

Namgyalgar

## Under the Coral Tree

*Namgyalgar Retreat  
Christmas 1997*

by Tony Mugg

The afternoon of New Year's Day was also a celebration of a beautiful retreat as participants relaxed in the shade of the Coral tree. The Coral tree is a lone and ancient warrior adorned with prayer flags that grows on the saddle below Rinpoche's house at Namgyalgar. A wind blew up and tall clouds were building on themselves over the surrounding mountains while retreatants enjoyed a wonderful feast, prepared by Grit Fair, under the beloved tree.

A Gakyil meeting prior to the retreat had finalized plans, but the discussion was dominated by our concern with bush fires. Some weeks of dry weather had made everything brittle and the air was now heavy with volatile eucalyptus oil from the trees of the forest. We had studied the history of fires in the district and considered how best to protect the lives of everyone at the retreat; how to evacuate one hundred and seventy people and where.

Water storage, fire pumps and hoses, notices, warning sirens, fire buckets, the formation of fire fighting teams to stay on the land during a fire so that Rinpoche's house and the Gonpa could be saved after a fire front passed through, were subjects all thoroughly covered. Throughout the day, the smell of dryness justified our fear and care. The thought of local rain showers before the retreat was no comfort as a dry northwest wind can rise so quickly and mockingly erase that gentle gesture.

As Christmas approached the weather moderated. It was still dry, but not so hot. Workers arrived to help. Alan Gilbert with the preparations. Brian Snowden from Melbourne. Sean from New Zealand and from the USA, the Connecticut Cowboy, Jim Smith. Also our gekod Federica and assistant gekod Bob returned from their travels with Rinpoche in

India. Their work went well in the milder conditions and Namgyalgar looked safe and welcoming.

Rinpoche arrived from Sydney happily showing his tiger spirit; robust, lively and very much at ease. He looked so well. His journey through Tibet and India and his time in Singapore obviously enlivened him.

With hot weather forecast, the Gakyil submitted the concerns we had about the safety of everyone in the event of a fire and gave Rinpoche an outline of our precautions. Rinpoche was not too worried, but said our preparations were important and it was necessary to consider everyone's safety. Rinpoche then observed that as so many people were camping at Namgyalgar, rain would be inconvenient for them, so maybe it would be better if the rain came at the end of the retreat. Through the week of the retreat, the days were warm and the air still. One day was even hot enough for Rinpoche to swim in the ocean.

On New Year's Day the remains of lunch were being packed away and the towering clouds continued to form. Lightning and thunder surrounded us at a respectable distance; then rain. Big, soft, warm drops of rain. We all stood beneath the canopy of the Coral tree and watched as it became steadier and heavier.

Two nights later, the air still moist with rain and as thunder rolled over the hills, the Gakyil sat on the verandah of Rinpoche and Rosa's house. In a relaxed and jovial spirit Rinpoche talked about the development of Namgyalgar and gave us guidelines for the progress that would take place over the next two years. Rinpoche was also explicit about the Gakyil arranging a series of strong practice retreats to be held at Namgyalgar throughout this time. He looked forward with hope to the next teaching retreat at Namgyalgar at the end of 1999.

## The Retreat with Tsok Nyi Rinpoche at Merigar

by Sergio Quaranta

This year I came to the Christmas retreat at Merigar with the firm intention to follow the entire retreat. There was no precise reason for my decision, since I only knew Tsok Nyi Rinpoche from his photo on the brochure announcing the retreat. To meet him in person was a very pleasant and precious surprise.

From the very beginning, Rinpoche directed his teaching to a very concrete level describing how we, in general, continuously focus our attention externally, becoming slaves to objects, distancing ourselves more and more from our natural condition and ending up becoming strangers to ourselves. Losing contact with that which we really are is the source of sadness, anger and depression, in other words, suffering.

Why do we fall into this trap? The cause lies in perceiving vision in the wrong way. We attribute concrete substance to that which has no absolute existence; we strongly believe that objects are solid and real and as a consequence we believe in the reality of our "I".

Here the Master explained that our mind, "the knower", has two ways of working: one way is grasping, the other is being free from any action which can produce karma. Respectively, these ways are nothing other than the expression of the superficial aspect (which we could call relative) of the mind, and the profound or essential aspect of the mind itself, which are not in opposition but naturally inseparable.

Since we fall into this confusion, is there a way to come out of it? Of course there is. Rinpoche explained the essential method of Dzogchen of applying "non-meditation non-distraction". This apparent contradiction makes us understand how distraction itself is the source of all our problems. On the other hand, maintaining presence during any type of action, whether sitting for formal practice or any type of activity in daily life, is the key which unlocks the door of liberation. Rinpoche put into perspective the concept we often have, and which is only a concept, of seeing the "practice" as something very elevated as opposed to mundane daily life which is something to reject. In Dzogchen it is not like that, on the contrary we cannot really call ourselves "dzogpachenpos" as long as this separation exists.

The Master spoke at length on the base, the path, the fruit and the way of seeing, meditation and behavior, as well as what is meant by awareness with and without effort. He then gave a complete explanation on the three ways to liberate that which arises and which manifests as reflections within our minds.



Tsok Nyi Rinpoche in the Gonpa of Merigar

E. TERZANI

Tsok Nyi Rinpoche asked us to be simple people, even if we are complicated externally, in the sense of doing everything which we have to do in normal life, but capable of maintaining a mind which is simple and pure. The Master compared this simplicity to a wise old man who lives happily with the little that he has, without complaining when it rains or when it is sunny, but enjoying all types of conditions.

During the teachings Tsok Nyi Rinpoche often stopped to ask us all questions to be sure that we had understood the crucial points. Dissatisfied with vague and philosophical-type answers, he always showed us how to precisely recognize any possible problem or obstacle and then punctually gave the solution, the way to overcome it. The numerous examples the Master gave to illustrate various situations were very amusing, such as the story about the young man who learns to drive. At the beginning he is timid and insecure, with all his senses alert with the tension. But then he gradually starts to feel more secure and is able to drive in the traffic even while he is listening to music and hugging the girl seated next to him. Telling these stories with his humorous and effective gestures the Master indicated how we could deal with the practice and gradually gain confidence in it.

