormitory for nearly a month or so. Rinpoche still worked in Naples at the University and came some weekends. One day, he came inside the old small Gonpa (which is now the office of Merigar and the SSI), followed by a

group of children from Merigar and saw me weakly sitting there. He started to play and sing with the children and taught them some Tibetan dance movements. He looked at me and said that I should also come and do them. So I joined in with the group of children, feeling quite weak but soon started to enjoy the games. Also other adults came to watch

>> *The precious light continued from previous page*

It was already dawn, and I arose and immediately began writing down everything that had happened in the dream so as not to forget it. I also thought that to train in this Dance it would be necessary to prepare a mandala. After breakfast I saw Jennifer and I said to her, “It is necessary to prepare a mandala.” I indicated a place where there was already a wooden platform on which we could trace the pattern. Thus we began to draw the mandala. After a few days, Joe and Kathy brought me the colors I needed with which I began to paint a small mandala.

★

In the Iron-Horse year, the twenty-third day of the sixth month, that is, August 14th, 1990, while I was doing a retreat of the practice of long life in the Fortress of the Dakinis at Tsegyalgar, I had a dream in the early morning:

I was probably in the Gonpa at Merigar; it was a large, round temple through which light streamed from all directions. Inside were practitioners of the Dzogchen Community and I was teaching them the Dance of the Vajra of the Liberation of the Beings of the Six Lokas into the Six Pure Dimensions.

In the dream I knew by heart and in all its detail the entire Dance, all the particulars of the movements of the body, of the feet and of the arms, each of the mudras and their meanings. At the back of the hall on a very large table was a design of the karrà with the exact measurements and the colors of the thigles. I was explaining the mandala to various people and showing them the diagrams. Next to me was a western girl, blonde, pretty, who explained again, from the beginning, the measurements and form of the mandala. While listening to her speak, I realized she was an expert in the Dance of the Vajra. Therefore together we took our positions on the mandala at the sides of the lines ‘A and ‘A-MA.

The six parts in which the mandala is divided represent the six dimensions ‘A, A, HA, SHA, SA, MA; among these are another six dimensions. Thus I took my place on the dimension of ‘A, she between ‘A and MA. Then slowly we began to demonstrate the Dance. While we were dancing Masutavalivali I said, “In all the steps, the pawos must always move their right foot first, and turn to the right; they must never turn to the left.” Thus the first dakini, the action dakini, had already explained to me, so that now moving to the left would be like an error. While she taught me these verses, the action dakini moved toward the left, though, according to me, she also should have been moving right.

Thus I danced several times turning right, until the girl said, “In general it is true that the pawos move toward the right and the pamos toward the left, but in this case the pawos move left to symbolize the great identity or non-duality of all phenomena, like vision and void, samsara and nirvana, subject and object, happiness and sorrow, and so on. In this way, the pawos, who represent the aspect of method, integrate into the void of prajna or into the wisdom of movement.”

She persistently affirmed these principles, and thus I followed her indications. While we were discussing in which direction to turn, at the same time practicing the Dance, I awoke.

I arose quickly and went to where we had prepared the mandala and I danced as I had done in the dream. I remembered the steps clearly until Samuntacaryasughayai, though I was not certain of some transitions in the verses Bhetasanabhykulaye. As soon as I returned to the cabin I wrote quickly, more or less correctly, all that I remembered of the Dance, so that, also, I could reexamine this material when I had the possibility.

★

In the Iron-Horse year, the twenty-fifth day of the sixth month, that is, August 16th, 1990, while I was sleeping in the Fortress of the Dakinis at Tsegyalgar, early in the morning, I had a dream:

I was among many people, seated on a somewhat elevated throne, and I was giving an explanation, using a microphone, on the real sense of Dharma; I sought to introduce and communicate the true meaning of the Teaching. We seemed to be in a large Indian city. The persons present belonged to diverse ethnic groups: for the most part Nepalese, Tibetan and Indian. Many were Chinese, and almost a third were Westerners. Though I was speaking in Tibetan, employing every so often Indian, Chinese and English words, everyone present seemed to understand what I said, as they were listening calmly, with great attention and interest.

I was explaining what a religion is: “A religion limits us, whereas in the true sense of reality there are no limitations in one’s own condition, in the nature of each individual, in the three existences of body, voice and mind. It is necessary, however, to understand how body, voice and mind are conditioned by emotions, how they become entrapped in the illusion of dualism, and how dualism is always and ever more creating and developing our egos, with which we generate problems for ourselves and for others. If we understand these three principal points, we can free ourselves from the suffering of samsara. At that point, believ-

ing or not in a religion, having faith or not, are no longer important: you simply have to understand and apply these principles.” This was the gist of my explanation.

As I was speaking, suddenly some confusion arose in the crowd. I thought that someone was fighting, and that the police had arrived to quell the disturbance. Observing well, instead I saw that about twenty male and female kin were arriving: some had begun to dance, leaping among those present, and others to run. Many people ran away out of fright, while others moved aside respectfully, leaving them space to pass. Some of these kin were leaping almost seven feet in the air, others five feet or three and a half feet. They were dancing and sounding drums, damarus and bells.

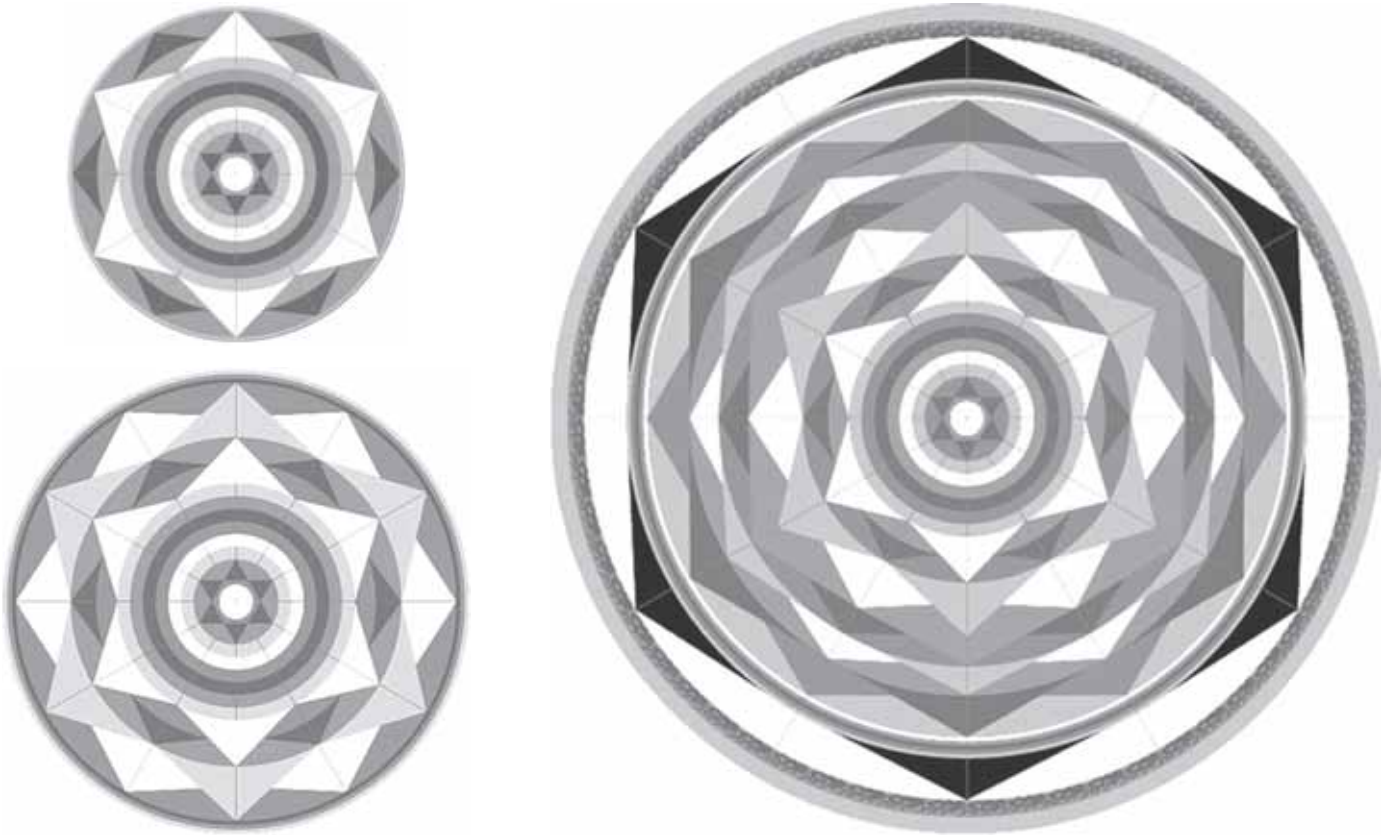
While people scattered in all directions, an empty space formed around me, so that I could see the ground. We were on a very large karrà (gyepa chenpo) which I recognized because one had been shown to me in a prior dream. I was on the white thigle in the center of the karrà, on a seat which could turn in a circle, and I thought I was in reality the guide of this Dance of the Vajra. In that moment I saw emerge from the crowd and approach me several young couples: one Indian, one Tibetan, one Chinese, one occidental, one African with very dark skin, one American Indian. They arrived in front of me, bowing their heads with respect and with their hands assuming the meditation position: rotating as in the lotus mudra, from the outside toward the inside, the right hand above the left, with the tips of the thumbs united and the other fingers straight out. One couple at a time came up to me offering this mudra at the level of the heart in sign of greeting, after which they returned to their places.

These young people wore an ancient costume, with a somewhat short top. I noticed that the kin had now taken positions at the edge of the mandala, playing their drums and damarus with a quick beat. On the outside were many other musicians who were playing softly. At that instant they began to sound the melody of the Song of the Vajra, together with the chorus of voices of everyone present.

The pawos and pamos who before had come to greet me now, upon entering the inner thigle, immediately began to dance. Beyond the six circles of thigles, within another six karrà, many young people, men and women, were dancing. Outside the blue thigle, on many circles, numberless as the waves of the sea, innumerable persons danced with the same rhythm. While I was observing their movements attentively, I awoke. Thus I was able to correct what I had already written about the Dance, above all where the steps were not clear. [...]



Focus on Vajra Dance



The Earth Mandala – the Solar Mandala – the Universal Mandala.

and gradually we became a large group, the children growing bored or tired and slowly disappearing. We were mostly then big children playing different games with Rinpoche for the next couple of evenings. My connection as well with the Sangha started to have the feeling of a Family. Rinpoche then left for Tsegyalgar for his personal retreat of Mandarava and where he received instructions of the Vajra Dance for the first time.

The next time I came to Merigar again was for helping and participating in the inauguration of the Shang Shung Institute in the following year of 1990 and also then I decided to move from Spain to Italy and rented a house in the Amiata region. That summer Rinpoche started to study and write down and work on his texts of the first part of the Song of Vajra Dance and the Three Vajra Dance. He came every day, sometimes mornings, sometimes afternoons and often stayed all day or until late night studying and making us follow his movements on the Mandala. Sometimes, when we were not many people present, he would ask me to do some steps to make his notes more accurate to explain in the best possible way the movements of the Vajra Dance. Then Jim Smith from Tsegyalgar asked Rinpoche if it was possible for them to do the Vajra Dance in Tsegyalgar and Rinpoche suggested they invite me to teach them.

That is more or less how I met the Vajra Dance and met the magic and joy, specially in the early days, learning, discovering and this wonder of having met these teachings, this method, this precious jewel, this complete path. It humbles me always, being that fortunate and not knowing by what merits, having met this great Dzogchen Master and his treasures he so totally shares with us, trusting in the transmis-

sion and our limited capacities to keep it pure to its essence.

The Mirror: Can you describe the different effects of the three different dances? Or do they all have the “same taste”?

Prima Mai: As my understanding goes, every Vajra Dance transmitted by our Master is a method to total realization, the ultimate Bodhicitta, the integration of our three existences inseparably into the state of Rigpa, the primordial wisdom, the state of all enlightened beings of all dimensions of the Universe.

As it goes with methods, even if on the absolute level they are of the same essence and potentiality, on the relative level they can work more concentrated with different aspects of our existence. We have the Dance of the Liberation of 6 Lokas and we are working with the natural sounds, syllables of the real nature, the real nature or wisdom of the 6 Lokas, which is the six pure dimensions of Samantabhadra, the primordial Buddha. The 6 Lokas refer to the 6 physical dimensions in which sentient beings transmigrate in Samsara. It is just by physical hearing of this Mantra that a sentient being receives a concrete cause to enter the path of Liberation and therefore physically cannot fall into the lower realms of existence. It has the potential to purify all causes which make one transmigrate endlessly in Samsara or fall into lower realms of existence. It works also with the main 6 chakras in our Body. It is more essence, more concentrated on this aspect of the physical dimension than the Dance of the Song of Vajra, even though all Vajra Dances function the same in the real sense and essence.

The Dance of the Song of the Vajra is a very complex Dance with many different sounds and movements, different timings and mudras. This works on our energetic level. Also every sound or syllable presents a chakra or

sub-chakra or energy point in our physical Body. So it is working on a more secret level, since energy is invisible. These sounds are like a key and essence of all teachings and knowledge. It is always best to read or listen to Rinpoche’s words and explanations as you can find in books, other articles or mp3 recordings of his retreats.

The Three Vajra Dance, integrating with the most essential and powerful Mantra in Dzogchen with the three natural sounds of OM A HUM, presents the natural enlightened state of our three gates of existence. This method is connected, being very essential, more with our mind level. Even if its movements are simple, if all three aspects of our existence are not in touch or not coordinated or distracted in any way by dualistic visions, a simple move or experience mirrors this without doubt internally or externally so that we can discover and integrate this. The Vajra Dance, besides its relative benefits of coordinating and harmonizing all aspects related to Body, Speech and Mind, of course also functions for developing one’s capacity for being able to discover the state of contemplation and integration. Without knowledge of the state of contemplation, it is, quoting Rinpoche from his book “The Song of Vajra”, like watering a field with no seeds in it. Nothing can grow. For example the methods of Shine practice are advisable to become familiar with the state of contemplation.

As Rinpoche often explains, in Dzogchen, most important is the state of mind. Everything depends on this state. Even if we learn a movement to its perfection with no flaw visible, if there is not the state, knowledge, the energetic expression just shows perfection but does not connect. In all Vajra Dances, integration of all three aspects of our existence, body, speech and mind are inseparable. It is the same, only we

might concentrate more on one of these aspects. But even this is just a concept, because in the real sense it is not possible to separate and say this works better for this or not etc. These are relative aspects.

The Mirror: In relation to the mandala in three dimensions, what are the main geographical locations (not only gars) we can use to draw the mandala in 3 dimensions? Are there any GPS coordinates to use?

Prima: This is a work of Rinpoche’s in progress in collaboration with Stephen Korns, who is an expert on mapping and he can answer much better than me. In any case the part of the world we call the Poles are in the position of the central part of the Mandala and the equator corresponds to the outer blue thigle of the Mandala. We have a Mandala covering the southern part and one covering the northern part of the World, which also present the female and male qualities of existence. The outcome one day could be that we will have all GPS coordinates and with Google Earth or similar programs it should then be possible to discover particular energy points on our Globe corresponding with energy points in our physical dimension.

With the knowledge of the correspondence of chakras and their functions in Body, Speech and Mind, Rinpoche pointed out that there will also be knowledge of more benefits from methods applied in these particular places on the Earth. In addition Rinpoche mentioned his fear that this knowledge would develop on a more material spiritual plane and the risk that the real sense or knowledge would be lost in a kind of new-age development. It is very fascinating knowledge and could easily be abused for conceptual material ambitions searching for effects and experiences rather than integrating with the real sense. Rinpoche will know if there is enough ma-

turity for such knowledge to be revealed.

The Mirror: What is the relationship between the music and the movements in the Vajra Dance? Are special tones used designed by Rinpoche? If there are special tones, does it mean that there is a relation between these tones and also geographical points, locations, on earth related to the mandala in 3 dimensions?

Prima: I learnt that in the past knowledge was passed not so much through books but transmitted by sounds, sacred images and sacred Dances. Sound and movement are more related to energy, so they are more secret because they are invisible and perceivable only by our energetic body, meaning our chakras and many more energy points connected to our chakras up to cellular levels. We learn this also in traditional medicine.

As Rinpoche explains, all existence comes through its essence, sound and rays and light, so then I can understand the importance of the relation and interdependence of sound with Body and mind in relation to time and space. Space is also present in my inner dimension of Body and my outer dimension, the earth, the solar system, the universe. It is not separate but in correspondence.

A sound and movement presents a state of knowledge in its essence. I don’t have to know intellectually or conceptually to have the total function of it. The first time you shout angrily to a little puppy, it shrinks away and knows instantly what this sound indicates and does not need any studies beforehand. It creates an imprint, a correspondence. If then there is even a physical action related to it, the stronger this imprint will be. There is the law of cause and effect. A samsaric cause produces a samsaric effect, a chain reaction and continuation in its illusory imprints and illusory 6 dimensions of transmissions.