The days started at nine in the morning for many people who met in the Gonpa for an hour before the teaching for a session of contemplation. After the afternoon teachings, Rinpoche's assistant, Lama Tashi, led a collective practice with moments of contemplation alternated with the practice of Vajrasattva.

During these periods Rinpoche received those who wished to see him in private to ask personal ques-

tions or simply to communicate their appreciation.

More than once Tsok Nyi Rinpoche personally led the afternoon collective practice and on one occasion asked us to get up and walk around the Gonpa to experience and test our capacity to maintain our presence and remain in the state of rigpa integrated with movement.

Everything went very well. The Master, Lama Tashi and the transla-

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### SPECIAL NEW YEAR PILGRIMAGE ISSUE

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# The Importance of the Dzogchen Community

There are many newer and older students in the Dzogchen Community who do not have a clear idea or understanding about what the Dzogchen Community is and why it is so important. Since I have created the Dzogchen Community, it is my duty to clarify why it is so important.

On a variety of occasions, I have tried to explain how important our Dzogchen Community is for Dzogchen practitioners. It seems many people don't care very much; they think that Namkhai Norbu is giving importance to the organization of the Dzogchen Community because it is his own Dharma Center. Some people say, "I like to come to follow your teaching and retreats, but I don't like the organization of the Dzogchen Community."

With these kinds of misunderstandings, recently some Dzogchen Ati followers of my teaching - not only students who have been following my teachings occasionally, but those who have been following all my teachings for many years such as Dzogchen Semde, Longde and Upadesha, as well as following my SMS Trainings - are in a lot of confusion about the way they view the Dzogchen Community. They are going more and more in opposition to the principle of the Dzogchen Community and creating their own Dharma Centers to have personal positions. These people justify it saying that they need more freedom for themselves from the organization of the Dzogchen Community.

I understand very well what it means to have more freedom for oneself. Some people don't feel free in themselves in the Dzogchen Community because they feel there is a strong bureaucratic or control system. If this is so, we should note that the Dzogchen Community is not functioning in the correct way, and remember well what the purpose is of having Gakyils in the Dzogchen Community. We should correct the errors of the people who are taking on the responsibilities of the Gakyils. This is our responsibility. Of course, the people of the Gakyil should do their best to organize the Dzogchen Community, but it is not only the duty of the people of the Gakyils. It is also your duty. Instead of criticizing the organization of the Dzogchen Community, you should also try to correct things when you feel there is something that really does not correspond to the principle of the Gakyil.

It is very possible that a person who has been following the teaching of Dzogchen for many years may be involved in various kinds of activities. Through that principle, one could need such freedom and therefore develop their own Dharma center. All this is very natural. I am not saying at all that people who follow my teachings cannot open Dharma Centers. Of course, they can open new Dharma Centers and have their freedom. What I am saying is that they should not do it while falling into the wrong or opposing direction.

What does it mean, the wrong or opposing direction? If someone is following my teaching and transmission, they must recognize that the Dzogchen Community is the Main Boat. Even if you are creating some of your own boats, you must always be in the Main Boat. That means never falling into an opposing position to the Dzogchen Community and criticizing it, but feeling truly that the Dzogchen Community is your own boat and taking care of it in that way. One should not feel afraid to create a Gakyil in your own center because it would infringe on your personal position and power. In this case, even if your Dharma Center is not really the Dzogchen Community, it should somehow relate to it, just like other boats can travel together cooperating with the Main Boat. We can call it: A Dharma Center Affiliated with the Dzogchen Community.

When you act as my student, as a member of the Dzogchen Community, and do Santi Maha Sangha Trainings regularly, then you must understand that the Dzogchen Community is like being in a Big Boat that carries all my students to whom I have transmitted all my transmis-



G. DALLORTO

sions of Dzogchen Ati Yoga, and takes them to the final goal of its realization sooner or later. That means that the Dzogchen Community is a guarantee to all my students that they will get to the final goal sooner or later with my transmissions of Dzogchen Ati Yoga.

When we are in the same Big Boat of the Dzogchen Ati Yoga Transmission, which is called the Dzogchen Community, there does not exist very much of a need to open a personal Dharma Center or to abandon our Big Boat. Naturally, sometimes there can exist special cases or reasons why there needs to be other forms of Dharma Centers affiliated with the Dzogchen Community; like having small boats due to circumstances or other boats cooperating and traveling together to the same goal. In developing these kinds of Dharma Centers, we must understand that these centers must not develop in opposition to the Dzogchen Community while using both my teaching transmissions and the Dzogchen Community for their own interests, like increasing personal position and power.

I can understand very well that someone can have problems with the organization of the Dzogchen Community, because we are living in time and circumstances. There can always be problems; we do not worry about having problems because having problems is the natural manifestation of our samsaric condition. The real problem is neither having nor not having problems, but having awareness while inside the problems.

When we have problems with the Dzogchen Community, those troubles are usually related with people who are taking responsibility as members of the Gakyil of the Dzogchen Community. The fault is with the individuals in the Gakyil, not of the Dzogchen Community. When you find these kind of faults, you also have a duty to correct them. This means that you are also being responsible for the Dzogchen Community; not only in a general way, but also for the Gakyil of the Dzogchen Community. It is not difficult to communicate to the Gakyil; you can personally contact the people of the Gakyil directly or by mail. Today we have all kinds of possibilities of communication: letter, telephone, fax and E-mail.

The Dzogchen Community is for all Dzogchen Ati practitioners. It doesn't belong only to the people of the Gakyil. That

means that all Dzogchen practitioners are in the same boat and they should take care of the Dzogchen Community just like their own home. That is how our Dzogchen Community members must be in our Dzogchen Community.

Even so, why are some of my older students opening their own Dharma Centers? Nowadays in India, Nepal and many places of the Western world, many new Dharma centers or monasteries are manifesting suddenly and easily like mushrooms flourishing in the rainy days of summer. It seems like something wonderful for the diffusion of Dharma. It could be so relatively, but the real condition is very different from that. So, it is better we understand a little more clearly about the real condition.