When using sacred sounds in relation to movements it automatically creates an imprint and benefits from its correspondence so we don’t need to think, visualize etc. Then each sound has its time and both are linked inseparably to its corresponding energetic impact. Therefore timing is important for the Vajra Dance and probably Life in general, knowing the length of time of each syllable in correspondence to the time of the next syllable.

One can learn perfectly and technically all the timing of singing the Song of Vajra, but if it is done “only” technically, like only counting fanatically, then, in my opinion, it loses its correspondence with all aspects of body, energy and mind. It does not correspond anymore with the real condition of circumstances

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The Song of the Two Step Dance

Togden Shakya Shri

This song of realization by Togden Shakya Shri (1853–1919) expresses the joy of the path to liberation in terms of the steps of a divine dance. This and others of his inspiring verses of instruction are to be found in “Togden Shakya Shri, the Life and Liberation of a Tibetan Yoghin” by Kathog Situ Chökyi Gyatso, translated from the Tibetan by Elio Guarisco and recently released by Shang Shung publications.

E MA HO! The Song of the Two Step Dance

Sangha of Vajra brothers and sisters,
You who dwell in the secret treasure house of the dakinis,
Supreme power place of Lhadrag Yangdzong,
Yogins, Master and disciples who keep your samayas!

Sangha of Vajra brothers and sisters of pure and instant presence
Who dwell in this dance circle of celestial dakinis,
The place of natural and self-arisen perfection:
Having reached effortlessly and spontaneously
This pure celestial buddhahfield,
Enact the joyful dance of the dharma!

Once more, Vajra brothers and sisters,
Look at the true nature of mind!
In the space of the total integration
Of all experiences-bliss, clarity and emptiness,
Dance the steps of true self-liberation!
Step into the non-dual state of bliss and emptiness!

Once more, Vajra brothers and sisters,
Look at the true nature of mind!
In the space of absolute equality of all that manifests
The mind’s own nature, groundless and rootless,
Dance the steps of ineffable and ungraspable reality!
Step into the innate state of clarity and emptiness!

Once more, Vajra brothers and sisters,
Look at the true nature of mind!
In the space devoid of taking anything as real,
Merging in an indivisible union of appearances and mind,
Dance the steps in the undistracted state of the single flavor!
Step into the all-penetrating state of vision and emptiness!

Once more, Vajra brothers and sisters,
Look at the true nature of mind!
In the space of the union of samsara and nirvana
Devoid of a meditator and of anything to meditate upon,
Dance the steps of the undistracted state of non-meditation!
Step into the totality of pure presence and openness!
Once more, Vajra brothers and sisters,
Look at the true nature of mind.
To the space of the four awakened dimensions, mind itself,
I offer transparent, ineffable reality.
To the supreme loving refuge,
The spontaneous appearance of the indivisibility of
All buddhas of the past, present and future and
To the natural energy of my own pure presence and emptiness,
I offer true self-liberation.
Grant me swiftly, swiftly
The realization of the unsurpassable secret.

>> Interview continued from previous page
of time and space, all aspects of existence. It loses the factor of giving space, it becomes just a rule. For not creating this rule, then experience is indispensable and for having correct experience, one must have introduction of knowledge and do practice. Knowing the principle of the correct movement, sound and timing is essential and then one can give space, integrating with the real condition.

The Mirror: Is it appropriate for those who have received Rinpoche’s transmission, but never learnt any of the dances to watch and dance along with the dancers dancing any of the Vajra Dances? Is it okay for strangers to watch the dances in progress?

Prima: From my understanding and I hope to be corrected if otherwise, everyone who has received Rinpoche’s transmission can of course “watch” the Vajra Dance. The correct attitude is probably to participate and practice the Tun together by sitting in contemplation, integrating Voice through singing or at least remaining in a state of awareness. If one does not know the integration of the movement, the steps, then it is more respectful to not disturb other practitioners by stumbling among them. Also one must have the capacity to be able to follow others correctly and continue at least in a calm state. But of course, if one asks the others if it’s possible to have a try, to make an experience of how it is, before attending a course and learn properly, maybe



Prima Mai.

Photo: Jozef Aust

there is the possibility then to follow one or more practitioners for getting this taste. This collaboration of course is possible also, always keeping awareness and respect for other practitioners and keeping the intention to follow Rinpoche’s advice to study correctly.

For strangers to watch the Vajra Dances, it depends. It is for sure not positive to do a kind of missionary people in coming to see the Vajra Dances. On the other hand if during a Vajra Dance some “strangers” out of a population of 6 Billion people should be present by “chance”, it is simply very fortunate and nothing wrong about it to watch either of the three Vajra Dances. Also if a relative or friend of yours, whom of course you have not told the deepest secrets of your practice, shows sincere interest and not only superficial curiosity and asks if he or she could come and see what you are doing, it can be positive as well. Out of respect I would always communicate with my fellow Vajra brothers and sisters about such a visit and find some agreement with them. Maybe if there is much interest, you could decide together to make an open day for these sincerely interested people and also give a small simple introduction of what you are doing, always keeping in mind that it is to the general public, even if they are close friends or relatives. In that case one can offer the possibility to see the Vajra Dance of the Liberation of 6 Lokas for example, since the Mantra functions also directly for creating a good cause to enter the path of Liberation one day.

Rinpoche also once mentioned that maybe one day we could

show the Vajra Dance of the Song of Vajra in a place like a theater, to a large group of people, because it could benefit these people, functioning as a Thogdrol (through hearing and seeing receiving the cause to enter the path of liberation).

The Song of Vajra Dance is very complex and not so easy to practice all together harmoniously in movement and time. The Dance of 6 Spaces is less complicated in movement, easier and less likely to look out of order, even if it is not completely precise yet. The Song of Vajra Dance and 3 Vajra Dance work at a more essential and secret level of Dzogchen Teachings (energy and mind) and if we are not 100% familiar with them, it is better we do not use them in public.

The Mirror: While teaching the Dance you have given very helpful comments. Could you say more about learning the dance, contemplation and integration of presence in daily life?

Prima: For me personally, I understand from Rinpoche’s teachings that practice is of course not “only” for total realization but, on the relative level, for having a less complicated Life as well. So a spiritual path is nothing separate from my ordinary daily Life, nor is it just an exotic corner to sometimes enter to feel something. Entering the Mandala maybe after a busy day in a city or after travelling etc. the first moments one might just look at oneself, not even noticing the other Vajra Dancers, maybe still thinking a lot about what still needs to be done or what happened that day etc. These thoughts simply run like a loose monkey. Then one starts conceptualising that one should not be that way in a practice and tries to get rid of it,

trying to be very contemplative, applying some effort just to discover shortly after, that one does not even remember what one was thinking about just a few seconds ago. Then the Tun is finished.

From my experience one really cannot search or find a state beyond thought by concept or effort. It only works with simple continuous attention, awareness and integration of one’s monkey-mind with, for example, the continuous sound and movement of the Vajra Dance. What is happening when I do this step? Observing simply, being there in that moment, not trying to change any state for something different from what it is. Already doing all the movements correctly trains one in at least being in a state of ordinary awareness and discovering what being distracted is.

Then I had some experience more or less like this. We have all wondered why it is that a dream that is so complex in actions only lasts a few minutes. It’s something similar: in just one single move of one syllable a space opens of clarity and experiences on all levels of body, energy and mind, simultaneously, impossible to explain for that actual 1 second. It is like dancing beyond the limited timeframe and it is void of thought and at the same time full of experience which again is just like nothing because it is as if it is everything, a continuous infinite potentiality with no need to change since it is all the same simultaneously. Its only possible if one does not try to change whatever is and accept whatever changes, relaxing, integrating fully and keeping very present without effort.

There is this quote which I carry always with me, which one finds in the Upadesha Tantra Nyi zla kha sbyor, and translates as the “Union of Sun and Moon”. It says:

“Listen! Beyond you, beyond thought. The Dharmakaya explains:
Your state communicates to yourself, there is nothing else.”

It quite explains all.
Rinpoche’s advice on daily Life and integration of practice is my best tool. There is nothing more to say or find. It’s really useful to listen again to his teachings on mp3 from time to time, and really put oneself in it, asking oneself what one has really understood now of what he says, specially if one thinks one is in trouble.

When teaching the Vajra Dance, I do not prepare what I have to say very much. Internally I create a good intention, express the wish to keep simple and true to the essence of Rinpoche’s teachings, find guidance for this and be aware and be true to my heart. What I try to keep in mind is really Rinpoche’s essential teachings on daily Life and practice. It is my refuge and it offers all. ©

Phendeling

The new Ling in the Czech Republic

Tereza Stárková

The Czech Dzogchen Community would like to introduce the new Czech country centre – **Phendeling**. It was bought in autumn 2008 and according to Rinpoche’s indication officially opened on December 15th 2008. The name Phendeling was given by Rinpoche and the meaning of the Tibetan word Phende is described in the explanation of the practice of Ödzer Chenma: “Phen means provisional benefit and de means final, ultimate benefit or realization. When both these benefits are present it means that it is a real teaching.”

Little history

The idea to create a Ling had been maturing in the Czech community since 2002, when Rinpoche came to Prague and held a retreat at Prague Castle. Since that time many Gakyils and active helpers had discussed, thought and dedicated their time and energy to this topic. In the beginning many different ideas circulated in the Community about the locality, type and size of the land, our possibilities and the success of the whole project. Some peo-

ple wanted to create a Dzogchen village, some wanted to build a European retreat center from EU funds and some wanted just an old farmhouse to reconstruct and use for practice. While some people were sure we would buy something very soon, others thought it was just a fantasy that would possibly come true in 10 years, if ever. The active people checked the offers in the real estate market frequently and during the years many research trips across the country were organized, but without success.

It was going this way till 2007 when one person asked Rinpoche if it was good idea to have a Ling in the Czech Republic. Rinpoche answered that a Ling is good thing, but in order to have it, the whole Community must be in agreement, that it could not be the project of just a few people. So at that time the Gakyil created a detailed questionnaire that showed that 99% of the Community really wanted a Ling. It also showed how many people were ready to support the project financially, what kind of property people preferred etc. Many



The original building in Phendeling.

Photo: Jiri Rys

people came to an outdoor Community General Assembly (near a very beautiful lake) to discuss and work on this topic. During this event a team was created with the mission to follow up the idea of the Ling till the very end and to manifest it in the material dimension, according to the requirements derived from the results of the questionnaire.

The team started to work very actively, even though there were some obstacles. We almost bought a property, but after the third visit we discovered that it was not an appropriate place for a

Ling, as it originally seemed. Later we lost a special possibility to have our Ling financed by mortgage so the project was without financial sources. At that time there were also no appropriate offers on the market, everything was either too expensive or otherwise not suitable. But people were enthusiastic, really willing to do something for this project. We focused less on searching for properties, but more on fundraising in order to be ready when we found a good offer. Many fundraising events were organized by the Gakyil and volunteers (lotteries, concerts, events etc...) and

members started to contribute regular amounts of money for the Ling project.

Prenatal period of Phendeling

In summer 2008 we asked Rinpoche if it would be possible to organize a big lottery on behalf of our future Ling. We got an interesting answer which also contained this (magical) sentence: “I try to help you in different way”... It was unbelievable how things took on speed and power after this e-mail. What was not possible in years was suddenly accomplished (literally) in one month.

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Wangdenling, Slovakia

The first members of Dzogchen Community in Slovakia started to follow Rinpoche’s Teaching in 1998. The book with Rinpoche’s teachings entitled ‘The Crystal and the Way of Light’ was published in Czech and two people from Slovakia visited Merigar West for the first time at Easter 1998. Soon a group of practitioners also appeared in Prague and the number of Rinpoche’s followers has increased year by year.

In 2002 Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche visited Prague and also Bratislava – the capital of Slovakia – where he gave a public talk and stayed for one night. As he travelled through our countryside Rinpoche joked about geographical locations such as Lamac and Stupava, which are little areas near Bratislava and reminded him of the words ‘lama’ and ‘stupa’. He also re-named the Slovakian High Tatras and Low Tatras mountains as High Tantras and Low Tantras. His stay in Slovakia was very pleasant and Rinpoche promised to come back one day.

Today we are nearly 60 members, mostly young and almost half of them follow Santi Maha Sangha training. People here met in towns and did retreats at weekend houses mostly in the western part of country. There are little sang-



Wangdenling.

has in Bratislava, Trencin, Zilina, Zvolen and Kosice. Near a town called Trencin, practitioners met in a small hut in the forests of the Bosaca valley for collective and personal retreats and also built a simple dark retreat cabin.

In 2008 Peter Grancic, who lived in Ireland at that time, found on the internet an interesting piece of land with an old house which was in the Bosaca valley, only 35 minutes on foot from the place where we did retreats. After some hesitations and financial troubles the Slovak Community decided to buy this place with the help of a generous donor, Libor Maly from Prague. Rinpoche named it **Wangdenling**, possessing potentiality. Its birthday was on the 6th January 2009.

Wangdenling is located almost on the border with the Czech Republic, so some Moravian and Czech practitioners have taken it

as their Ling and are participating in developing it. In addition it is not so far from Austria and Hungary, about 20 minutes driving from the highway through villages and along a forest road, so you can manage to get there in 2 hours from Vienna.

In the 12th century, Bosaca valley which surrounds Wangdenling was known as the place of Christian hermits – the name ‘Bosaca’ comes from word ‘Bosonohy’ which means ‘monk without shoes’. The old house used to be a farmer’s house and the previous owner used to keep goats and planted various grains and fruits. Now they live as our neighbours and help us to clean the grounds and have promised to sell us more land to spread and develop the community place.

In the Slovak Community we have two professional architects who are focused on ecological

construction and they are creating a project for a wooden Gompa with a view over the valley. We plan to use wood and other natural materials from the local forests. The large peaceful area of land is also ideal for small retreat cabins which could serve for personal retreats not only for people from the Slovak Community but also for all practitioners and followers of Namkhai Norbu who want to deepen their practice and knowledge of the teachings of our Master.

In the future we plan to organize a space for Vajra Dance and Yantra Yoga in the big meadow belonging to the community place.

Although at the moment conditions are really provisional, maybe like in Merigar at the very beginning, we organized our first weekend retreat with a teacher – we invited Jacob Winkler to explain the Sang and Serkyem practice. The retreat was great, we set up a simple tent in the meadow so we had beautiful views over the hills and Lopenik hill (which is built on golden pillars as local legends say).

Day by day we are discovering how lucky we are to have the possibility to create a place to practice and work together. We hope to see you there very soon! ©



Retreat with Jakob Winkler.

We are also working on a Stupa project which we plan to build between the Gompa and the retreat cabins – it would be the first Stupa in our country. Right now, we are looking for donors and hope our dream can come true.

Our website:
www.wangdenling.sk
Contact us:
wangdenling@gmail.com

New Lings

16

>> continued from previous page

First we found information about the red zone of the mandala as the best location for Community centers. We looked at the map of the Czech Republic and marked an area of 20 x 20 km square where the Ling should be located – and the first place we looked at was immediately the right one.

A remote farmhouse near the forest surrounded by meadows and grassland with cows, easily reachable from Prague and other Czech Community centers and also near the Austrian and German borders. In the region of South Bohemia, famous for beer making, fertile land full of lakes and friendly people. Rapid email voting was organized during which the whole Community voted for this project, and over one or two weeks we collected contributions from almost 100 members (ranging from 5 EUR to



The opening ceremony at Phendeling.

Photo: Jiri Rys

Reconstruction project

During the Winter we approached a professional architect to prepare the actual plans for reconstruction, according our quite precise parameters of what the Ling should look like, broadly discussed, prepared and

karmayogis and the demolition works were finished. Now the construction company is starting to reconstruct the building and hopefully in Autumn we will have a new roof and the attic will be ready. Everybody is working very hard to have our Ling ready for

town with a unique atmosphere dominated by a Castle stretching over the meandering Vltava River, with narrow cobblestone streets, where you can find cosy inns, coffee shops, and ancient taverns to entertain a diverse international crowd.



Karmayoga.



Photos: Josef Vintr

3000 EUR) and with this money we bought the property. We had expected to consume all our finances with the purchase and we knew we needed much more for reconstruction. But to our surprise, the financial dimension (the biggest root of fears and doubts toward the idea of a Ling during all the previous years....) turned out to be very relative in this case. In one month after the purchase we gathered again a great amount of money so we could plan major reconstruction. It was really energetic times and we could feel Rinpoche's blessing for this project during the whole process and our gratitude is beyond words.

Birth of Phendeling

Since the first weeks of owning the property, karmayoga weekends combined with practice and listening to the webcasts have been organized, and the General Assembly (more than 40 members came) took place here as well. On December 15th, the day of the opening, we did a Sang practice and a Ganapuja and a letter from Rinpoche was opened (inside there was some calligraphy with the name Phendeling written by Rinpoche). In the end of the year 2008 there was already a New Year's Eve retreat combined with listening to Rinpoche's Teaching by webcast.

summarized by our hardworking Ling team and gakyil. The main idea of the reconstruction is that a 140m² gonpa will be created in the raised attic, which will, of course, contain a Vajra Dance mandala, and 5 separate rooms for accommodation/personal retreats will be built, as well as the flat for the Gekos and visiting teachers. A big kitchen, a 60m² dining room and adequate social areas are part of the plan. We also plan to build a Dark retreat cabin soon.