For example, when a Lama who is mainly interested in receiving money and power, etc., arrives in the Western world or in a Southeast Asian country, he can say he should create a Dharma Center for the diffusion of the Buddha's teaching. The Lama can say that he needs to build a Dharma Center or a monastery for a group of monks to live in. Of course, for that purpose, he can get some generous donors, or can receive directly sums of money. This all sounds very nice, doesn't it? But in the real sense, most of these kinds of activities are just worldly Dharma businesses. They have nothing to do with the Buddha Dharma.

I am not saying that all Lamas traveling in the West and Southeast Asian countries are doing this - we know very well there are many good and serious Lamas - but at the same time, there are also some Lamas who are mostly concerned with doing a kind of Dharma business. I am referring to those kinds of Lamas.

If we take as an example the kind of Lama who wants to be an important worldly Lama, the first thing that he does is use some technique that encourages many people to pay respect to him. How does he do it? He tries to build a small monastery or a center under his own name and then he tries to get some donors for that project. Of course, he can't say that he is preparing for his position or worldly power. What he needs to say is that he is working for the benefit of the diffusion of the Dharma or for the service of a small community of monks or nuns. Yes, of course, relatively there are always some benefits, such as diffusing the teaching or having benefit for a small Sangha, etc. But its negative side for the life of real Dharma is incomparable.

When he succeeds to build his own seat, then he becomes a venerable Lama. He has more possibilities of developing still more of these kinds of activities for supporting his own position. This Lama's seat carries more and more of a wealthy position and he has more and more power over those dependent people. Thus he becomes a more and more important Lama or a famous teacher and has the title of Rinpoche and so on. This is the real reason for creating so many monasteries or Dharma centers in one's own name. Of course, this technique can be used not only by Tibetan Lamas, but also by Westerners as well.

You may ask: "Didn't you create your Dzogchen Community in that way?" When I was 3 years old, and then again at 5 years old, I had already received recognition as a very important high Lama or Teacher reincarnation, therefore I did not need to construct it. Even though I had been recognized as such, since the beginning I haven't had any desire to become a Buddhist teacher in general, or a Dzogchen Teacher in particular. So how could I have the idea of preparing to become an important Lama or a famous teacher?

You may know this already, but after many years of living in the West, in Italy, many Italians asked me to teach the Dharma. The Gyalwa Karmapa particularly had asked me repeatedly to teach Dharma to Italian Dharma followers. But I had hesitated for some years reflecting on it, because I knew that to give teaching meant working with the transmission and since I was also still on the path, I did not want to play with the very important transmissions I had received from my teachers.

Finally, when I decided to pay respect to the order of Gyalwa Karmapa, and make those people happy who were interested to receive Dharma teachings, I started to teach principally the Dzogchen Teachings, and at the same time I took a promise of 27 commitments for my teachings that they not become something related to personal interests, etc. Since then I have always transmitted all my Dharma teachings in general, and the Dzogchen Ati Teachings in particular, while maintaining these 27 commitments.

I created the Dzogchen Community

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## NAMKHAIR NORBU RINPOCHE'S SCHEDULE 1998

<b>SINGAPORE</b>		<b>POLAND</b>		<b>MERIGAR, ITALY (continued)</b>	
Feb. 27-1 Mar.	Teaching in Singapore	May 22-24	Polish Retreat	August 14-24	Chögyal
<b>TAIWAN</b>		May 26-29	Visit Paldanling land	Namkhai Norbu	
March 6-8	Teaching in Taiwan **	<b>GERMANY</b>		General Retreat	
<b>JAPAN (see pg. 13)</b>		June 5-7	German Retreat *	August 28-30	SMS III Level Exam
March 14-15	Tokyo Teaching	<b>AUSTRIA</b>		September 31-4	SMS IV Level Training
March 20-22	Island Retreat (Japan)	June 10	Lucid Dream Conference*	<b>FRANCE</b>	
<b>ITALY</b>		<b>MERIGAR, ITALY</b>		November 20-22	Paris Teaching*
April 9-14	Merigar Retreat	June 12-14	Austrian Retreat	November 27-29	Karmaling Teaching
<b>RUSSIA</b>		June 25	His Holiness Sakya Trizin Zhenpa Zhidral Teaching	<b>PORTUGAL</b>	
April 20-22	Santi Maha Sangha Base Level Exam, Moscow	<b>June 26-28</b>		December 4-6	Portugal Retreat *
April 23-27	SMS Ist Level training	<b>July 24-28</b>		<b>BRAZIL</b>	
May 1-5	Moscow retreat	<b>Chögyal Namkhai Norbu General Retreat</b>		December 12	Public Talk, San Paolo
May 8-10	SMS Ist Level Exam			December 18-20	SITIO Retreat *
May 11-15	SMS II Level Training			<b>ARGENTINA</b>	
				Dec. 28-4 Jan. 1999	Tashigar Retreat

\* Venues to be announced. Use International Contacts List for details (see The Mirror issue #42).

\*\* To be confirmed



# The Origin of Tibetan Language and Culture

A talk given at the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts in Dharamsala

by Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche



Tibetan Dancer

G. EDWARDS

November 1, 1997

Today I am very happy to be here at the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts and wish to express my appreciation for the study and preservation of an important and ancient aspect of Tibetan culture done here at the Institute. I consider this work very important.

As you know, the activity you do is related to our culture. In Tibet we have a different way of classifying fields of knowledge. For example, we speak about the ten minor fields and the five principal fields of knowledge. Art falls into one of the five principal fields of knowledge under the name of *sowa rig pa*, which means arts or handicrafts.

The work of art is related to our three existences of body, speech and mind and when we practice the Dharma, the foundation of the practice are the three doors of body, speech and mind. When we are complete in that, we are considered to be sentient beings. Therefore when we practice the teaching we have to rely on the three doors. They are called the three doors because when we practice the Dharma we obtain liberation in relation to these three doors, so these are the doors that lead us to liberation.

In art, for example, we use our body to express various moods in a physical way. Even with regard to producing works of art such as paintings or statues, this work is done through the door of the body.

But that is not the only way of expressing art with the body. We can express ourselves when we are under the influence of strong emotions such as attachment or hatred and so on. These emotions manifest in our body, in the expression of our face, the movement of our hands, etc., and become the object of theatrical representation. When you look at Indian dances, especially the ancient ones, you can see that they are very skillful in expressing different mental states by means of the movement of the hands, the eyes, and the body. Therefore, this manifestation of expression through visible physical aspects is very important.

Then in art we use the door of speech when we are chanting or singing. As for the way of using the door of the mind, that is the door that underlies those of speech and physical activity. These verbal and physical doors through which our inner states manifest are very important, especially in the first of the five sciences or *sowa rig pa*.

In Tibet when we explain or teach about the five sciences, scholars usually say that they originated in India. For example, when you speak about *dra rig pa*, literally meaning "grammar", immediately you think about the Sanskrit grammar — the grammar of Kalapa, the Chandrapa grammar, the Panini grammar and so on. Scholars usually explain it in this way and it seems that besides this Sanskrit grammar, there is no other science of grammar or language which is peculiar to Tibet. But this is not the case. Here, when we talk about *dra rig pa* in Tibetan, we are referring to the ability to use speech. *Dra rig pa* refers to the science of using the language; knowledge of the words, the grammar, the syntax and

all these aspects of the language. For Tibetans this mainly refers to their use of Tibetan language, not only to Sanskrit grammar. For example, in our Tibetan language there are many words that have no root in Sanskrit, so when we want to identify this science of *dra rig pa*, we have to say that it refers mainly to the language and letters of the written Tibetan language. The basis for the spoken Tibetan language is the letters.

There is some misunderstanding about Tibetan language which I found out about through my own experience. When I first went to Italy on the invitation of Professor Tucci, I worked with him for two years. After this I went to teach on my own at the University. While I was teaching there, I noticed that the course of study for Tibetan language was two years, while for the other languages it was four years.

At the beginning I was new and inexperienced, but later I questioned why there were only two years for the study of Tibetan language required, when it was four for the study of other languages. The answer was not clear, so I made an investigation. At first I thought it was because I myself didn't have any kind of Western diploma, only an Indian one. Then I discovered another reason.

Generally Tibetan scholars teach that the Tibetan language originated at the time of Songtsen Gampo, around the 8th century. Prior to that no Tibetan language existed. Scholars used to say that the Tibetan language was created by Thonmi Sambhota, the minister of the King who was sent to India in order to create a written language for Tibet. Prior to that Tibet did not have any written language and was presented as "a land of ignorance" or "a land of obscurity". In that country of darkness due to the kindness of the Dharma king of Tibet who was a manifestation of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, the sun and the moon finally shone over Tibet and dispelled the darkness. Then the various fields of knowledge appeared and developed at that time.

Western scholars who were studying under the Tibetans were obviously exposed to that view and accepted it as being true; the language, the various different sciences such as astrology, medicine and so on were thought to have been introduced exclusively from neighboring countries such as India and China. Therefore when one holds such a view, naturally, Tibetan culture and language become a branch of the other two major languages and do not have an original status of their own. And Tibet remained like a man without his own limbs. So at that time I understood that the two year course of study was due to this fact.

Then I thought that this cannot be the case, there must be an origin for Tibetan language and culture in the country itself and I started to inquire. Usually we haven't done this kind of inquiry in Tibet in the past. I had many kinds of texts and scriptures at my disposition so I started to look at them to see if there was some proof to say that Tibetan culture originated in Tibet itself.

I looked at the Bönpo texts because they indicated that prior to Songtsen Gampo there was a language used and it was the language of Shang Shung which was used in Shang Shung, in Tibet. But that was a problem because if the language prior to Songtsen Gampo was the language of Shang Shung, then it was not the language of Tibet, but of a different race of people to Tibetans. If that was the case, the problem of the origin of Tibetan language and culture was still there. So I started to study the history of the ancient kingdom of Shang Shung.

Now we must remember that there were six clans which were antecedent to the formation of the kingdoms of Shang Shung and Tibet. These six families are usually known as the six original Tibetan clans. One of them was known as *Dra* or *Khyung* and it was from this clan that the Kingdom of Shang Shung descended. Therefore because we speak of the original six clans of Tibet, from one of which came about the kingdom of



VIKRAMASILA FOUNDATION

## His Holiness Sakya Trizin will give teachings on the Zhenpa Zhidral (Beyond the Four Attachments) and the Initiation of Vajra Kilaya June 25-28, 1998 at Merigar

H. H. Sakya Trizin was born in Tsedong, Southern Tibet in 1945. He is descended from the Khon royal family, one of the most ancient Tibetan spiritual families, and is the forty-first in an unbroken lineage of lamas that stretches back to 1073 AD. He is the head of the Sakya tradition, and the title 'Sakya Trizin' means 'Holder of the Throne of Sakya'. He became the head of the Sakya at the age of seven upon the death of his father, and has received

an intensive training in the study and practices of the Sakya tradition. Whilst still a child, he completed a seven-month retreat.

Amongst his main teachers were: Jamyang Khyentse Chokyi Lodro, Ngawang Lodro Shenpen Nyingpo, Chogye Trichen Rinpoche, and Khenpo Appay Rinpoche.

In 1959, at the age of fourteen, he left Tibet during the Chinese military takeover and went to India. He then studied with H. E. Chogye Trichen Rinpoche, who instructed him on the Rime collections, the 'Gyude Kunda' (Collection of Tantras), and the 'Lamdre'. As well as holding the three main Sakya lineages of Sakya, Tsar and Ngor, H. H. Sakya Trizin holds the complete teachings of both the Iron Bridge and Great Perfection lineages of Nyingma, given by Drupchen Rinpoche and Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche respectively. He is also holder of the Lamdre teachings, which cover the Hinayana, Mahayana and Mantrayana paths. He has founded numerous monasteries throughout India and East Asia, and established his seat in exile at Rajpur, U. P. India, near to which he founded Sakya College, the school of higher philosophical studies where training is given in logic, philosophy and psychology. He is fluent in English, and since 1974 he has made several world tours teaching in Europe, the USA and Southeast Asia.

## RETREATS

with

NAMKHAIR NORBU RINPOCHE  
At Merigar

### EASTER RETREAT AT MERIGAR, ITALY

April 9th - 14th, 1998

Rinpoche will give Dzogchen Teachings in distinct sessions for the new and older practitioners.