Busy Karmayoga weekends

By Spring we started to organize regular karmayoga weekends and every 2 weeks people came for demolition works of the old building, liquidation of old material and equipment, cleaning bushes and around the old gardens, cooking and cleaning. We shipped away 20 tons of rubble, odds and ends in total and the demolition works were quite heavy, often followed by light injuries of karmayogis. Besides a good atmosphere, a good feeling from good hard work, the motivation to come was also supported by evening barbecues, "strong-water" (famous Slivovice) and delicious cuisine prepared by smiling vajrasisters cooking for brave muscled karmayogis.... :-)

During this Summer an excavator also came to help to the brave

the November visit and retreat of Yeshe Namkhai. The Ling should be ready for the first (pioneer) personal and collective usage in Spring 2010.

Location of Phendeling

Phendeling is situated in a greenbelt of unspoiled, hilly countryside area filled with protected forests of the Blansky Forest nature reserve, and near a town called Cesky Krumlov, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, also called "little Prague". The geographical location of Phendeling is near the south borders of the Czech Republic. Transport takes 2 hours from Prague and Pilsen, 1 hour from Linz, 4 hours from Brno, Munich, Vienna and 14 hours from Roma, Paris.

Surroundings

The location of Phendeling is also perfect for relaxation and sporting activities whether it's hiking, biking, skiing, horseback riding, golfing, fishing, or rafting along the Vltava river. The recreational facilities near Lipno Dam, the Sumava National Park, and the Blansky Forest Nature Reserve are all within easy reach.

In the town Cesky Krumlov there is the second largest castle complex in the Czech Republic, and the oldest Baroque theatre in the world, many museums, galleries, concerts and medieval festivals. It is a lively, cosmopolitan

Support the reconstruction of Phendeling

So far we have gathered enough money for basic reconstruction, which means approximately one half of the estimated budget. So at this moment, all financial help is very appreciated, needed and greatly welcomed.

As a sign of our appreciation we have also prepared the following offer:

Whoever contributes at least 108 euro can stay 1 week at the Ling for free, in a period of 3 years after the donation.

We also welcome any help of karmayoga offers, especially during Summer/Autumn 2009. For more information please contact red@dzogchen.cz

We believe you will support our effort to establish this Community centre in the heart of Europe by donations (big or small) or karmayoga, as it is precisely on the basis of many small contributions and personal efforts of practitioners that the project was able to progress so far. The final manifestation of this beautiful centre for study and practice simply depends on the participation of everybody :-)

Donations:

You can send your contributions to:

Account name: DZOGCHEN
Raiffeisenbank, a. s. Prague,
Czech Republic
IBAN:
CZ375500000005001038150
Account number:
5001038150/5500
SWIFT/BIC: RZBCCZPP
Specific symbol: 700

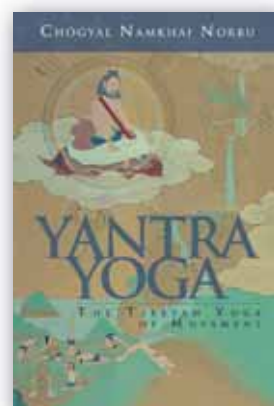
Tereza Stárková

On behalf of the Czech Community

Website of Phendeling

More information and photos (location, surroundings, Karmayoga weekends, retreats etc.) you can find at www.phendeling.cz/en

Books by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu



- ◆ Yantra Yoga
- ◆ Dream Yoga and the Practice of Natural Light
- ◆ Dzogchen Teachings
- ◆ The Supreme Source
- ◆ Dzogchen: The Self-Perfected State
- ◆ The Crystal and the Way of Light



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The words of the Master

Liz Granger

Mid July was hot, very hot, even for the usually windy chilly ‘little Tibet’ of Merigar West, on the slopes of Mt. Amiata in Tuscany. After a long wet winter of incessant rain which continued through the springtime, it was an wonderful pleasure to soak up the intense heat of July.

This start of the hot bright summer coincided with the long awaited arrival of our Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu at the Gar on July 10. It is fantastic to be able to have him here once more and even more so seeing that he is now able to walk and sit comfortably and easily, drive his car and even start to swim again! Many people in the Community had heard that Rinpoche’s health had not been good during the winter and had been very concerned about him. During a question and answer session after the worldwide guruyoga transmission on July 31 Rinpoche gave us a detailed report on his health.

He told us that during the winter, when he arrived in New Zealand from Argentina he had a lot of pain in his back and couldn’t walk without a stick. He had to be taken to give teachings in a wheelchair. The doctors who were consulted at the time felt that he needed to have an operation on his back but when his son, Yeshe, consulted doctors in Italy, the US and Russia, they agreed that it was better not to operate but to do a cure with massage etc.

So when Rinpoche went to Russia he spent almost two weeks in a hospital to receive treatment like massage, physiotherapy and even electrotherapy. He started

to feel a little better and on one of the last days there they called in another doctor to ‘correct’ his back because it was ‘out’ and that the nerves were squashed and this was the cause of the pain and the reason why he couldn’t sit up straight. This doctor gave him strong massage using a stick and after about a quarter of an hour he gave him three really strong blows with the stick to make the bones go back into place. After that he still had some pain for two or three days but gradually started to walk erect with the walking stick then after a little while he didn’t need the stick any more.

Now in his words he has almost become ‘normal’ the only thing is that if he has to walk a bit far he feels tired straight away. The doctors also told him to lose some weight so now he is trying to do that and the exercises that they taught him. Recently he has started to go swimming and now he is swimming every day, doing a few movements in the water and out of the water.

Before starting his personal retreat at Merigar West Rinpoche spent time at Serkhang on different occasions playing bagchen and talking and joking with those present, telling stories about his experiences and encouraging others to talk. He also came to celebrate the fourth birthday of his granddaughter, Matilde, Yeshe Namkhai and Egle’s daughter, in the tent in front of Serkhang.

Since Rinpoche’s return to Merigar West there has been some mention that he might sell the Gar, that there were too many difficulties there and there had been much speculation and



Bagchen with Rinpoche: Rinpoche spent time playing bagchen and telling stories at Serkhang on different occasions. Photo: R. Piro

opinions about this among people at the Gar and even outside Italy. However, just after finishing the practice of the worldwide transmission, he clarified the situation by saying, “I have some good news. After you did the Naggön, [practitioners at Merigar West did a 24 hour Naggön practice July 25–26] I had a dream. In the dream I received some infor-

mation that we don’t have to sell Merigar. This is the information. The problem is, for example, that in winter it is usually very cold and very long and for people who stay here and put up with this, it is not very easy. This is the first thing. Then secondly it becomes heavy economically for the Community to maintain so we need to think about these things a little

and see what is best. See what we can do to improve.” It is very important for all of us to reflect on Rinpoche’s words and try to work together to improve the situation at Merigar West and at all the Gars around the world. It is time for us all to do our best to apply Rinpoche’s suggestions not only at the international level but also in our local communities. ©



Migmar and his team painting and embellishing in gold leaf the hand crafted Tibetan panels of the new throne, altar and other furniture at the Gonpa. Photo: R. Piro



The Gonpa is much larger now and can seat many more people in the new covered space surrounding the original building. Photo: R. Piro



July 16–19 the Shitro retreat with Nina Robinson was held in the Mandala Hall. Photo: R. Piro

Merigar West update

What has been done

During the first weeks of spring and early summer, when the rains had stopped, extensive work went on at the Gonpa to repair, renovate and enlarge it. The building is in an open elevated area on a hill-top and receives the strongest aspects of the weather elements in all seasons – water in all its forms, rain, snow and hail, abundant wind and fierce sun – and over the years, the building has suffered because of this.

The most urgent work was renewing the copper roof to prevent further rain leakage and this was carried out mainly by Mimar, Franco, Ivan and Mateusz over about a month in the spring-time. They stripped off the external coating of copper and made slight structural modifications to increase the slope of the roof in order for rain to slide off it instead of remaining there. Then two layers of tar were applied to insulate it and then the new copper sheeting was added. In addition, all the rain gutters for the roof were renewed and also adapted slightly to the new slope. The windowed spire at the top was sealed with silicon to prevent water from entering.

Then work on the external deck around the building started. Some of the wooden beams supporting the deck were rotten due to damp and were replaced with new ones and all of them were then treated to protect them from water infiltration. After this, the new thermal glass windows were installed by a company from Grosseto.

The new windows form a second ‘wall’ to the Gonpa, making it much more spacious. The old windows and doors are still in their place and will probably remain there in order to make it possible to maintain the heat in a contained area in the winter. However, in the summer, the ‘old’ doors are open and there is plenty of seating space for a much larger number of people in the building now. The new windows and doors include a security door which can be opened with a sharp push and the central door in the east is now automatic. Getting inside the Gonpa is still a little strange – people go round and round looking for an open door and then are surprised to find the main east door opening silently, automatically when they approach!

In the entire surrounding area between the old and new windows, which was previously the outer deck, parquet flooring has been laid with an under-layer of clay pebbles to block humidity. This floor has been sanded and given an opaque finish. In the future, the old wood floor in the central part of the building will also be sanded and finished in the same way.

Inside the Gonpa there are now several new pieces of wooden furniture in traditional Tibetan style, with surfaces carved in ornamental style and displaying the eight auspicious symbols etc. The worked panels were brought from Tibet and built into several pieces of furniture constructed by Mimar, Ivan and Mateusz and include a new throne for Rinpoche, a new altar and two long cabinets used for the Ganapuja offering that are currently being painted by a team directed by Migmar.

Although much work has been done, there are still many finishing touches to be done such as sanding and repainting many of the older parts of the Gonpa. The windows in the turret need to be adjusted etc. and we hope to be able to do these jobs during the summer and autumn.

Recent work was not only limited to the Gonpa. The heavy incessant winter rains had also created some serious landslides, mainly in front of the Mandala Hall and the parking area at Gadeling and as a consequence during the spring there was a lot of work done with the help of heavy machinery, to bank up the earth that had come down. Because the buildings are on a slope, the heavy rains in the winter run down the hill and accumulate into streams which carry away soil. To combat this, a deep drainage ditch has been built behind the Mandala Hall to carry away the water before it can cut into the land.

Besides construction work, many weeks of toil have been dedicated to the garden at Gadeling under the expert supervision of Nina Robinson. The Great Stupa has been repainted and Serkhang generally prepared for the summer season with several colourful hand painted umbrellas set up in the veranda area to shade people having lunch or playing bagchen and the Kayo bar has been opened.

Rinpoche’s arrival at the Gar on July 10, accompanied on the final leg of the journey by a cavalcade of horses and welcomed by an excited happy group of local practitioners, signaled the start of the summer season at Merigar West which will host a seven day teaching retreat given by the Master in mid-August. Two other teaching retreats to be given by Rinpoche will both be held in October (see this page for retreat details).

Summer is in full swing at the moment with courses of Vajra Dance, Yantra Yoga and practice practically every day, regular practice sessions both early morning and evening and a lot of coming and going with people from all over Italy, Europe and other parts of the world.



Translators course: Fabian Sanders spent a month giving two courses for translators from Tibetan (advanced and less advanced) at Merigar West on behalf of the Ka-ter Translation Project of the Shang Shung Institute. Photo: R. Piro

What needs to be done

Activity is geared towards the August retreat and preparations are under way for the finishing touches to the Gonpa and all the other services that will be provided for participants, from parking to reception to child care and refreshments and lunches. Rinpoche has also suggested that this year, for the traditional lottery held at the end of the retreat to raise money for the Gar, that we do-

At a recent Gakyil meeting in which Yeshe took part he stressed the importance of linking the work of the gakyil with the six paramitas: generosity, patience and perseverance are not concepts but should be our behaviour in order to not be carried away by fear and emotions.

Talking of the 6th paramita, the perfection of discriminating wisdom, consisting of studying, re-

He went on to say that the Gakyil works on the form, the body, and the form can manifest in millions of different ways and with different characteristics. We should not always try to impose the form we deem best, discovering that we are different individuals we have to collaborate: Merigar was born from nothing and has been created through collaboration. If we don’t listen tensions can arise. If we are able to listen then through experience we can recognize what we have ‘listened’ to.

We ought to relax not looking always for something better, just recognizing our capacities and working with them.

The Gakyil are currently in the process of assessing and monitoring the membership situation over the year and have already noted a different trend in 2009. In this field there is definitely need for improvement and for the Gakyil to provide greater communication with members of the Community in order to make them more aware of the situation.

At the moment the Gakyil is looking for new candidates for the new Gakyil and for the position of Gekos. The election will take place during Rinpoche’s stay at Merigar, between the end of August and the end of October, depending on when candidates are presented. However, the ‘old’ Gakyil will stay on to collaborate with the new one until the end of the last retreat with Rinpoche. ©



Vajra Dance exam of August 18, 2009 at Merigar West. From left to right: Wesley Guo and Youju (Tracy) Ni from China have been authorized by our Master for the 1st level of the Vajra Dance. Maurizio Mingotti from Italy/Merigar West has been authorized by our Master for the 2nd level of the Vajra Dance. Because of various circumstances, our Master wished to hold this Vajra Dance exam in Merigar West. The regular Santi Maha Sangha, Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance Teacher Training and exam will be held in March next year 2010 in Tashigar Norte. May this auspicious day and all positive actions springing out of it bring joy and Wisdom to all sentient beings. Prima Mai


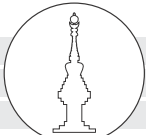
nate personal items to which we are attached, just as was done at the recent lottery at Merigar East. Yeshe Namkhai has donated his car as well as other precious objects that will be auctioned internationally together with other valuable items after the October retreat (or in October).

flecting and applying, he stressed the fact that the Precious Vase does not speak of reading books but of listening, as sound and not intellectual concepts is the beginning of all.

Passages

Born: Merigar West is happy to announce that on July 3 Dekyid, the daughter of Topgyal and Tsering was born. We wish them infinite good wishes for the long happy and prosperous life of the new arrival.

Merigar West



Merigar West

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GR Italy fax: 39 0564 968110 www.dzogchen.it

Calendar of Events 2009

September

September 3-18
Yantra Yoga course on all 108 movements
With Fabio Andrico and Laura Evangelisti
For Yantra Yoga instructors and on invitation

September 15-20

Dance of the Song of the Vajra advanced course
With Adriana Dal Borgo

September 25-October 1
Dance of the Song of the Vajra course part 2

October

October 2-10
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Dzogchen Teaching Retreat
Experiential Instructions on “Bepai Gumchung”, the Hidden Collection of Buddhagupta, an ancient Dzogchen text found among the Tunhuang manuscripts

October 23-30
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Dzogchen Teaching Retreat
Practice and Teachings dedicated to those that have died, **Shitro, terma of Rigzin Jyangchub Dorje “Khorde Rangdrol”**

October 31-November 1
Yantra Yoga Tsandul and first series
With Alessandra Policreti supervised by Laura Evangelisti

November

November 6-8
Dance of the Song of the Vajra course – going over the steps
With Rita Renzi

November 13-15
Dance of the Song of the Vajra course – going over the steps
With Rita Renzi

November 14-18
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Dzogchen Teaching Retreat
Webcast from Barcelona, Spain

November 27-29
Mandarava Tsalung retreat with explanations
With Nina Robinson

December

December 4-11
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Longsal Longde Teaching Retreat
Webcast from Tashigar North, Venezuela

December 13-15
Santi Maha Sangha Level 1 Training
With Igor Berkin

December 12-13
Yantra Yoga practice retreat



Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Teachings at Merigar West

October 2-10
Dzogchen Teaching Retreat
Experiential Instructions on “Bepai Gumchung”, the Hidden Collection of Buddhagupta, an ancient Dzogchen text found among the Tunhuang manuscripts

October 23-30
Dzogchen Teaching Retreat
Practice and Teachings dedicated to those that have died, Shitro, terma of Rigzin Jyangchub Dorje “Khorde Rangdrol”

Photo: E. Ihlicik

December 26-January 3, 2010
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Santi Maha Sangha Base retreat
Webcast from Tashigar North, Venezuela

December 26-January 3, 2010
Dance of the Song of the Vajra advanced course
With Prima Mai

December 26-January 3, 2010
Yantra Yoga course
With Laura Evangelisti

Renewal of the Gakyil

Dearest Practitioners,
On September 27 we will renew the positions of the Gakyil and Gekos of Merigar West and this is an opportunity to do this joint practice by offering yourselves as candidates.