The retreat begins at Thursday, April 9th 1998 at 5 pm.

The costs are 250.000 lire (or 50.000 lire per day) with the usual reductions for members.

### FIRST SUMMER RETREAT AT MERIGAR, ITALY

July 24th - 28th, 1998

The retreat begins Friday July 24th, 1998 at 5 pm.

The costs are 200.000 lire (or 50.000 lire per day) with the usual reductions for members.

### SECOND SUMMER RETREAT AT MERIGAR, ITALY

August 14th - 21st, 1998

The retreat begins Friday, August 14th, 1998 at 5 pm.

The costs are 350.000 lire (or 50.000 lire per day) with the usual reductions for members.

Shang Shung, we can basically say that the language of Shang Shung is a Tibetan language.

So the written language of Shang Shung existed from the very beginning of the diffusion of the Bönpo teaching. The Bönpo say that the written language of Shang Shung was created by Shenrab Miwoche, the founder of Bönpo. So at that time I really started to look into many scriptures of the Bönpo.

After I read many Bönpo texts, the history of Shang Shung started to unfold before me. Prior to the advent of the Tibetan kings and kingdom, there were many generations, at least 18, of the kings of Shang Shung. When I made a rough calculation of the years covering the history of Shang Shung, I found out that it started about 4000 years ago. When I made this calculation it became clear to me that the history of Shang Shung is almost as old as the history of China and India.

Later, when we held meetings or conferences at the University to discuss various aspects of Tibetan culture — since at that time I was teaching subjects such as astrology, medicine, etc. — I would assert with a certain arrogance this view that Tibetan medicine, culture and other aspects of the culture that went back much before Songtsen Gampo, and we can find the proof of this in the Bönpo texts. At that time various aspects of the culture were transmitted with the use of the written language of Shang Shung.

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munity for the purpose of the continuation and maintenance of my Dzogchen Ati transmission. This Community is only for those people who are interested in my Dzogchen transmission and who are interested maintaining the Dzogchen transmission which I have sincerely and purely transmitted to them.

I am not limiting other Dzogchen teachers and their teachings by not integrating them into the 'Dzogchen Community'. Of course, if there are some serious Dzogchen teachers and teachings, I always integrate that into the Dzogchen Community and always will. You can understand that by the paintings of Dzogchen teachers that are painted in the Gonpa of Merigar. That is how I work.

Today the name "Dzogchen Teaching" has become very marketable. It is for that reason that I am very, very doubtful to consider all who carry the name of "Dzogchen Teaching" as something to be integrated into our Dzogchen Community. For that reason it is very difficult to believe that these kind of Dzogchen teachings are correct or are really the Dzogchen Knowledge Transmission.

I have tried to transmit the essence of all three series of Dzogchen Ati, which are the very essential knowledge of Dzogchen Ati transmissions that I received from my precious teachers such as Rigdzin Jangchub Dorje, Ayu Khandro Dorje Paldron, Togden Ogyen Tendzin and so on, more than 15 Dzogchen Masters, to my students who are seriously interested. Most of you know that I have transmitted mainly Dzogchen Ati Teaching and its transmissions for some 15 years or more, which means that for all this time I have been dedicated and worked seriously with the Dzogchen Ati transmissions.

Of course, then you can understand that I also have a great responsibility for my Dzogchen Ati transmissions. For that reason, I formed the Dzogchen Community with all my students who are in this same transmission boat. You can understand why I created the Dzogchen Community, and that the Dzogchen Community does not exist for my personal interest or for creating an important position of power for me.

Everybody in the Dzogchen Community remembers, they know very well, that I never made any kind of missionary life. I worked in the University for nearly 30 years. It doesn't mean that I liked being a University professor all those years. What I learned in the Dzogchen teaching is that a practitioner of Dzogchen should accept how the circumstances of one's life are manifesting.

Of course, one can understand that if there is some terrible situation, one can try to find what the cause is and try to modify this situation. That is also clearly explained by Buddha Shakyamuni in the teaching of Sutra; that the way of overcoming the samsaric suffering is not struggling with it, but discovering what is the cause of suffering. Of course, when one discovers the cause, there is always the possibility of modifying. Otherwise one can accept just how it is: I have that circumstance and I accept it as it is. For that reason I worked that way instead of being in a position of a Dzogchen Master.

I am not saying that the position of a Dzogchen Master is negative; but if there is some personal interest for being that way, then it could be negative definitely. Therefore you can understand very well the real purpose of the creation of the Dzogchen Community from the beginning. In short, the Dzogchen Community is: How we collaborate with each other and between all our Dzogchen practitioners;

How each practitioner goes deeper or progresses in the real knowledge of Dzogchen;

How each practitioner integrates the knowledge of Dzogchen in their real condition;

How all practitioners are traveling together to the total realization;

How we can maintain a real and pure transmission of Dzogchen Teaching for the future generations;

How we can have a guarantee of the correct continuation of the Dzogchen Ati Teaching.

So, the Dzogchen Community was established as the safeguard for the continuation of the Dzogchen Ati teaching and its transmissions. How I started it is the same way I take care of it continuously. It doesn't depend on how long I live, but until the total realization of all who are interested on this path and are seriously related with my transmission.

For that purpose, the Dzogchen Community has a characteristic way of being. Its structure is different from all other kinds of Dharma Centers and that is called the Gakyil. And that is why the Gakyil exists in the Dzogchen Community. If one has the real knowledge of Dzogchen Ati, then he or she must have the knowledge of the value of Dzogchen Ati transmission. Having this knowledge, then one can have total understanding of the value of the Dzogchen Community. Then it is not so difficult to understand the value of the Santi Maha Sangha Trainings and how they are related with Dzogchen Community.

When we are starting different levels of Santi Maha Sangha examinations, we ask, "Are you a Dzogchen Community member?" Of course it doesn't mean, "Do you have a Dzogchen Community Card, or did you pay some money to have the Dzogchen Community Membership Card?" If that was so, there would be no sense in having a Dzogchen Community Membership.

It means that one must understand how important the Dzogchen Community is and how one must be responsible for it. That is the real sense of Dzogchen Community Membership. If you are a Dzogchen Community member, then there is no reason to create another Dharma Center in your name; you already have the Dzogchen Community. You should take care of it in the way I have done until now and am continuing.

You may know already I have had some problems of feminism in the Dzogchen Community of Australia. I am not sure still if it has been overcome or not. Anyway, it is a very heavy and dangerous concept for me. In my teaching, originally taught by Garab Dorje, what we should learn is:

"RGYA CHAD PHYOGS LHUNG BRAL BA" that means more or less: "Not falling into any concept of limitations" and Guru Padma Sambhava said:

When we speak of Dzogchen, we can understand its meaning on two different levels. The first refers to the state of every individual, the nature of self-perfection where nothing is lacking (this is the literal meaning of the word 'Dzogchen') which is introduced by the teacher to the student. Through recognition of this state we can become familiar with it by using different methods and mainly by keeping our presence and awareness.

The second meaning refers to the Dzogchen teaching and also, in this case, it indicates that the Dzogchen teaching represents the essence of all different kinds of paths and methods of spiritual practice, including non-Buddhist traditions. If we examine the huge mass of methods and explanations found in Dzogchen literature, we will be surprised to see how from the basic notion of "knowing one state, everything self-liberates" it can expand into thousands of different methods of practice and insights, though never forgetting the center from which they all sprung.

If we really understand the Dzogchen teaching, we will discover that for our spiritual growth there is no need to rely on other traditions and techniques such as Western psychology, shamanic trances and new age fantasies. In the natural condition there is no need to invoke the power of a deity to descend and bless our state. We are already Samantabhadra—a state beyond the masculine and feminine aspects but which at the same time is the source of both—this is what Dzogchen communicates, and even if it is very difficult to realize it concretely in our existence, if we have met the Dzogchen teaching it means we have a very precise karmic connection and should therefore, if we are

"SNANG BA YAB LA STONG PA YUM, GNYIS MED A TI RDZOGS PA CHE" which means more or less: "The vision is yab and its emptiness is yum, the non dual state is the Ati Dzogchen".

I have always understood the concept of sex or the male and female principle in just that way. In the state of Dzogchen, of course, we must be totally beyond the concept of sex. Then you can have the idea, "Why then do all these Sambhogakaya forms like male or female exist?"

The above statement of Guru Padma Sambhava makes it clear. Of course, relatively, we have our dualistic vision, like subject and object, male and female, samsara and nirvana and so on. Even if we have these kinds of relative, dualistic visions, and in the pure vision, the visions are manifesting like the Sambhogakaya forms of divinities and their nature is emptiness manifesting its energy, then relatively they are manifesting different aspects. But in the real sense, they are beyond dualism since the beginning and their real condition is inseparable.

Relatively, of course, we have our sex of male and female, but we know it is only in the relative sense. Even in the relative sense, I am not saying either male or female is more important and another is less important. An individual does not exist who is only

## The Nature and Meaning of Santi Maha Sangha

by Adriano Clemente

really convinced, follow its path by relying only upon a qualified master, without mixing the teaching with other views.

Mixing and integrating are two different things. We can integrate all knowledge into our state. If I meet a Hindu teacher who communicates the knowledge of non-duality I can integrate that knowledge into my state as part of Dzogchen understanding. But if that teacher introduces me to some deity or some power on which I must rely for any spiritual or material benefit, I am 'mixing' my Dzogchen understanding with something which is contrary to the view, that is, the need to rely on something outside my natural state.

The Dzogchen Community, as far as I know, was the first spiritual community to have the name 'Dzogchen'. When Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche started talking about Dzogchen in the middle of the seventies there was virtually no Western translation of Dzogchen texts, and Tibetan lamas considered that it should be kept secret and not communicated openly to people interested in the teaching. But as with many other projects, Rinpoche had a clear vision of the future and it is no surprise to remember that when the Dzogchen Community was only an idea for most of us, in the mid-seventies, it was already something living and growing for him.

After Rinpoche had taught Dzogchen around the world for a few years, other teachers started to teach Dzogchen. By now this teach-

ing has become very popular and fashionable among Buddhist students, with all the consequent positive and negative aspects. In fact quite a few spiritual associations and teachers use the name 'Dzogchen' when they advertise their workshops and retreats.

In the middle of the eighties, after ten years of spreading the Dzogchen teachings and clarifying the three series of Semde, Longde and Menngagde, the idea of the Santi Maha Sangha training started to develop in Rinpoche's mind. Especially after the pilgrimage to the holy mountain Kailash in 1988, he understood the necessity of leaving the Dzogchen teaching in its purest and most complete form and at the same time of having the guarantee of a Dzogchen 'sangha' which could grow spiritually and in harmony with the basic samayas.

What is the meaning of 'Santi Maha Sangha'? 'Santi Maha' means Dzogchen, and 'sangha' is the community. As we can see Rinpoche did not, for example, use the name 'Santi Maha Padgala' ('padgala' is a Sanskrit word that means 'individual person'), but 'sangha' and this is of the utmost importance. Because the Sangha is the real 'Body' of the Master, just as the Dharma is his Voice and the Buddha is his Mind. It is wrong to think of the Master as a kind of deity to venerate and the spiritual brothers and sisters of the Sangha as ordinary people to criticize, despise and quarrel with. But it seems that sometimes we use Rinpoche's authority, for example, by saying "Rinpoche said this or that" just in order to defeat another person's idea or point of view. If we only wait for Rinpoche to tell us "do that and don't do that" we will never grow enough to become a real spiri-

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either male or female, but an individual has both aspects of male and female. For example, the two sides of a human body have solar and lunar conditions. So there is no sense in accepting and rejecting or not paying respect to each other. A very simple example: when we are walking we need both legs; we cannot negate one of them and if we do, everyone could understand that there is not any sense in that.

We are only pretending to be a Dzogchen practitioner if we still hold on to these concepts. It means that we are being really very, very far from a real understanding of Dzogchen Ati Knowledge. And our practice is not Dzogchen, but is only progressing with samsaric concepts.