“My responsibility is not only to give teaching and transmission, but also to maintain the teaching and transmission correctly. For this reason we have the organization of the

Gakyil and people who take care (of them) in a responsible way we try to create collaboration”. (Chögyal Namkhai Norbu; International Gakyil meeting Merigar 15/08/06)

“In order to have knowledge you need responsibility and collaboration.” (Yeshe Silvano Namkhai, International Gakyil meeting 10/08/06)

In our experience taking part in the Gakyil is a practice that gives us the opportunity to collaborate actively in the life of the Community and in realizing the vision of our Teacher. Thus Merigar really becomes ‘home’, experienced

with pleasure not only during retreats but also in all of its other moments. The relationship between our Vajra Brothers and Sisters becomes more real and intense through the difficult discovery of how to relate to the different dimensions of each one.

We have prepared a video of Rinpoche and of Yeshe speaking about the Gakyil: to watch the video click here http://www.dzogchen.it/it/comunita/gakyil_2

With love,
The Gakyil of Merigar West



First Level Teachers' Training of Dance of the Vajra with Adriana Dal Borgo and Prima Mai, August 2-8 ▲



and August 16-22, 2009 ▲.

Accommodations near Merigar West

Information for people who intend to come to Merigar for retreats or to follow courses
If you are looking for accommodation, airport transfer, local car hire or only logistic assistance, you can contact the following information and reservation service:

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@gmail.com
Phone: 0039 0564 957542
Mobile phone: 0039 339 1370739

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

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



Longsal symbol drawn in sand.



Yeshi Silvano Namkhai and family going over to see the longsal symbol. Photo: M. Möhle

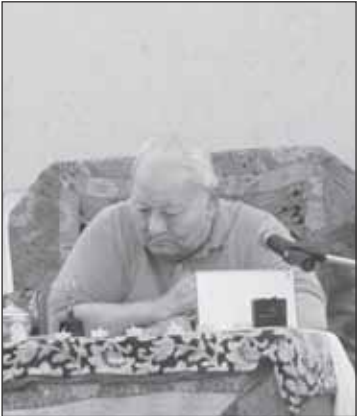


Photo: M. Möhle

Santi Maha Sangha Base Level Exams and First Level Training

Jaga Zebrowska

It is already the second time that the exam of the Base Level and the training of the First Level of Santi Maha Sangha took place in gorgeous Romania at the end of June and the beginning of July. I had been hopping to participate in this course last year, however due to my ‘serious’ professional as well as private matters (naturally not less ‘serious’...) I was not able to make it there.

There were 95 sometimes a bit nervous brothers and sisters from various places in the world, such as Russia, Ukraine, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Germany, Spain, Hungary, Cyprus and Finland taking the exam. The majority of them experienced a range

of emotions before actually being examined by either Jim Valby or Igor Berkhin. Although directly after, almost everyone was overwhelmed with happiness and claimed that it was a great experience.

Then we, that is 144 persons (including repeaters), started 8 days of intensive first level training. In the mornings we received teachings from our precious Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and in the afternoons the explanations by Jim Valby and Igor Berkhin were given. Yantra Yoga in the mornings (I have to admit, I was not always there) and dancing in the afternoons, as well as in the evenings, left only a little time for indulging oneself on the irre-

sistible beach taking advantage of the sun and the Black Sea.

Traditionally, at the end of the retreat, in the presence of our precious Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, an auction took place, successfully led by Naomi. Thanks to the outstanding generosity of our vajrakin, we were able to gather as much as 22.500 Euro for the new Gonpa! If everything goes well with the building permit, next year this time the First Level exam and training for the Second Level exam will be held in the newly built Gonpa.

There is not much time left, so I better go back to my practices and studying, still having in me all the images and memories of unforgettable retreat in Romania. ©

New Gakyil

During the General Assembly on 27th June 2009 held in the presence of Rinpoche and Yeshi, the New Gakyil of Merigar East and the Geko were elected:

Blue@dzogchen.ro
Fijalka Turzikova (CZ)
Ondrej Stefik (SK)
Jaga Zebrowska (PL)

Red@dzogchen.ro
Greg Ladra (PL)
Filip Stys (CZ)
Beatrix Csete (RO)

Yellow@dzogchen.ro
Mira Mironova (RU)
Abel Paizs (HU)
George Tenger (HU)
Egle Purtulyte (LI)

Geko: Greg Ladra (PL)

Israel

New Gakyil

Blue: Marilyne Ankaowa
marilynea@gmail.com

Red: Gisele Gordon
g.gordon@o13net.net

Yellow: Dani Moskovich
dmoskov@gmail.com

You are most welcome to contact us.
Sincerely yours, Shalom,
Gakyil of Israel



Dream Yoga with Michael Katz August 6–8 in Jerusalem.



Dream Yoga with Michael Katz August 14–15 in Tel Aviv.

Europe
Denmark

Yantra Yoga – Copenhagen April 2009

by Lennart Warnemyr

Dzogchen Community Denmark was glad to have Laura Evangelisti supervising our own Christen Norre Bundgaard for a five



day intensive in Yantra Yoga. The course was held at our meeting place in central Copenhagen where we usually meet every Tuesday for Yantra Yoga, collec-

tive practice and Santi Maha Sangha studies.

The first three evenings were open for all and the last two days were for people with transmission from our Master. At first we were about ten participants and for the last two days we were seven. Since this was a supervised course it was Chris who did most of the teaching while Laura occasionally complemented his instructions or gave more background information. This meant that Chris got on with his education towards becoming a Yantra Yoga instructor while we

all received the benefits of Laura’s extensive experience. We all felt that this was a really good arrangement.

During the course we learned many warming up exercises, the nine breathings, the five loosening of the joints (tsigjong), the eight movements (lungsang), the pranayama and yantras of controlling the channels (tsadul). We also got our first taste of the first series of yantras together with a demonstration of The Vajra Wave. Emphasis was always on awareness in the movements

and trying to make breathing and movement one process.

On Sunday we were all joyfully tired after an intensive and rewarding course. We thought it would be great to have more Yantra Yoga in future in order to deepen our understanding of the movements.

In Copenhagen we are about ten practitioners who come regularly to meet and practice. We are planning for more courses of Santi Maha Sangha, Vajra Dance and of course, Yantra Yoga. ©

Europe >> continued

France

Upcoming
Dance of the Three Vajra course
11–13 September 2009
with Stoffelina Verdonk
Paris

Place:
Les Mains d’Oeuvre, 1, rue Charles
Garnier, Saint-Ouen (immediate north-
ern suburb of Paris)
Metro ‘Porte de Clignancourt’ (line 4)
or ‘Garibaldi’ (line 13)
Bus: 95 (station ‘Porte de Montmar-
tre’) or 85 (station ‘Paul Bert’)

Times:
Sept. 11 6 pm–9 pm
Sept. 12 11 am–7 pm
Sept.13 12 am–7 pm

Cost: 105 Euros with usual discounts
for members

Early registration is welcome.
For additional information and to
register please contact: Zheni Meria
Zhmer77@yahoo.fr

French Dzogchen Community Web Site:
<http://association.dzogchen.free.fr>

*

Upcoming
The Six Spaces
October 26 to November 1
with Cindy Faulkner
Karma Ling, French Alps

price: 130 euro
This year this course is included in Lama
Denys Rimpoché’s
seminary “Tchenrezy-Mahakala”. This
course is open to people following the
seminary.

If you are interested in coming to these
courses or have any questions, you can
contact me at: dreulma@rimay.net

*

Dejamling New Mandala

by Madeleine Doré

It was under the omen of a favor-
able time for blooming that the
marvelous inauguration of the new
Dejamling Mandala took place. The
center of the new mandala is large, and
this brings space and easiness for Pamo
and Pawo to meet. Someone said, “We
are all here for the same teaching and
every one gets something different; we
enter to an other level of the dance.”
Each session started with applying the
dance and finished with the practice of
Gomadevi.

There were 13 participants, roughly
the right number for pawo and pamo. It
allowed us to understand and integrate
the experience of moving as in a mirror,
with carefulness, fluidity and lightness.

Intense application of presence
happened thanks to the guidance of
Adriana. Adriana dal Borgo transmits
the teaching with natural simplicity,
humbleness and particular attention.
This was helpful to learn the practice
of Gomadevi and helped us to taste
the freshness of instant presence, in
harmony with our real nature. Every
day each one was kept precisely with his
body, heart, and mind, the steps and
experiences of the daily session.



Developing Course for Vajra Dance and Gomadevi Practice with Adriana Dal Borgo July 8–12, 2009.

Dejamling is a school to learn being
together; to feel Community life.

Early in the morning a group
practiced Mandarava with Annalen.
At night, after sharing the excellent
‘healthy’ food prepared by several dif-
ferent gifted participants, some sat to-
gether late with Adriana, and Stoffelina
and Mimo, playing bagchen with lot of
joy and humor.

Thanks to the hard work of respon-
sible practitioners, the development
and improvement of the buildings

brings more comfort to the Ling; the
presence of Gekö Emils helps for achiev-
ing projects. We were invited to visit a
new little wooden cabin for retreat that
had just been installed at the upper part
of the land; it’s hard to imagine how it
was carried up there!

For Adriana, Dejamling is ideal place
for personal retreats or small groups.
She suggested to share the special
techniques adopted for executing this
marvelous mandala. In any case, the
changes in measures for the center of
the mandala oblige the dancers to ad-
just their movements and to integrate
exercise.

‘To stay in the state of Dzogchen,
was the best way to open and activate
the new mandala of Dejamling’. The lu-
minous colors of the mandala attracted
dragonflies and butterflies. Some
machines working around in the wood
and airplanes were sounding A. One day
a frog entered the mandala coming to
dance.

Presence does not ask for explana-
tion, it’s just given, or it’s just there. We
are grateful to the Master and the Teach-
ing, which bring us these marvelous
experiences and precious presence. ©



Dream Yoga with Michael Katz July 25–27 in Paris.



Dream Yoga with Michael Katz July 28–30 at Dejamling.

Italy

Venice
Upcoming

Yeshe Silvano Namkhai
in Venice for a Retreat of
Dzogchen Teachings
September 5–7

The Retreat will take place in the
“Centro Sportivo Sant’Alvise” near the
Jewish Ghetto of Venice. You will find all
the information about the location at
www.ilcentrosantalvise.com

On Sept. 5th the first Teaching session
will take place from 4 to 6 pm.
On the Sept. 6th and 7th, the Teachings
will take place from 10 to 12 am.

Regarding accommodation, we have a
special agreement with: Hotel Minerva
& Nettuno, Lista di Spagna, Cannaregio
230, Venezia, tel. (+39) 041715968, (+39)
0415242366, fax (+39) 0412758953,
email: lchecchi@tin.it
www.minervanettuno.it

Just 25 euro per person per night!
We suggest you to reserve very quickly,
because the 5, 6 and 7 Sept. in Venice
is high season (“Mostra del Cinema”,
“Regata storica”, Biennale!) and this
price for Venice for this period is re-
ally rare. The password to reserve is
“gruppo Norbu”.
More information on our website.

For information:
Blue: Marco Baseggio, tel. +39 4109
940 79, cell. +39 34 83 43 20 69, email:
marco@casabaseggio.it
Yellow: Giovanna Carraro, tel. +39 4172
10 34, cell. +39 34 60 29 17 78, email
giovannacarraro@gmail.com
Red: Giuliana Giromella, tel. +39 4223
312 41, cell. +39 34 01 47 38 78, email
giuligiro@alice.it
The Venice Gakyil

*

Dancing in Venice



The final weekend of Vajra Dance
with Adriana Dal Borgo took
place in Venice in June. Twenty or
so practitioners from Venice, Padova,
Treviso and Udine had learned all the
steps of the Dance in order to practice
this Precious Teaching. The course took
place in the large St. Alvise gym with
two Mandalas. The gym overlooks the
lagoon and has big windows and at
times we had the feeling of dancing on
the water. The course was hard work,
especially for those who dedicated their
weekend to it after a week of work,
however it brought everyone great ben-
efit and made the group enthusiastic
and everyone has promised to practice
the Dance every Saturday.

Adriana taught and encouraged the
group with great care and patience. She
had just come back from Russia and
after teaching the Russian group she



was surprised about how slowly the
Venetian group learned ... even though
we managed to catch up at the end ...
possibly spurred on by being compared
to the fabulous Russians...

After the Dance the group made
merry at the ‘El Timon’ restaurant.

May this Precious Teaching spread
for the benefit of all beings! ©

Upcoming
Intensive Yantra Yoga course
lead by Emmanuel Jouan under the
supervision of Laura Evangelisti
September 25–27
at Kunsalling
(retreat place in Parco Alto Garda)

Tsadul, Pranayama & movements of the
first and second series.
Open to practitioners already familiar
with the Eight Movements and who
have received transmission.

The course will begin on Friday Septem-
ber 25 at 18:00. There will be two ses-
sions on Saturday and Sunday, at 10:00
and 16:00.
Only 10 people can attend the course.

The cost of the course is 40 Euro (no
discounts) including accommodation.

· Each participant will have to bring
some food (fruit, vegetable, rice etc... +
wine & meat for the final Ganapuja). We
will cook on rotas.
· Accommodation will be in the Gonpa
of Kunsalling; the Ling is 1400 m above
sea level, so bring proper shoes, rain-
proof and warm clothes for the evening
and a sleeping bag.
Please bring along your yoga mat.

· Parking is 25 minutes away from the
ling so we recommend using a ruck-
sack. Parking places are limited so we
recommend car sharing.

For more information please contact the
person in charge who will also forward
the maps for getting to the Ling

Registration:
Fulvio Ferrari – in charge of the
retreats
Tel. +39 0365 82 51 65
info@kunsalling.it
www.kunsalling.it

*

Europe >> continued

Italy >> continued: Umbria



The Umbria Dzogchen Community organized a course on Guruyoga and Semzin led by Fabio Risolo, June 13–14 at the Alethea gym in Bastia Umbria.

Bologna
Upcoming
Yeshi Namkhai to give teachings on The Six Paramitas from the Dzogchen viewpoint

September 19–20
OM Yoga Centre in Via Castellata 10

Sessions from 10–12 am.
In the afternoon, there will be explanations of the nine breathings in Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance practice.

The retreat is open to all and the cost is 40 euro per day.

For further information and to enroll:
Libreria Ibis, tel. 051239818
Cesare Pilati, 3347703328
Alfredo Colitto, leunar@yahoo.com

Maps, information on how to get there and where to stay are available at:
<http://yeshiabologna.rdv.it>

Lithuania



Yeshi Silvano Namkhai in Lithuania, July, 2009.

Poland
Upcoming
Yeshi Silvano Namkhai to teach in Poland

We are happy to invite you to the retreat of Yeshi Silvano Namkhai in Poland, October 5–13 2009

The plan of the retreat:

Warsaw
Oct. 5: **Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism and Dzogchen**

Oct. 6: **Phowa**
Oct. 7: **Upadesha of the Introduction to the state of Ati**
Oct. 8: **Respect for Vajra Brothers and Sisters**

(There will be video webcast with Rinpoche in the morning, as well as Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance sessions)

Paldenling
Oct. 10–11: **Discovering awareness** from “You are the eyes of the world”,

one of main practical guides to the fundamental tantra of Dzogchen Semde, Kunjed Gyalpo.

Cracow
Oct. 13 – Public talk: **“Six paramitas in Tibetan Buddhism”**

You can find more information at:
http://dzogczen.pl/YN/program_en.php

If you plan to come, please register on the page above.

Serbia

Dzogchen Community of Belgrade is happy to announce

The first opening of the Mandala in Belgrade since 1995
Vajra Dance weekend – all Dancers are welcome

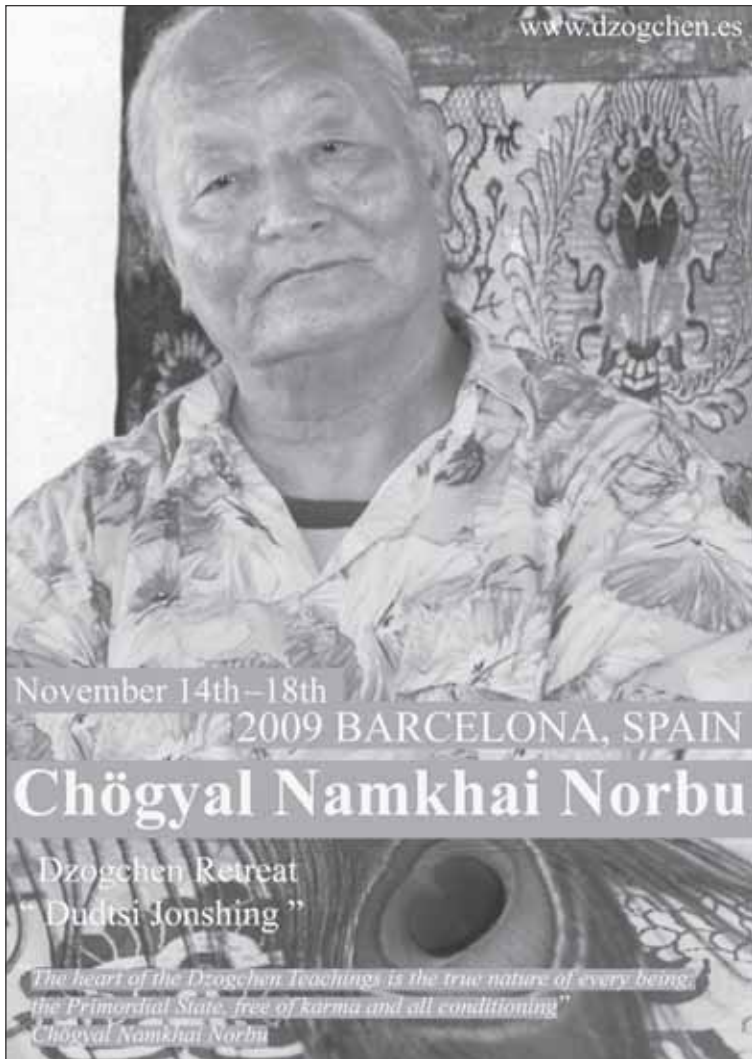
Weekend Retreat of Chod
Practice and Explanation
Led by Zeljka Jovanovic
2–11 October 2009

Vajra Dance: October 2–4
Chod: October 9–11
Tibetan language course: October 6–8

Who can attend? Open to all the people who have received Dzogchen Transmission by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche.
Tibetan language course led by Zeljka Jovanovic – open to all.

For more information please contact:
Lale, yellow Gakyil: cell ph.: +381 63 269 362, lale@ittv.rs or
Jelena, blue Gakyil: cell ph.: +381 64 139 7779, ela.z@eunet.rs

Important! Please register before the retreats and the course start, by e-mail or phone. Thank you for your collaboration!



Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Dzogchen Teachings
November 14–18
Barcelona
(see the announcement on this page)

Course on Kumbaka
With Fabio Andrico
November 18–19
Barcelona, Kundusling

Yantra Yoga course on the 2nd series of Yantras and the Pranayama of the 1st series
With Gloria Pinsach supervised by Laura Evangelisti
November 21–23
Barcelona, Kundusling

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Dzogchen Teachings
May 21–23, 2010
Canary Islands

Upcoming courses in 2010
Course of Kunye with Aldo Oneto
Course of Gomadevi with Enzo Terzano
Course on the Yoga of dreams with Michael Katz

Comunidad Dzogchen de Espana
Pasaje de la Paz 10 bis
Barcelona 08002 Spain
Contact: carlos_azul@dzogchen.es
olaya_amarillo@dzogchen.es
elena_azul@dzogchen.es
www.dzogchen.es

Course of the Dance of the Six Spaces of Samantabhadra
Led by Yolanda Ferrandiz
September 25–27
Mallorca, Spain

Schedule: Fri 7 pm–9 pm;
Sat + Sun 10 am–1 pm + 4 pm–7 pm

Cost: The cost is 90 euros with discounts for members

Where: Ceip Nova Cabana-son Macia
c/ Gladiol, s/n
07141 Son Macià – Pint D’Inca – Mar-ratxi, Mallorca (Spain)

Registration and information:
Contact person: Alba Papini
Tel. +34 971 63 11 28
Cell n. +34 680 99 58 80
albapapini@hotmail.com

Europe

>> continued

Spain

>> continued



Participants in the Dance of Song of the Vajra course held at Kundusling Barcelona July 10 to 15 and August 1 to 8 led by Ludmilla Kislichenko. Photo: Laly Arnas

Course of the Dance of the Song of the Vajra

Impressions of a Beginner

by Sol Carreño

A magic flute sings ...
A secret song
The Enchantment

Guide:
Our Precious Master.

We are going to learn to dance,
This precious Dance of the Vajra!
A Family

Harmony and manifested reflection
In the Sacred Mandala
Sounds and Colours,
Our Beloved Planet.

Dakas and Dakinis,
What a joyful posture!...
Figures

A natural state,
We are going to learn to dance,
This precious Dance of the Vajra!
(...)

This course of the Dance of the Song of the Vajra took place in Kundusling during the end of July and the beginning of August and it lasted about two weeks. Our Dearest Luda was the trainer who taught this teaching and spite of the suffocating heat, we could not miss this appointment.

Day after day, syllable after syllable,
we learned all steps ...
How much generosity and patience!

All her explanations and tips that accompanied our teachings helped us to understand the deep meaning and beauty of this precious Therma and day after day we felt more and more fortunate. Thank you Rinpoche!

This course has also been very precious for our Beloved Kundusling, because the time spent together and the intensity of the course have reinforced the relationships between the members of the Community, at the same time that new links have been established.

We all have learned from this positive experience, and now we know that together we are strong. We understand better the statement of the Master: “We are all in the same boat”.

We are all in the Mandala!

Rinpoche,
Thank you for your Precious Teachings! ©

UK

Kunselling
Programme of Events

Dance of the Vajra (Emakirikiri), Part II, Beginners
Led by Cindy Faulkner with supervision from Prima Mai
September 14–20

To book, please contact Rowan Wylie
Tel: 01223 47 35 28
rowanwylie@hotmail.com

AGM London
September 26

25 Thigles of Samantabhadra
with Barry and Anne Patterson
October 10–11

To book, please contact Mike Beddard
Tel: 0781 529 99 76
mikebeddard@gmail.com

Karma Yoga with Xitro Practice
October 23–30

To book, please contact Colin Ellar
Tel: 0208 737 03 47
colin.ellar@blueyonder.co.uk

Namkha-making Weekend
with Sally Field
October 31–November 1

To book, please contact Mike Beddard
Tel: 0781 529 99 76
mikebeddard@gmail.com

Long Life Practice of Mandarava
with Judy Allan
November 14–22

To book, please contact Mike Beddard
Tel: 0781 529 99 76
mikebeddard@gmail.com

Tara Practice To Celebrate Chögyal Namkhai Norbu’s Birthday
with Julia Lawless
December 5–7

To book, please contact Mike Beddard
Tel: 0781 529 99 76
mikebeddard@gmail.com

Open Period (Including Families)
For Christmas and New Year Celebrations
December 24–January 2
Open Webcast December 26 to January 1

To book, please contact Nick Segust
Tel: 02920 65 28 66
kunsellingbookings@yahoo.co.uk

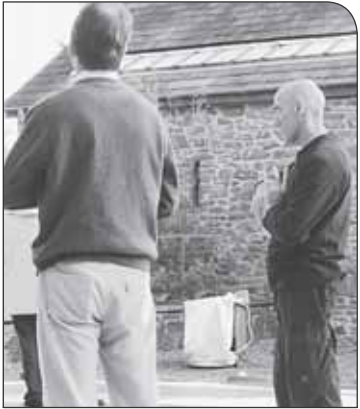
Dance and meditation retreat at Kunselling UK

by Peter White

The retreat started on Monday afternoon straight after the end of a Dance of the 3 Vajras course. By common consensus we concentrated on the Dance of the Vajra and Cindy drew up an intensive timetable taking us from Yoga first thing in the morning through sitting practice, a dance ‘refresher’ session and 3 Thuns of Dance. Together with a communal cooking schedule this meant rather busy days!!!

Cindy offered the ‘dance refresher’ sessions of the Vajra Dance in 4 parts and patiently guided us to greater fluency and confidence in the practice sessions.

Amely kindly acceded to a request from those who had received transmission, to explain the practice of ‘Jnana Dakini Thugthig’. This she did with great clarity, patience and deference to the precise explanations of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. Following this intensive mantra Thun many of us found light feet for the Dance.



The whole retreat was bathed in an atmosphere of lightness and humour, even when the Welsh weather was giving us it’s best cloud and rain!

Toward the end of the week the clouds cleared and Lol supervised the taking down of the dome. It was a truly liberating experience to dance constantly under the sparkling sun and sky.

The biggest heartfelt thank you goes to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu without whom none of this perfect mandala would be manifesting at all – the perfect Teacher, the perfect Place, the perfect Practice, the perfect Sangha! ©

Vajra dance week at Kunselling, Wales

by Stephanie Mulholland

It was the last week of May, 2009 when a number of us from various parts of the country descended on Kunselling to learn the first half of the Dance of the Vajra from Stoffelina Verdonk.

Nature was at its fullest, it seemed, what with the tweeting birds, baa-ing sheep, hopping bunnies, blossoming white frothy hawthorne, columbine in shades of pale and rosy pink, deep plum and royal purple, ceonothus (such a heavenly deep blue) and the early white roses covering the farmhouse....

It was in this environment that we learned the Dance – through graceful and harmonious movements, this is a wonderful way to get into the State as transmitted to us by Rinpoche. As Stoffie constantly reminded us...“this is not a dance, this is a practice!” Some of us were “naturals”, easily relaxing and moving.....others found it a bit more challenging and there was frustration, near giving up but no one actually left!

Stoffelina’s sweetness and presence was deep and comforting but still, WE had to learn it ourselves...there was no way around it! I had a sketch pad in which I drew, coloured, and wrote the lines we were learning to help imprint it on my brain and in my being.


It couldn’t have been a more perfect environment – daily meals cooked first by Rowan, then Erin, and finally Judy – so we were nutritionally well cared for... and the flowers! Climbing blue ceonothus, Californian lilac, growing under the bedroom windows attracted a multitude of buzzing bumble bees, creating a lovely hum as we ate our meals on the terrace looking at the mountains in the sunshine.

After the Dance retreat, a few people did personal retreat. Rose Lewis and myself stayed on to do practice as well as some deep cleaning and massive amounts of laundry. Those were glorious days indeed in the hot sunshine. I recommend highly to all that can: stay and practise after learning the dance so that it can become ingrained more deeply. Plus, what could be better than hanging out at our wonderful Kunselling – the walks, the karma yoga, the leftovers in the fridge ... heaven! ©

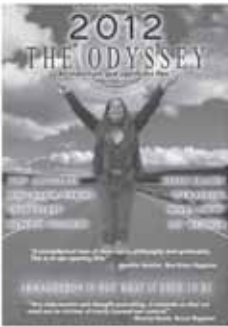
Sacred Mysteries

DVDs for the New Millennium

Journey with Sacred Mysteries on a cinematic tour of the magical, alchemical, shamanic realms of the past, the present and the future.




ARTmind
Alex Grey



2012 The Odyssey
Directed by Practitioner Sharron Rose

“A metaphysical tour of time, space, spirituality and philosophy. This is an eye-opening film.”
- New Dawn Magazine


“Brings together the best elements of *What the Bleep* and *An Inconvenient Truth*.”
-Duncan Campbell, NPR radio




Timewave 2013
Directed by Practitioner Sharron Rose

“Inspiring...a rich perspective on our history and a new understanding of our present-day world.”
-Four Corners Magazine


“Offers an inspiring take on what we can expect in the future.”
-Nexus Magazine




Sophia Returning
John Lamb Lash




Secrets of Alchemy
Jay Weidner



Sound Yoga/ Nada Yoga
Shanti Shivani



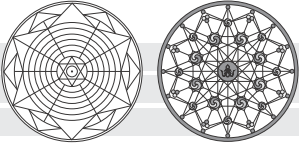
Healing the Luminous Body
Alberto Villoldo



Yoga of Light
Sharron Rose

www.SacredMysteries.com
877-304-3459

TsegyalgarEast



Burying the Treasure Vase at Khandroling

July 12, 2009

Paula Barry

We were worried that it might rain, but on Sunday July 12th the sun shone gloriously. This was the last day of the Gomadevi Jnana Dakini retreat lead by Enzo Terzano here at Tsegyalgar East. After a week of studying, learning, practicing and integrating the practice with the Dance of the Song of the Vajra, we felt it would be an auspicious moment to bury the Treasure Vase, filled and empowered last year by our Master, within the center of the place where the Universal Mandala will once again manifest. The place is at the top of the hill where Chögyal Namkhai Norbu first received



The treasure vase. Photo: K. Fekete

the extraordinary terma of the Vajra Dance. We arrived early that morning to prepare the land near the state-ly seven limbed birch tree where Rinpoche first sat and indicated the importance and sacredness of this land here in Buckland, Massachusetts. We prepared the offerings of juniper mixed with empowered substances for the smoke offering of the Sang rite. And we prepared wine and tea and milk sweetened with local maple syrup to offer to all the different types of beings in the rite of the Serkyem. We offered tormas and many, many wonderful foods and drinks to the entire



Dancing on a provisional mandala. Photo: K. Fekete

outer mandala and to the inner mandala of our primordial state and to the weak guests as well. In between our intensive practices of Sang, Serkyem and Ganapuja, we did the short Gomadevi practice and danced the Dance of the Song of the Vajra

sense of loving togetherness and hope for future manifestations of the profound potentiality of Khandroling-Land of the Dakinis. ©

Put it on your calendar!!!
Weekend Retreats with Jim Valby
At Tsegyalgar East, Conway Mass
2009–2010

Hum: Semdzin & Rushen
September 26–27

Prajna
October 31–November 1

Anuyoga
November 28–29

Santi Maha Sangha Level 2 Only
December 26–27

Purification
January 30–31

Shine: zhi gnas
February 27–28

Lhagtong
March 27–28

Refuge
April 24–25

Short Chöd
May 29–30
7th Mind Training
June 26–27

For more information please
contact our secretary Asruh and
secretary@tsegyalgar.org
or call 413 369 4153



Goma Devi Retreat with Enzo Terzano from July 7–12 2009 in Rinpoche's cabin at Khandroling. Photo: P. Barry

USA Kundrolling, NYC
Upcoming
Dance of the Om A Hum
Supervision for Kyu Khandro with
Prima Mai
Nov. 13–15

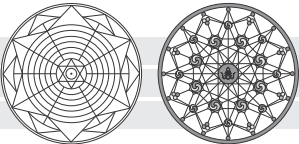
Advanced Song of Vajra Dance
Nov. 16–18 evening sessions

For more information please contact:
stanleycool@hotmail.com or
janefulton100@hotmail.com



Dzogchen Teachings, 30 Words of Advice of Longchenpa Practice Retreat with Elio Guarisco June 12–14, 2009 at Kundrolling.

TsegyalgarWest



Tsegyalgar West
Baja California Sur, Mexico

tsegyalgarwestsecretary@gmail.com
<http://tsegyalgarwest.org>

New Gakyil

Michael Hass from Huntington Beach, CA, Blue and President
Joel Crisp from San Diego, CA, Blue and Vice President
Miles Thomas from San Diego, CA, Blue
Diane Sievers from Conway, MA Yellow
Helen Thomas from Portland, Oregon, Yellow and Treasurer
Carol Fields from Berkeley, CAL, Red
Scott Schroeder, Baja Sur, Mexico, Red

Please direct all inquires to our secretary, Angelina Ibarquen at
tsegyalgarwestsecretary@gmail.com

*

Tsegyalgar West Update

Tsegyalgar West is busy preparing for our next season, which in Baja, Mexico is roughly November to April. We are planning retreats with such teachers as Nina Robinson, Elio Guarisco, Vajra Dance Instructor Bodhi Krause, Yantra Yoga Instructor Lynn Sutherland, maybe Yantra Yoga Instructor Marisa Alonso from Argentina, maybe more. Many casitas are being finished as we speak, with as many as 13 being completed by November 2009.

We are actively seeking staff. Any interested practitioners should email us at
tsegyalgarwestsecretary@gmail.com

Potential applicants need to be fairly rough and ready because it is a wilderness eco-preserve. When we have new staff in place we will be able to welcome more people that are interested in personal retreats in remote areas such as External Rushen.

Finally, we are focusing more than ever on establishing a presence in town in Los Cabos, the world-famous resort area right at our door-step. Yantra Yoga retreats are going to be held not only at the Gar but at a beach-side resort called Vista Azul.

Come and join us at our little (big) piece of paradise. And thank you Rinpoche for everything
Joel Crisp, Blue gakyil
www.tsegyalgarwest.org ©

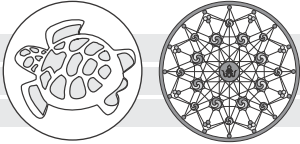
New Gakyil New Mexico

Julia Deisler Yellow
jmdeis@yahoo.com
Jody Santry Blue
ciaobella322@gmail.com
No Red



Dance of the Six Spaces with Bodhi Krause at Dondrubling, Berkeley July 15.

TashigarNorte



Tashigar North /Finca Tashigar

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

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

Calendar of Events 2009–2010

September

September 11-14
Gomadevi Practice Retreat

October

October 23-25
Mandarava Practice Retreat

Oct. 30–Nov. 1
Shitro Practice Retreat

November

November 20
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's arrival in Tashigar North

December

December 4–11
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu
Dzogchen Longsal Longde Teaching Retreat

December 8
Rinpoche's Birthday

December 13–17
Course of Yantra Yoga 1st. Level
With Dina Priymak supervised by Fabio Andrico

December 18–23
Course of Vajra Dance (1st Part)
With Carmen Rivas supervised by Adriana Dal Borgo

Dec. 26–Jan. 1
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu
Santi Maha Sangha Retreat

January

January 4-10
Course of Vajra Dance (2nd Part)
With Carmen Rivas supervised by Adriana Dal Borgo

January 10-15
SMS Base Level Course
With Elías Capriles

January 16-30
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu
The Drubchen of Mandarava and Vajrapani

March

March 8-12
Tashigar Norte Retreat with Rinpoche

March 13-18
Kumbhaka Course
With Fabio Andrico

March 19-25
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu
Teacher's Trainings:
Santi Maha Sangha Base and 1st Levels, Vajra Dance, Yantra Yoga 1st and 2nd Levels

April

April 1-5
Retreat of 7th Lojong
With Grisha Mokhin

Apr. 30–May 2
Santi Maha Sangha Base Level Exam

May

May 3-9
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu
Santi Maha Sangha 1st Level Training

Camping Reservation System

Tashigar Norte informs you that at this moment 80% of the camping lots are already booked for December and 95% for January. Be aware that if you don't book you may not find a place for your tent. Further months there are a lot of available places.