We can understand what feminism means in a political sense. I am not saying that people cannot be involved in politics. Of course, whoever has a political conviction and is mainly interested in doing political activities, they can do as they like. But someone who is a follower of a teaching like Dzogchen Ati, for those kinds of people, the teaching has nothing to do with political principles. The teaching dealing with political activities is the most dangerous for damaging the teaching and its transmission.

Since we have the responsibility of saving the pure Dzogchen Teaching and its transmission,

then we must notice that dealing with the concept of feminism is a dangerous thing related to saving the pure Dzogchen Teaching. Therefore I don't want anybody who is still keeping this kind of feminist ideology in mind, and at the same time is a Dzogchen Community member, to come to me to present the Santi Maha Sangha Level III examination. If someone is coming in that way, I will ask them not to come to the Santi Maha Sangha Level III Examination. Everyone is free to come to me and follow my Dzogchen teachings and if they are coming seriously, then I say they are always welcome. I don't care at all if I have many followers or not. That is not my principle.

Of course, if there are many serious followers of the Dzogchen teachings I am happy, because they can have real knowledge of Dzogchen Ati and they can contribute this precious knowledge to many sentient beings. If there are crowds and great numbers of people that is fine. But seriously interested people are rare, and in this case, I prefer to be alone and quiet. In short, if someone wants to deal with me or with my Dzogchen teaching, then that person really should be honest in the real sense of the Dzogchen Teaching. That is something that I really need.

Many Tashi Delegs to you all. ■



# Not Too Tight and Not Too Loose

## The Middle Path

An Interview with Tsok Nyi Rinpoche  
Merigar January 1998

by Andy Lukianowicz and Liz Granger, translation by Tony Duff

**Tsok Nyi Rinpoche** is the son of **Tulku Ugyen Rinpoche**, the great Dzogchen and Mahamudra master who recently passed away. He is the third reincarnation of **Drubwang Tsok Nyi**, an outstanding yogi and **Drukpa Kargyu** master and is connected with both the **Drukpa Kargyu** and **Nyingma** lineages. He usually lives in Nepal where he is responsible for his monastery and a nunnery. He is also the spiritual leader of **Gechak Gompa**, a retreat center for one thousand yoginis in eastern Tibet. He recently gave several days of teaching at Merigar and kindly consented to give this interview for *The Mirror*.

**The Mirror:** Our first question has two parts. Firstly you grew up with your father who was also one of your gurus and we would like to ask you about this experience. And then in regard to the West where there are lot of difficulties in relationships between children and parents, do you have any advice for parents and children about this relationship.

**Tsok Nyi Rinpoche:** Firstly until I was about thirteen I spent most of my time with **Tulku Ugyen Rinpoche** in Nepal. After that I went to India and I stayed with **Khamtrul Rinpoche** in Tashi Jong. And the reason for that is that previously both the first and the second **Tsok Nyi Rinpoches** had very close relationships with the **Khamtrul Rinpoches** — sometimes **Khamtrul Rinpoche** was **Tsok Nyi Rinpoche's** guru and sometimes **Tsok Nyi Rinpoche** was **Khamtrul Rinpoche's** guru. They had a guru/disciple relationship that changed backwards and forwards. I went to India from the time that I was about thirteen and I stayed there basically for twelve years, but within that twelve years I frequently came back to Kathmandu and in the presence of my father, **Tulku Ugyen Rinpoche** I requested further instructions and received oral advice and so forth.

So my first guru, when we consider the **Nyingma** tradition and the **Dzogchen** tradition in particular, is **Tulku Ugyen Rinpoche**. After that I met with His Holiness the previous **Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche** and requested many oral instructions and initiations, and having received those he also became one of my root gurus.

Still as far as **Tulku Ugyen Rinpoche** is concerned, some sort of special feeling, some kind of happiness and source of confidence,

came about through being with him. Not only through being with him, but even now I have some kind of joyful feeling in my heart and that is only through the kindness of **Tulku Ugyen Rinpoche**. It's something I got from him.

When he was alive he was really like a bodhisattva. He never closed his door to anyone. He gave teaching to whoever came from anywhere in the world. And I think that that kind of blessing stays with me. But I cannot do that — from time to time I have to close my doors. But even when he was really sick and dying he still continued to see people. The doctors tried to close his doors, but he secretly continued to give teachings and advice.

In my relationship with him I always consider him to be a great bodhisattva and **Dzogchen** practitioner. I cannot do as he did, but in my mind I think that his activities and way of life were very helpful to me. Of course he was my father but I did not have a real worldly relationship with him. When I was young our relationship came through the teaching and I realized that he was not only for me but for everyone. I didn't really mind — I didn't need him as a personal father. So when he passed away I had this kind of sadness, not as if my personal father had passed away.

I was with him at the time of his death and I saw the process of his passing away and after that I felt that a great teacher had passed away, not my personal father. It's very funny. We have an equal responsibility — I and all his students have a responsibility towards him as students. It's not as if I and my father were alone for all our lives. So when he passed away I felt very sad, but in another manner because he was also my teacher. Whatever teaching I got was mostly from him, especially the meditation part of the teaching.

And to answer the second part of the question. The relationship between parents and children is becoming more and more difficult



Tsok Nyi Rinpoche at Merigar

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and somehow I think it is a problem of freedom. At eighteen years of age, young people are considered to be "free" so parents think that they don't have any more responsibility for them and their children think they are fully authorized as grownups. But most of them are not grownup at that time; their minds have not grown and they still need care and direction. This is a modern kind of problem.

So my advice is for parents to consider their children individually instead of following the system. The culture has set up a system which has become solidified into certain ages and so everybody is going ahead according to the system instead of following their own wisdom. What I'm suggesting is that instead of people just following the cultural system, the cultural norms that have come into being, that the parents on the one hand take more of a part in giving advice and guiding their children, regardless of whether they are eighteen or twenty-one, whatever the age might be. At the same time, the children be trained somehow so that they don't have such a strong idea of, "Oh, now I've reached this age, I can do

whatever I want," but they, too, accept parental direction and advice for a longer period. So individual care needs to be developed more.

**The Mirror:**

You are part of a young generation of lamas most of whom were born outside Tibet in India. Many of you have studied English and are able to communicate with Westerners. Do you feel a greater facility in teaching Westerners through this being able to communicate directly?