To book a place check the procedure in our web site: www.tashigarnorte.org, in the section Useful information-Accommodation.

Camping Reservation System
Tashigar Norte

Peru

Dear vajra brothers and sisters,
Greetings to all. We are pleased to announce the new Gakyil members in Peru (Norbuling) for the period 2009–2010

Blue Gakyil

Paul Sablich (Director)
Maria Luisa Flores Guerra (Secretary)

Red Gakyil

Patricia Elejalde
Jimena Piedra

Yellow Gakyil

Ethel Martinez
Raquel Maurier

gakyil_peru@yahoo.com

*

Dance Course – First Part of the Song of the Vajra
with Nelida Saporiti
June 2009

By Patricia Elejalde

It was a golden afternoon; the wind was carrying ceaseless mantras all around, people of all ages and from all over the world had gathered

together to listen to Rinpoche's teachings before returning to their everyday life. I felt I was living in another dimension. It was my first visit to this part of Italy, to Merigar, to the Yellow House, and I had never seen a mandala before, so when I saw Prima Mai dancing to the sounds of the Song of the Vajra, something huge opened inside me and what I felt is something beyond words. The experience was unique; I remember thinking that night: the sangha in Peru has to experience this too, and wished that someday we would be dancing all together as well.

The wish came true seven years later. There we were, 24 of us, gathered around two mandalas, eager to start, like children waiting excitedly for a long expected gift to be finally unwrapped, listening to Nelida explaining the source and depth of this incredible teaching, generously transmitted by our precious master. It was a 10-day intensive course; little by little, step by step, like learning to walk again, we started to combine and balance legs and arms and

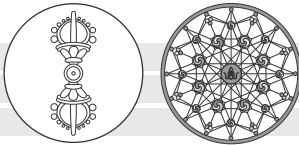


Photo: P. Sablich

slowly, slowly, the structure and form of the dance took shape while the experience itself started to sculpt countless and invisible changes within pamos and pawos, while outlining a harmonious kaleidoscope, enriched by the joy and sense of togetherness that manifested among us.

Muchas, muchas gracias, Rinpoche, for your love and this precious gift. Our heartfelt thanks to Nelida too, for her infinite patience and loving ways. We are committed to practicing what we have learned, trying to integrate the movements into the state of contemplation. We look forward to completing the second part of the dance soon! ©

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

Celebration of 20 Years Remodeling of the Gonpa

“The Gar represents a base for all those who are keeping and developing the teachings for the future, as a way of making real knowledge of Dzogchen arise in the future generations (...) we, Dzogchen practitioners, without exception, should take over spontaneously the responsibilities that guarantee the survival and development of this base for the teachings.”
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

If you want to be informed about the details of the ‘Gonpa Project’, the way to collaborate and the Calendar of Events for the Celebration of our Gar, you can go to the blog of Tashigar South: www.wordpress.tashigar-sur.com.ar

We invite all Gakyils and Lings related to Tashigar South to send us their calendar of activities related to this project to be uploaded in our blog of the 20 years.

If you would like to contribute:
tashigonpa@gmail.com

‘Project Gonpa’ Team

Together in The Mirror

- Acknowledgement -

The Gakyil of Tashigar South wants to make a public acknowledgement of the work of Laura Yoffe as editor in chief of ‘El Espejo’, the Spanish version of ‘The Mirror’.
We also want to thank all the collaborators of the ‘El Espejo’ team.

To the Translators – Daniel Lange, Alonso Espinosa, Ana Garcia, Liliana Campi, Beata Debarge, Nélica Saporiti

To Ana Maria Humeres in charge of the revision on behalf of the IPC

To the designers – Daniel Simonelli, Cris Galli, Claudia Harkan and Karina Dujan

To the style revisers – Paula Raedemaeker, Sergio Oliva and Griselda Gálmez

To the members of the successive Gakyils of Tashigar South and the Gakyil of Buenos Aires, that supported and made it happen.

For twelve years (1997–2008), Laura Yoffe, together with her team of translators, revisers, designers and literary collaborators, worked with generosity and efficiency making this bridge that allowed the access to the translation of so many teachings possible, and resulted in an invaluable benefit for the Spanish-speaking Community. All our Sangha anxiously waits for the new version in Spanish that will come as a project of the Shang Shung Institute and we wish for an auspicious start.

Gakyil of Tashigar South

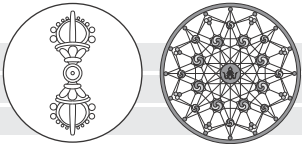
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A Yantra Yoga Course for Beginners with Carolina Mingolla took place from August 14 to 18 in Bariloche City, a beautiful Patagonian city on the side of Nahuel Huapi National Park. It was winter time, so we had some nice days of soft snow. Seventeen people participated in the complete course, most of them Dharma practitioners of the Drugpa Kagyu center. Some of them

had been to Tashigar South at different times, so they met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's teachings as well. Knowing there was a Tibetan tradition of yoga, they wanted to learn and apply it as a complimentary practice to their weekly meditation sessions. They immediately discovered the value of Yantra Yoga as a regular practice and are really interested to continue learning. ©

Tashigar



A Perfect Week End

by Graciela Moltisanti and
Roxana Sciacca

We finally arrived to Tashigar South to participate in a weekend retreat after an interesting journey, where sisters and brothers were together inside a car for 10 hours listening the Dzogchen Introduction Retreat via Webcast.

The program included teachings with our beloved Master at 4 am via Web-

cast, and also a Base Level Santi Maha Sangha course led by Ricky Sued with Yantra Yoga sessions led by instructor Marisa Alonso.

We had the auspicious opportunity to share with our brothers and sisters the offering of a Ganapuja on the New Moon of Buddha Shakyamuni's Enlightenment and Paranirvana.

Really, who could ask for more?

The weekend was intense, besides learning and practicing these important

teachings, sharing made us feel like active members of Dzogchen Community.

Marisa and Ricky invoked feelings of gratitude by being so kind and generous. Our recognition also goes to the important labor of our Gekö Luis Olivera and Secretary Sophie, for their dedication and patience. Our gratitude also goes to all who collaborated to make this event possible.

We sincerely hope that initiatives like this will increase members' participation on the eve of Tashigar South 20th anniversary!

*

Tashigar South's Dorjei Kotrab Retreat A Yellow Gakyil as Gekö...

by Griselda Olivera
Translation: Gustavo Avilés

From July 3rd to 6th we had a Dorjei Kotrab retreat at Tashigar South led by our dear instructor of Santi Maha Sangha Ricardo Sued. This retreat was my second experience as Gekö. The first time was not so easy, and I was told this one would be easier, shorter and I would have a lot of help. So based on this information I said yes.



The numerous helpers ended up being only the secretary Soledad, who created wonderful meals, Eduardo and myself as acting Gekö.

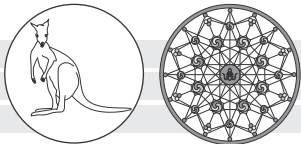
I wanted to make people feel welcome, comfortable and at home during this silent retreat. Usually meal times, like asado, are an important social time for Argentineans, so this was something new and a challenge to my wish.

Watching the people walk through the Gar, sitting in the little Gonpa or by the hearth where sparks and flames

softly illuminated their faces, people radiated energy, one that was not disturbed by speech, and I saw some harshness and tension dissolve in the faces as the time went by.

I still carry with me images of my fellow practitioners coming to the dining room at lunchtime where we were altogether, and they were perfect company with feelings of peace, tranquility, love and deep reflection. I now think that being silent for some time is also a good practice to incorporate in our daily life. ©

Namgyalgar and Pacific Rim



**Namgyalgar
Dzogchen Community in
Australia**

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

secretary@dzogchen.org.au
www.dzogchen.org.au

Upcoming

The Dzogchen Community of Cairns, Queensland, Australia would like to invite you to:

A Course of the Vajra Dance of the Six Spaces of Samantabhadra
with Cosimo Di Maggio

19th and 20th September 19 & 20, 2009
10 am–12.30 & 2–4.30 pm
Cost: Aus \$ 80

Contact: Maree Ploetz (Red Gakyil)
tel: 0427 148 994
maree.ploetz@gmail.com

Everybody who is interested is most welcome to come along.

Passages

Born: Born to Georgia McDonald and Paul Medi in Melbourne, Australia
“We’ve had a baby! Our little boy was born at 8.23pm Thursday July 2, 2009 night at home, after a lightening fast labor of about 3 hours!”

New Gakyil Singapore

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The Santi Maha Sangha Gar - Namgyalgar..... Say A!!!

Have you ever thought “I wish I had more time to practice?” You need to retreat!

Ok, so you have got the time off work, you have paid the bills and told your Mum that you won’t be at home, but where are you going for your retreat? Your apartment just doesn’t cut it. The neighbours complained when there were 6 people over for a Ganapuja, how are they going to react to one week of singing the Song of the Vajra or a long Nag-gong session? And what about ringing the bell during practice? But what if you want to do a dark retreat? You think to pull down the shutters, take the phone off the hook, and don’t answer the door but what about the logistics of making a vegetarian lasagna in the dark? Tricky! You need a supportive, peaceful environment for contemplation and retreat. You want to practice, knock over some of those Santi Maha Sangha practice commit-

ments in a private, secluded, natural, Dzogchen friendly environment...but where do you go?

Well, I will let you into a well-kept secret. You go to Namgyalgar – The Santi Maha Sangha Gar. It’s got everything a retreatant on the way to total realisation could need. Dark retreat cabin, a self contained light retreat cabin where you are greeted each morning by grazing kangaroos right at your doorstep. If you want to dance there is a beautiful mandala, arguably one of the finest in the southern hemisphere. There are pristine Eucalypt forests with vistas to the Pacific Ocean. If you want community there is plenty of that with community kitchens, dormitory facilities to share with others, caravans for accommodation, and other practitioners keen to study the Dzogchen teachings at a deeper level. There is lots of opportunity to study and practice the SMS at a variety of levels with others and cultivate your under-



standing of our precious teacher’s transmission.

And what about Karma yoga, I hear you say? Well there is plenty of that at Namgyalgar! There is enough karma yoga to earn yourself a fortunate rebirth for a kalpa or two.

So where is Namgyalgar? It is closer than you think: it is in Australia. It might seem far now but it is very close when you arrive there! It is 4 hours south of Sydney amidst the stunningly beautiful South Coast of Eastern Australia, nestled amidst a sacred aboriginal women site, poised between pristine beaches, tranquil lakes teaming with birds, rolling

hills bristling with wildlife and home to the black-faced wallaby, red kangaroo, hairy-nosed wombat and a residential goanna that scavenges around the dining area. After a big day of practice you can go swim with the dolphins or spot whales at Bermagui. Is it your lucky day to integrate with one of nature’s little beauties?

Namgyalgar is here to support your practice, support your study of the Santi Maha Sangha to help your spiritual progress and the continuation of the transmission. What better place is there to cultivate a deeper experience and understanding of the teachings

in arms of the Dzogchen Community at the Gar. Now is your chance to support Rinpoche’s precious little gems, Namgyalgar. Come to Namgyalgar and say.... A!!!

Travel/ Accommodation / contact information

Tourist visa easily obtained online www.immig.gov.au
Other visa opportunities also available for students, work especially for those under 28 years old. Brush up on your English language skills whilst you are here.

Air tickets from international destinations vary a lot but start from about 700 euro. Cabin prices vary dependent on membership category but are inexpensive. Dormitory Accommodation starts at \$Aus 5/night.

For more details check Namgyalgar website www.dzogchen.org.au or contact Vicki Forscutt the Namgyalgar Secretary for further information and bookings. ©

Documentary

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Interview with Jennifer Fox

NYC May 20, 2009

Jennifer Fox is an award winning documentary filmmaker and has been a student of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu since 1985. Her films include *Beirut: The Last Home Movie*, an American Love Story, and *Flying: Confessions of a Free Woman*. She has also Executive Produced many films. Jennifer started filming the life of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu 20 years ago and *The Mirror* has interviewed Jennifer about the history, progress and status of the film. You can learn more about Jennifer and her films at: http://www.flyingconfessions.com/about_Jennifer.php

The Mirror: What is your basic intention in the making of the film about our teachers, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and Yeshe Silvano Namkhai?

Jennifer Fox: The aim of the film is to allow ordinary people to meet Rinpoche and Yeshe Namkhai and to get to know the Teachings in a very direct way. My goal is to reach a very broad, general audience. The film is not really meant for us in the Community, although I hope people will appreciate it and that it will become a keepsake for all practitioners. But I am trying to get the story of our Teachers out there and into the homes of the average person, even if they are not spiritually inclined. My feeling is that there is a whole unknown audience that have not meet the Teachings yet, but who would be interested in Dzogchen and the teachings if they had a chance to meet our Teachers in a simple way.

M: What will the story of the film be?

JF: Well, the working title of the film is, *Learning To Swim*, and it is the story of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche and his son Yeshe Namkhai over two decades, beginning in 1988 to the present. It is a universal, classic father-son story about a father who wants to pass on his history and tradition and about a son who wants to be different. It is about a Tibetan master in exile trying to save his culture, his lineage and the Teachings. It is also about his son, Yeshe, who was born in Italy and who in the beginning – at age 18 when I began filming him – wanted nothing to do with his father’s mission. Then Yeshe goes through a transformation over 20 years, and joins his father and becomes a teacher in his own right. So, it is this archetypical story that can speak to a wider audience.

M: How will the film be different because it is aimed at a wide audience?

JF: Most of what we hear from Rinpoche is extremely high teachings that simply cannot be expressed in a feature length film for an uneducated audience. The film will only be able to include the basic principles of the Teachings, such as: impermanence,

attachment, and being present. In this way, for practitioners, the film may seem very simple. But my job is to make a film that a viewer – who knows nothing about Dzogchen or about Buddhism – will be able to follow.

When making a film for a large audience events and actions need to be made very clear. An audience expects to understand Rinpoche’s journey in exile to save Dzogchen over 20 years; they expect to understand Yeshe’s journey from a young man who wanted an ordinary life to a person who goes through a spiritual awakening. The viewer needs to witness the steps that Rinpoche and Yeshe go through and ‘see’ and ‘feel’ them change. The success of the film will depend on making an audience ‘feel’ the obstacles they face, how they overcome them, and their incremental personal transformations. Meanwhile, we all know that spirituality is something essentially invisible. So it is a hard task: because how do you make people feel their spiritual states?

M: How did you begin the project?

JF: I started filming around 1988/89. I was already a filmmaker and had just completed my first feature film. I was taking a break from my work and I had the enormous good fortune to be able to travel with Rinpoche as a kind of informal secretary and cook. He was suffering from high blood pressure and needed to watch his diet and take care of his health in a more serious way.

It was a time of great technological changes. I remember I bought the very first laptop computer that any of us had ever seen so he could do his correspondence while he traveled. There also were big leaps in video equipment and I was able to buy the first really small broadcast quality camera to film him on his journeys.

M: Were you already thinking of making a film about Rinpoche back then?

JF: Honestly, I didn’t know. I just felt it was such a precious moment that I shouldn’t miss it. I continued to film him, the community, and the family on and off for years. I filmed Yeshe at that time extensively. I was fascinated by the story of his reincarnation and thought it would be the basis of a good film with his father’s story.

I remember a conversation where I said, “I know the film I should make. It would be a story about you and your father and you would go back to Tibet and accept your reincarnation and then you would start to teach.” And he said to me, “Forget it, it will never happen.”

He was very clear at that time that he wanted his own normal life, with a normal job and a fam-



Videostills: Jennifer Fox

ily. Even though at the time, he talked about the fact that he had signs of his previous reincarnation and that he was practitioner. He just did not want to be a Master. But we kept filming anyway.

M: How will this film be different than other Tibetan Buddhist films?

JF: There have been few good spiritual films created. The task of showing the spiritual is so daunting that most of the time the makers just show the external side of the teachings, like the rituals. Those films mean a lot to us practitioners, but little to a general audience.

In a way, Rinpoche and Yeshe allow the camera inside their lives as a direct outgrowth of the lineage of Changchub Dorje, who was an ordinary farmer and doctor, yet a highly realized being. Rinpoche never wants us to make a false hierarchy, but to see the real Teachings. He never wants us to construct a fantasy of what is a Teacher. So in the film he allows you close to show the real way a teacher works with students to help them evolve and awaken. It also shows how hard it is to be a teacher, transmitting this enormous lineage to the West.

I can’t imagine any other teacher, allowing themselves to be filmed both in their public life and private for 20 years. The access is just incredible – so rare! So, this film is a huge gift from Rinpoche and Yeshe, and Rosa and Yuchen, to all of us and to the world.

M: Why have you filmed for so long?

JF: I always knew the film’s strongest narrative would be to show Rinpoche’s life over time. There is something universally powerful about a man pitting his life energy to save his spiritual heritage. Seeing Rinpoche developing over 20 years provides a very strong narrative. When I started to film him he was 49 years old, and I have followed him till now at 70 years. When I began to film

Yeshe he was 18 years old; he is now 39. We can see the effect of Rinpoche’s efforts and the Community growing and also the problems of a bigger community.

There is also a lot of teaching in the film, even if it’s not all verbal. We learn about the precious human body, about the meaning of life, and integrating our existence. Rinpoche faced death over the years. He was able to survive cancer and various other illnesses. So, he is teaching about death in the formal teaching context, but also through his actual life that we see on camera where we see the real story of a man facing impermanence. So this is one of the biggest messages in the film. I think in documentary you can convey the most over time when you see people change. The viewer can observe that through mundane life we see a larger world and that ‘the personal is political’. So this film shows Rinpoche and Yeshe in a very ordinary way, even as they are very special people, and are facing very large issues like saving a spiritual culture – which is at the heart a very political message without having to actually talk politics.

M: How did this frame of father son story change the possibilities for the project?

JF: Once we had Yeshe’s story as part of Rinpoche’s story, suddenly broadcasters began to be interested. They said, ‘Oh we get it now; it’s a universal story about a father trying to pass on his tradition to his son who wants to be normal. All our audiences will understand that.’ Suddenly it was not just about Buddhism and the doors began to open.

Being that the goal is a wide audience, we finally found the story container to pass on Rinpoche’s teachings. A lot has happened in the last months, we started out in 2002 with the Dutch co-production with BOS, the Dutch Buddhist Television Channel (thanks to Babeth Van Loo, who pushed me to continue to film our Masters in the Millennium), but this year we have gotten TV distribu-

tion in Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, and a co-production in France and Germany through ARTE. Now we are working on Italian and USA television and the rest of the world – so this is sort of this domino effect.

I think this film will also be able to show in cinemas in some countries as well, especially in the US, Germany, Switzerland. It will also be distributed on DVD both for home use and educationally. I would like to make a special edition for the educational market to distribute to organizations, schools, and religious groups. I would also like to put up an interactive website that would be a place for dialogue and discussion and also direct people to the various Dzogchen communities around the world. But all this will require still more funding, so we will see. When the film is finished, I will donate the 1000+ hours of footage I have filmed to the Shang Shung Institute for the permanent archive of our community.

So the goal of getting the film to a wide audience is slowly starting to be realized.

M: What were the challenges in making a film about a spiritual master?

JF: The biggest challenge is how to show the invisible. Spirituality is something internal. We feel Rinpoche transmit. We are his students; we are connected to him by transmission. But how can we get non-practitioners to feel his state? I do believe they will feel something even if they don’t know what they are feeling. At the very least, I hope that people will get a taste of the Teachings and that will make them want to go and find out more. But it is the hardest thing I have ever tried to do. And I don’t know if I will succeed; I still wake up at night worried!

On the level of the physical challenges, it is hard to shoot retreats because it always feels like the camera is invading. I could trip or fall in front of hundreds of people, and disturb the Teachings. The joy of shooting is get-

Documentary



Jennifer filming and Yeshi.

ting to spend so much time with Rinpoche and Yeshi and Rosa and Yuchan and their families. But I know it is also exhausting to have a camera around all the time. I feel sorry for this, yet also extremely grateful that they have chosen to make this sacrifice to help people.

All good documentary films are a deep collaboration between the filmmaker and the subject. It takes enormous trust and commitment on both sides to keep going forward. Rinpoche and Ye-

shi will have a complete review of the film before it is finished.

M: It is kind of a Dzogchen approach to making films, going to the essence.

JF: What I strive for is to let the essential story boil up from the material. My goal is to protect that essence against all the external forces and to listen to what the film wants to be. As a filmmaker, I am less a director than a midwife, trying to allow the birth to what

is essential and existing since the beginning in the footage.

M: I think it is clear from this interview that this film in an enormous body of work and certainly must be something that is costly. What is the financial situation?

JF: When people think of film, they have a fantasy of riches! But documentary films generally don't make money. That means that there is never (or very rarely) a profit, even when the film is extremely successful and distrib-

uted worldwide. Documentaries require non-profit dollars, foundation grants, donations and television sales.

So for years I have funded this film from my own life savings, because spiritual films are particularly hard to fund. This is my samaya to Rimpoche. Over the years I have luckily gotten some foundation grants as well as the Dutch TV co-production to keep the film going. Even though we are starting to make more television sales now, they often don't

pay until the end. The contracts for our biggest TV sales do not start until 2010, so we have a big cash flow problem and there is still more money to raise.

We have also had a few wonderful people in the community who have given private donations to the project. They have been life-savers – I am eternally grateful to them. Our dear master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu donated a hand-print of his master Changchub Dorje to auction and the extraordinary painter and teacher, Drugu Chögyal Rinpoche, kindly donated prints also to auction.

M: Thank you Jennifer for all your dedication and work, and also spending time with us for the interview. We look forward to seeing the film! When will it be finished?

JF: I am doing everything in my power to have the film completed by the beginning of 2010, but we will see. There are still some obstacles to overcome, including funding. But somehow I feel it should be out in the world next year. Most important, I pray that when the film is completed it will accomplish it's goal and it will have a great affect on all who see it around the world!

If anyone would like more information about the film project Learning To Swim, or would like to make a donation to help it's completion, please contact Jennifer Fox at: zohefilms@aol.com ©

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Schedule 2010

>> continued from page 1

Canaries
May 21–23
Canaries retreat

UK
May 28–30
London Retreat

Russia
June 2–8
Clinic treatment

June 11–15
Moscow retreat

June 18–20
Saint Petersburg retreat

June 28–July 4
Crimea retreat

Romania
July 20–25
Merigar East retreat

July 26–29
SMS Level I exam
July 30–August 10
SMS Level II Training

Italy
August 16–22
Merigar West retreat

August 25–Sep. 3
Grosseto personal retreat of Mandarava empowering chudlen pills for use at the retreat in Margarita plus Fitness

September 8–12
Zhitro purification for all those who have died

France
September 24–26
Teaching at Karmaling

Spain
October 1–7
Barcelona retreat.

Brazil
October 13–17
Brazil retreat

Venezuela
Tashigar Norte
December 1–8
Mandarava intensive practice retreat with Chudlen (in Webcast)

Dec. 26–Jan. 2
Christmas retreat

Yeshi Silvano Namkhai Schedule 2009-2010

2009
September 8–11
Germany, Cologne and Berlin

September 19–21
Italy, Bologna

October 2–15
Poland, Retreat in Paldenling and Warsaw

October 16–20
Denmark, Copenhagen

Nov. 31–Dec. 2
Italy, Namdeling (Napoli)

November 7–9
Italy, Presentation Light of Kailash and Zhenphenling (Rome)

November 17–23
Russia, St. Petersburg

November 24–1
Czech Rep., Phendenling

December 2–6
Slovakia

Dec. 28–Jan. 3
Greece

2010
January 4–8
Cyprus

January 16–18
Italy, Retreat in Merigar West

February 23–5
Argentina, Short retreat before Anniversary Tashigar Sur

February 6–12
Brasil, Lhundrubling

March 1–13
Hungary, Budapest, restricted retreat

March 18–26
Margarita Isl., Santi Maha Sangha Teacher's training

April 10–14
France, Paris

April 15–20
France, Dejamling

April 21–24
Ukraine, Kiev

April 25–28
Ukraine, Phuntsokling (Donetsk)

May 1–5
Israel

May 8–10
Italy, Florence/Pistoia, Weekend teaching in Sakyangongaling

May 20–25
Russia, Moscow, Weekend teaching in Rinchenling

May 26–31
Crimea, Kunsangar South, short retreat and CHNN organization

June 1–8
Russia, Moscow, Clinic

June 9–15
Russia, Moscow, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Retreat

June 16–24
Russia, St. Petersburg, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Retreat

June 29–July 6
Peru, Retreat at Norbuling

July 7–14
Bolivia

July 24–28
USA, New York City, Kundrolling

August 29–12
USA, Conway, Mass, Tsegyalgar East and Khandroling

August 18–23
England, London and Wales, Kunselling

September 7–12
Russia, Izhevsk, restricted retreat in Kungaling

September 13–16
Mexico, Mexico City, Pelzomling

September 17–20
Costa Rica, Dekytling

Sept. 21–Oct. 4
Baja California, Tsegyalgar West

Oct. 31–Nov. 4
USA, Berkeley, California, Dondrubling

November 17–24
Mozambique, short retreat

December 7–15
Moscow, Russia, Longde restricted retreat on Rinchenling's roof

Luminous Essence

A Guide to the Guhyagarbha Tantra

By Jamgön Mipham
Foreword by His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Translated by the Dharmachakra Translation Committee
Snow Lion Publications 2009

Andy Lukianowicz

“The lord and consort, as the identity of means and knowledge beyond meeting and parting, initiate the discussion by considering the magnificence of enlightenment in the manner of the great perfection, the inseparable truths of purity and equality.”

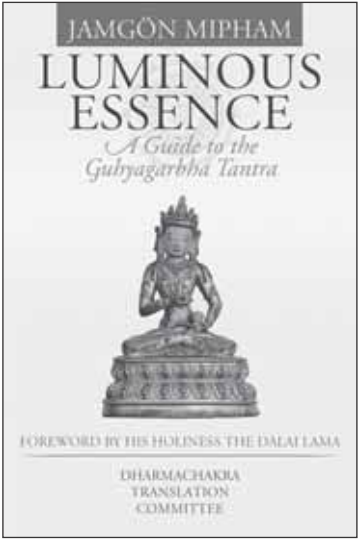
This translation of Jamgon Mipham’s *Luminous Essence*, Guide to the Guhyagarbha Tantra is a welcome addition to the small but growing number of tantric texts available in English. A tantra of the Nyingma mahayoga class, it is elucidated by Mipham mainly in light of Dzogchen or atiyoga, In fact Longchenpa’s Dzogchen-inclined commentary, studied by H. V. Guenther in his magnificent *Matrix of Mystery*, is the primary textual reference point for the translation of the root verses. At present, Gyurme Dorje’s complete translation of Longchenpa’s *Commentary* is available only on microfiche; one hopes that some day it too will be published and become more generally available. Also of great interest regarding the issue of purity and equality is Heidi Kopp’s comparison of Mipham’s and Rongzompa’s interpretation of the tantric divine nature of appearances in her translation and analysis of Rongzompa’s “Establishing appearances as divine”.

The translators, ably led by Andreas Doctor, author/translator of *Tibetan Treasure Literature*, a

very useful book on the Nyingma terma tradition with a translation of a Vajrakilaya sadhana that includes short discussion by Ju Mipham on ways to discern authentic tertons, have rendered Mipham’s pithy commentary in clear and concise language, maintaining its logical coherence and poetic beauty. The sometimes laconic style, however, is matched by the regrettable absence of any critical apparatus: no footnotes, no glossary, (not even the original Tibetan and Sanskrit names of the texts quoted by Mipham); in fact, there is not even an index.

Mipham’s book is well arranged and easy to follow. He starts with a brief overview of the meaning (and magnificence) of the Guhyagarbha tantra, with explanations of the meaning of its title and a summary of essential points and presentation of its meaning.

There follows a general presentation of the principles of the three continua, subsumed under ground, path and fruition. The first contains a succinct explanation of the arising of delusion. Through the mind’s capacity for mistaken perception “the self-display that appears spontaneously due to the unimpeded radiance of primordial awareness may be apprehended as objects.” This is the seed of dualistic delu-



sion. This section is followed by advice on reversing delusion.

The section on the path continuum gives a clear analysis of the different categories subsumed in two, five and nine vehicles, followed by an adroit explanation of the path of mantra, with special emphasis on the path of definitive means and liberation through knowledge. (By the way, in regard to my comment above, Mipham’s many references to ‘liberation’, at times a euphemism for killing, may have benefited from some explanatory notes.) Useful comparisons are also drawn between the paths of sutra and of mantra.

Mipham then sets out on the core topic of the book, his specific explanation of the path continuum. After briefly mentioning various classification schemes, Mipham embarks on ‘the present context’.

“The presentation that concerns us ... is framed around an extensive categorisation in eleven topics, or parameters, of tantra... (1) the view of reality, (2) unmoving absorption, (3) determined action, (4) arranged mandala, (5) progressive empowerment, (6) unbroken samayas, (7) zealous practice, (8) directed offerings, (9) activity display, (10) binding mudra,

(11) recited mantra.” Each topic is treated in terms of (a) essence, (b) divisions, (c) principles, (d) purpose. Constantly in this section on tantra, Mipham reminds readers that the basis is “the play of reality, the indivisible truth of purity and equality.”

The section on meditative absorption is especially useful, with summaries on flaws and remedies in one’s practice. On meditative absorption, Mipham concludes: “Meditative absorption is what blesses mantra and mudra. ... As one gains confidence in the meaning that all phenomena are great purity and equality by their very nature, one will move beyond the boundaries of meditation and nonmeditation. This effortless and spontaneously present practice is the consummation of the great perfection.”

With regard to conduct, Mipham quotes the *Yogini Tantra of Conduct*:

“When in possession of the nondual wisdom mind,
There is nothing forbidden at all.
With a nonconceptual mind,
The five sense pleasures are enjoyed.”

And *The End of Magic*:

“The fruition of nonduality
Is not attained after innumerable eons
Of painful ascetic discipline,
But in this life, through happiness and pleasure.”

There are so many illuminating passages, too many to mention them all, but some are so juicy. Here is an example of Mipham’s keen psychological insight: “Reasoning establishes the world and its inhabitants to be primordial purity and equality. Therefore, one does not need to accomplish these factors anew through the path. For people who have realised this in the core of their hearts, a regimen of effortful pursuits is proven to be a great obstacle on the path. Hence, it can be easily established how the practice of uncontrived natu-

ralness allows one to attain mastery over the self-display of wisdom appearances.” (As a later great master, Alan Watts, succinctly put it: “The perfection of Zen is to be naturally human.”) In relation to Dzogchen, Mipham states “Great accomplishment involves gaining certainty in the nature of the great perfection, which occurs once one’s training is stable and any clinging to the efforts of the path and the claims of the philosophical positions of the eight vehicles have collapsed.” On taking disturbing emotions as the path (the topic of one of our teacher Chogyal Namkhai Norbu’s *longsal* revelations) Mipham comments on the famous tantric (and sutric) insight: “The more desire one has, such as the workable faculty endowed with the desire of the desire realm, the more bliss there will be. The more one skilfully embraces bliss, the more powerful the vision of wisdom becomes ...” Mipham has this to say on sexual intercourse: while it binds the [ordinary] individual to samsara, practitioners, “motivated by the aspiration for undefiled great bliss,” use it as a means whereby “the ordinary mind and all its habitual tendencies are incinerated by a thicket of fire-like wisdom.” Also of great value are his various discussions of the four seals.

This is a veritable feast, and read alongside Jamgon Kongtrul’s *Elements of Tantric Practice* and *Systems of Buddhist Tantra* it gives valuable understanding into Buddhist tantra (Kongtrul’s *Treasury of Knowledge* gives only a brief summary of Nyingma tantra), while also offering a marvellous insight on relating tantra to Dzogchen. All who read it will find it informative, but above all delightful.

“Primordially unborn suchness
Is illusory in appearance like an apparition.
Though union, liberation and all other acts
Are performed, not the slightest thing is done.” ©

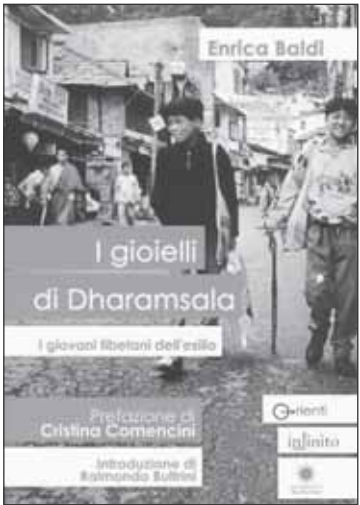
I gioielli di Dharamsala

I giovani tibetani dell'esilio
Enrica Baldi
Infinito Edizioni 2009

Lella Guidotti

At the beginning of May this year while I was at the Yellow House at Merigar West I saw Luigi Ottaviani go by with a book in his hand. I was curious about the title, “I gioielli di Dharamsala” (The Jewels of Dharamsala) and asked him what it was about. “It’s a book written by a practitioner on her experience with Tibetan refugee children. It’s going to be presented in Rome this May. Could you go on behalf of the Shang Shung Institute because we are the co-editors and none of us are able to go.” I told him I could and went back to Rome.

I left the book abandoned for days on a table. On the morning of the 15th I realized that it was the day of the presentation and



I hadn’t read even a page of it. I started to read it and didn’t stop until I got to the book shop. I read it in one go. The book took me to the TCV in India: the Tibetan Children’s Village inspired by H.H. the Dalai Lama for the education of Tibetan children in exile. “Children are the seeds of the future Tibet”. With these words His Holiness emphasized the importance of education for these children to prepare them to return to their country, we hope, in the future. Each year about 800

children cross the Himalayas, risking their lives to reach these centres.

Enrica Baldi, the author, has had a wealth of experience – after doing a degree in philosophy she devoted herself to the theatre following the school of Peter Brook. She has studied child psychiatry and psychoanalysis, her teachers include Bruno Bettelheim for environmental therapy, Maria Montessori with special reference to use of sensorial materials and she knows a lot about Buddhism and the history of Tibet. She came to Dharamsala following signs that appeared on her path and which would take her to that ultimate experience in which all her past journeys would take on a completely new meaning.

The first pages of the book include the poems and some compositions by the teenagers of the villages. These works transmit a collective sadness which makes us understand how difficult it is for those whose job is to comfort and help them to reconstruct on such a fragile and troubled basis. Enrica takes the oldest teenagers

to a writing workshop and especially the classic theatre, Greek tragedy.

I found the pages that explained why Sophocles and not Shakespeare was the choice of Antigone very interesting.

I really loved Enrica’s words, “(in Greek tragedy) there is simply man on the earth and all his struggles of existence. And in this struggle there is the foundation of modern ethics”.

Then there is the remarkable experience of Pinocchio for the smallest children. The pages in which she describes the rehearsals, the preparations, the search for costumes and objects through the streets of the town with some of the children are really vivid. Reading them a series of images rush by and one of these children, little Norbu, undisciplined and warm hearted with all his pranks catches hold of me and I can’t get him out of my mind. It was impossible not to cry imagining him yelling sha, sha (meat, meat) at Geppetto, his father, who he has found once more forever. With these universal stories

Enrica helps these children to overcome their traumas and to learn how to relate to the world. She says, “I think that Pinocchio is the universal fairytale of our times: it is the traumatized child who has absorbed the benevolent mother and searches for the guidance of the father in the world”.

There is precious advice from the educator for those who may wish to take the same path, but also for Western mothers and those who have embarked on the difficult experience of being mothers to children who come from far away.

In this process of curing trauma, bringing back joy is fundamental. Joy cancels the violence and the destruction that these children bear the scars of in their spirits. Reading this book I also understood something of my childhood and the mistakes that a young mother could have made.

I arrived in time for the presentation and met Enrica who besides being a sister is now also a precious friend. ©

Kunjed Gyalpo Series

Ornament of the State of Samantabhadra: Commentary on the All-Creating King of the Pure Perfect Presence of the Great Perfection

Vol. One: Commentary on Chapters 1-10 of the Kun.byed rgyal po by Khenpo Zhenphen Öser

Translated from the Tibetan by Jim Valby

Jim Valby Publications, 2008, 315 pages

This an excerpt from the first volume of an eight volume series of the Kunjed Gyalpo and commentary translated by Jim Valby

One Essence

The third subdivision explains how everything of the universe of samsara and nirvana depends upon the one essence. It has four subdivisions: total self-perfected space; the example of space (p136); primordial enlightenment of the universe (p137); [165] and connection of that example and meaning (p139).

Self-Perfected Space

The first subdivision is total self-perfected space.

(r) Being self-perfected, (Presence) is beyond all actions and actors. By saying ‘unborn, cannot be pointed out, cannot be labeled’, you may understand that inexpressible state beyond affirmation and negation.

Because this Pure Perfect Presence of the unceasing wisdom of the empty luminosity of space is primordially self-perfected, it is beyond all actions and actors. One may say words for what is beyond speech, thought and communication, like ‘unborn nature, cannot be pointed out with an example, and cannot be labeled with names and words’. Through those words you may understand that totally transcendent inexpressible state beyond both affirmation as existing and negation as non-existing. The fruit of unfabricated self-perfec-

tion is beyond all actions, actors, struggles and achievements of something other than that. The Dochu says:

“Because the self-originated wisdom of Presence Itself can never be searched for nor attained, it is beyond the concepts of both struggle and achievement. This is the fruit of self-perfection.”

Space Example

The second subdivision is the example of space. [166]

(r) The example that all phenomena are Pure Perfect Presence is the universal example of space. Also the meaning of Pure Perfect Presence is the same.

All these phenomena which manifest as the universe of samsara and nirvana are just the rolpa energy of the essence of the Pure Perfect Presence which, although nothing, appears as empty forms. Nothing else exists as something other. The example, which illustrates that Pure Perfect Presence, is the universal example of space, which indicates that all phenomena are unborn. Also, the meaning of the Pure Perfect Presence of rigpa as the basic space from which everything manifests is illustrated in the same way to be primordially unborn, baseless and rootless. Thus, the Lado says:



“The Pure Perfect Presence of the real condition is like space. Space is all-pervading and not attached to a self. The Pure Perfect Presence of the real condition is the essence of everything. There is not even an atom of self or attachment to a self. In the realm of space various things abide everywhere. The real condition of samsara and nirvana is indivisible. [167] However various things arise, they are perfect in the realm of space. Phenomena like negative thoughts, joy and suffering are not imperfect in the space of the unborn Presence Itself.”

Enlightenment of Universe

The third subdivision is the primordial enlightenment of the universe.

(r) The five manifestations of space, air, water, earth and fire are manifest marvelous enlightenment (which arises) from Pure Perfect Presence. Manifestations like the three worlds, the five paths, and the six types of beings are manifest enlightenment which is unperturbed by the maturation of karma. The three realms are the Body, Voice and Mind of primordial Pure Perfect (Presence).

As explained above, the nature of the All-Creating Pure Perfect Presence of the total self-perfected basic space is pointed out with the example of primordially unborn space. The whole universe which arises from its tsal energy is the essence of primordial enlightenment. The Gyutrul says:

“The components of the vajra aggregates are known as the five perfect buddhas. All the many sense bases and constituents are the mandala of bodhisattvas. Earth and water are Locana and Mamaki. Fire and wind are Pandaravasini and Tara. [168] Space is Dhatvishvari. The three worlds are primordial enlightenment. Absolutely everything without exception is nothing other than the state of enlightenment. Some phenomenon which is other than the state of enlightenment cannot be discovered even by buddha himself.”

The Dzogpa Rangjung says:

“In the world as limitless as space all sentient beings of the three worlds without exception, and the varieties of forms which manifest however, are the mandala of mudra. Whatever sounds are heard are the syllables of mantras. The multiplicity of mind’s concepts are inconceivable millions of contemplations. Any and all good and bad actions are the deeds of buddhas. Absolutely everything everywhere, including everything animate and inanimate, like material, is the mandala of the victorious ones.” [169]

These five elements as manifestations in the forms of space, air, water, earth and fire as the external world container arise from the essence of the total primordial dharmakaya of the Pure Perfect Presence of rigpa. The elements are the state of manifest enlightenment, which is established miraculously and marvelously forever and always without even an atom of impure manifestation which is something different.

Similarly, absolutely all manifestations of the six types of beings and five ways of beings and the three worlds are untainted by or unperturbed by the maturation of good and bad karma. Everything is manifest enlightenment, like the essence of the primordial purity of the three worlds uncorrupted by evil, the state of total liberation of the three realms not made wholesome by virtue, and the essence of the baseless and rootless non-duality of good and evil. [170]. Because of that, enlightenment is beyond the acceptance of good and the rejection of evil. Everything is the total dimension of effortless primordial liberation beyond hope, fear, struggle and achievement. To summarize, all these sentient beings of the six realms of beings encompassed by the three realms are the nature of the threefold Body, Voice and Mind of Samantabhadra, the Victorious One, the nature of primordial Pure Perfect Presence.

Thus the essence of the manifestation of the Desire Realm is vajra body. The essence of the clarity of the Form Realm is vajra Voice. The essence of the non-manifesting Formless Realm is vajra Mind. Or, alternatively, the bodily manifestations of the Desire Realm are vajra Body. The vocal semi-manifestations of the Form Realm are vajra Voice. The mental non-manifestations of the Formless Realm are vajra Mind. They are enlightenment as the nature of the three vajras. ©

Poem

Last night dreams so vivid
Of no consequence
Just the reflections hurling themselves
Back at the face of the mirror
Like a june bug hurling it self aimlessly
At a window screen
Till it tires and dies

Joseph Zurlyo



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How I met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Monica Neff

When I was seventeen years old I decided not to follow the course expected of me, to go off to college. It was not that I did not like books or learning, I always loved school, it was that I had this deeper sense and longing to grasp something that was still mysterious and unclear to me. I longed to answer some of these questions of who I am and what life was really all about. I grew up in California in a society that to me did not approve of or support children asking such questions and instead expected they would follow the course of the multitudes, school, job, house, family, bills, but I looked around me and people did not look happy and I knew there was something greater out there and I desired to touch it intimately. I was lucky that I had a few mentors at that time that I could open up and share with, which helped me through those hard times. I was reading the Tao te Ching, doing yoga and tai chi and starting to meditate, but felt lost without a teacher to guide me and a Sangha to support my practice.

I had a couple of pretty intense experiences in high school, “communing with God” or however you like to call it, very profound. One time I remember particularly I just started crying because I felt so much pressure, stress, strain and constriction and wondered what I was doing, and why everything was so intense, and this white light came and just enveloped me and it told me, “You are going to go on a journey and through this journey you are going to find your path.” And I felt this great love in my whole being and I surrendered into that and it was like ok, and all that weight lifted and then I knew that something was happening and I just had to go with it.

So when I was seventeen years old I took off on the road. I spent a few months hitchhiking around the western united states partying and getting into trouble. I even spent I few months being an activist in

the mountains of Colorado, but even there where the intention was to protect nature, there was so much hatred and struggle. It seemed even these alternative people who had dropped out of society had the same problems and issues and had not truly found peace or happiness. My travels led me on and I soon ended up in Hawaii.

I bought a one-way ticket to Hawaii. I went to Maui and I did not like it; it was all about sex, drugs and partying, lots of craziness and it wasn’t my vibe either, lots of aggression and just this whole scene I was not happy in. So I decided, summer was coming and I was ready to go back to mainland. Then I went to Hana, the jungle part of Maui. It is gorgeous there. I was walking down these old roads and went down one road to another road and I found this abandoned car off the side of the road in the bushes. I went to check it out, there was nothing in the car, and then I had this thought, well why don’t you pop the trunk open, and I did and the only thing in the back of the trunk was this one book, *The Crystal and the Way of Light*. And I thought, ok, I guess this is for me. I picked it up and turned it over and on the back of the book was a picture of Rinpoche. I got this tingly feeling all over my body and I knew right away that this was my teacher, without a doubt.

So I took the book and started reading it and I was completely blown away. It was as if everything a felt or knew deep down was eloquently and perfectly laid out for me. I felt a great sense of ease and happiness as I began to read that book, and also just blown away because this was it, someone actually knew what was going on and was able to communicate it clearly in writing, and for me then, it was only the beginning.

My plan was still to go back to the mainland but I needed some money. I met this man who gave me work for a couple of days and we got to become friends. He



Monica and Shunyata.

said that it was really important that I go to Kauai before I leave, even if for a week. In addition to paying me he gave me a plane ticket to Kauai, a backpack and a tent and told me to go to the end of the road and hike 10 miles to this place called Kalalau. And so I did. Kalalau is on the north shore of Kauai and the only way to get there is to hike an intense ten-mile trail or take a boat, a hiked of course, over the next year and a half I hiked that trail almost twenty times. Kalalau is a magical and mystical place. There is a whole community of people who live there called the outlaws. There is no electricity, no roads, so everything you bring in you have to hike in. You can live from the fruit and things growing there, but you have to know the land very well because everything is hidden well in the forest. People try to grow gardens but then the Rangers come and destroy the gardens because they don’t want people to live there, you are supposed to have camping permits the longest amount they issue is for seven days. So I set up my tent high up in the valley and lived there for about a year and a half. I ate passion fruit, noni, watercress, aloe and foraged. I shaved my head and walked around naked. It was great. I did a lot of yoga and meditated. It was an amazing and hilarious group of people and every night there would be new arrivals and people would cook meals together and sing songs. I really challenged myself and pushed my mind a lot at that time. I was slowly starting to understand and know myself better.

Eventually I came back to California, traveled around some more and met my son’s father, we traveled around Canada and up into Alaska, where I got pregnant right before leaving for India for the first time. I was twenty years old. I got sick the night before we left for India, I thought I had food poisoning, when we arrived in India we had to go on a twelve hour train ride in a second class car to Goa, where my son’s father grew up, and it was horrible. But I was pregnant, not poisoned. We came

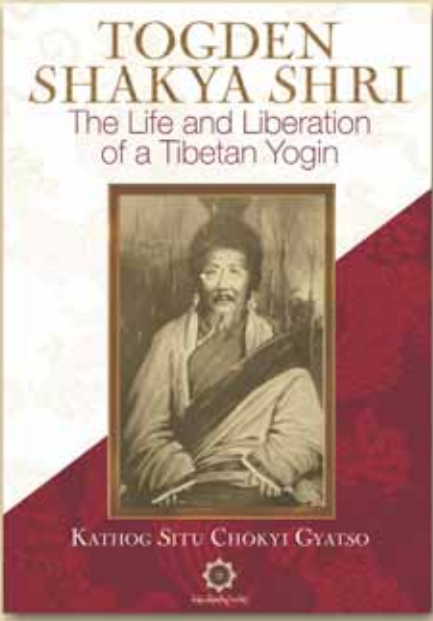
back home after six months. Then we went to Canada where my son’s father was from, we got a cabin in the woods and I had my son, Shunyata.

At that point I had been reading Rinpoche’s books all along and ordering them from the Internet. We were on our way back to India when Shunyata was about three months old and I stopped into Dondrubling [the Dzogchen Community Ling in Berkeley, California] a few days before leaving and Rinpoche was giving the web cast transmission, so I got transmission. This was in 2001. I got a copy of *The Precious Vase* and I started reading it in India. My son’s father was not at all supportive of the spiritual aspect of my life. After a while this caused problems in our relationship. So when we went back to Canada, I decided I could not be with him anymore, I shaved my head again and left with my baby. Shunyata was a year old.

I spent the summer with some nice women who helped me relax and open up. Then my grandmother had a bad stroke and I decided to go and help take care of her. So I moved back to my parent’s house and helped take care of my grandma and started studying Ayurveda. I got my license and I was really into at that point. I was twenty-three years old and Shunyata was three years old. I decided to go and live in India and study more Ayurveda. Then I got this overwhelming feeling that I had to meet Namkhai Norbu. I thought, what if I am in India and I miss my opportunity to meet him, I can’t let that happen. So I started looking for him and I found out that two days after I graduated from Ayurveda school, Rinpoche would be in Baja, California so I decided to drive there in my van. Shunyata was with his father in Canada.

It was amazing and the retreat blew me away. When we sang the Song of the Vajra at the first Ganapuja I ever did, I felt my DNA unraveling and it filled the room and then it reformed and came back in my body. After that the practice really clicked in for me and I came back to the Bay area and began studying Yantra Yoga with Jey Clark and got very into the practices. Since then I have gone to as many retreats as I can.

Now I am enrolled at the University of California at Berkeley where I am studying fungi and microbiology, I have two companies I co-run that use fungi and bacteria to clean up toxins in the environment and help people with ailments such as cancer, diabetes and HIV using medicinal mushrooms such as cordyceps. I have my garden, do my practice, and live very close to Dondrubling. I am finding my little routine. I love Rinpoche and the Community, and from the minute I encountered it I felt this deep connection and have known this is my path. ©




TOGDEN SHAKYA SHRI
The Life and Liberation
of a Tibetan Yogi

KATHOG SITU CHOKYI GYATSO

Togden Shakya Shri
The Life and Liberation of a Tibetan Yogi
By Kathog Situ Chokyi Gyatso
Euro 20.00
Translated and edited by Elio Guarisco
Shang Shung Institute 2008

THIS NAMTHAR, OR TRADITIONAL Tibetan biography recounts the inspiring milestones in the life of the revered Togden of Drugu (1853-1919), a portrayal which is also precious as the mirroring of a vanished world. The chronicle glows with inspiring facts and miraculous happenings, as well as insights provided by numerous letters between the Togden and some of the greatest masters of that era.

The book begins with instructions by Shakya Shri called Opening the Door to Liberation, and a selection of his Songs of Realization. In the appendixes, the translator puts the life work and accomplishments of the master in several useful contexts. The volume includes a preface by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and a foreword by Sey Rinpoche, lineage holder and great grandson of Shakya Shri.



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