**Tsok Nyi Rinpoche:** You know I don't really think about it that way. Dharma flourishing or not flourishing doesn't really depend on those type of things. To know English and to know other people's cultures is not, I think, important. The most important thing is to have a good understanding of Dharma and to practice yourself. There are a lot of Masters who don't

know anything about Western culture, still they do very well in the West. And if they don't want to do anything in the West, they are doing very well in Tibet, India, Nepal etc.

The main activity comes from the Dharma itself. Of course if they know some English it's easier to relate, but the main thing is understanding the teaching itself. If they have a very good understanding of the teaching and maybe some good realization, even if they don't know the culture of any other country or any English still they will do very well and be able to help very much just like **Khyentse Rinpoche** or **Dudjom Rinpoche**. I just know a little bit of English and Western culture, but this does not mean that I can reach as many people or give as many great blessings as Masters such as them.

Of course the best thing is to be a very great master with great realization as well as knowing about other cultures and languages.

**The Mirror:** During the teaching you spoke about integrating and that you have to have something to integrate in order to integrate it with everyday life. How can we be aware when we are integrating, when we have something to integrate and when we've lost it and are just lost in everyday life? And could you give some advice on how to bring this kind of rigpa or awareness into everyday life and into our everyday thinking process.

**Tsok Nyi Rinpoche:** Actually to really discuss this properly we have to talk about mind and mind's essence which means that we have to talk about rigpa and the liveliness of rigpa, but these are not suitable things for discussing in a newspaper. Nevertheless, what it comes down to is that what one needs to be able to do is that within the state of the view whatever afflictions arise one needs to be able to liberate them. Or putting it backwards you need to be able to liberate whatever afflictions arise and you need to be able to stay in the state of the view to do that. It's not that you're going together with

afflictions. It's not like this.

For example if a thief comes, in order to integrate it means you need to liberate the thief. It's wrong if you join the thief thinking that you are integrating with him because you are not going against him. In this way you are not liberating the thief, you are just going together with him and doing what he wants to do. That is not integration.

I see a lot of people like this all the time. They have desire and they follow it, doing whatever desire wants them to do considering that this is integration. That is not integration. That is making desire stronger and joining with it. Integrating means that whatever of the afflictions come, whether it is anger, passion, aggression, whatever, you know and you are not carried away by it. You are also not fighting it. Somehow you see the reality of the afflictions so they are just released by themselves. If you can do that then you are not afraid of anything and you become like a hero. Because wherever you go appearance is there, so you are not really rejecting appearance, you are dealing with it. So you can explain it in that kind of way.

This is one of these two kinds of **Buddha** wisdom because you know the key point of the affliction so even if it comes it doesn't matter for you because you know that the root of affliction has no real solid existence. But at the same time you are expert in how to deal with the circumstances.

So as I said before, to explain this kind of thing we need to use the terminology of mind and mind's essence and so forth, but in my tradition and my way of doing things until someone has stayed with me for say, 8 or 9 days in retreat and heard the whole explanation from top to bottom, then it's not appropriate for them to hear about these things at all.

**The Mirror:** Rinpoche, this is your first time in Merigar. How did you like it? Apart from the food.

**Tsok Nyi Rinpoche:** Actually I've been to Europe a few times even though I've not come here before. Coming here what I see, having been to Europe and other places, is that people are quite relaxed here, their minds are quite easy and because it's like that I really like it here. If you don't know well you think people don't understand because Italian people don't show so much expression on their faces, at least in terms of what we've seen, but when you ask a question they understand perfectly. So because of that I also learned about a different culture and at the same time the openness made me happy.

Then when I heard about **Norbu Rinpoche's** activities especially in Tibet, that made me very happy. I've heard a lot about **Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche** but here I came to his seat at Merigar and met the director of ASIA and heard how he's helping children in Tibet building hospitals and schools in remote areas where they need it, not just in the main town. It's not a political thing, it's just helping in Tibet. When I heard about this I was very happy.

So the whole thing has made me relaxed — but not in a stupid way.

So especially for people here, take care very well — not too tight and not too loose, middle path.

**The Mirror:** Thank you very much, Rinpoche.

## Santi Maha Sangha

continued from previous page

tual Sangha.

So the aim of the **Santi Maha Sangha** training is to learn how to integrate the **Dzogchen** teaching in our concrete existence according to the methods of **Semde**, **Longde** and **Mennagde**. And the capacity of knowledge and integration must be reflected in the behavior of individuals in order to contribute to the spiritual growth of the Sangha. This means that this period in the life of the Community is the most important we ever had, because it depends entirely on us whether the **Dzogchen** teaching Rinpoche is transmitting will be kept alive in its pure form or not. Now is the time we should all join our strength and energy for the benefit of the **Santi Maha Sangha**, that is the **Dzogchen**

Community, and especially those who follow this training should not forget what is its aim and purpose.

The **Dzogchen** Community has been devised as a non-authoritarian gakyil-based structure, in which there is place for everybody to participate and contribute for the benefit of all beings. The 'gars' are the main places where the **Dzogchen** teaching is going to be kept and preserved for the future, and the **Santi Maha Sangha** training takes place there and will continue to do so in the future. Qualified practitioners, therefore, should collaborate in the growth of the Community because collaboration is one of the most important samayas we have. Otherwise we may have many 'Santi Maha Padgala' teachers and students, but without the bodhicitta motivation of the Sangha, will the teaching have any life at all in the future? ■

## Retreat with Tsok Nyi Rinpoche

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tor, **Tony Duff**, expressed their gratitude for the great hospitality and in particular for the delicious food prepared by **Silvia** and her helpers. Because of the atmosphere of merriment and collaboration, when the Master said good-bye I was not the only one to feel a bit moved, but the sadness was lightened by the awareness that somewhere, sometime, in the space without limits of the **Dharmakaya**, we will meet again.

Once again thank you **Tsok Nyi Rinpoche** and many thanks to our Master who made all this possible through his work and his infinite kindness. ■



# Origin of Tibetan Language

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Nowadays in Tibet we use two different forms of the written language. We can say that the form with the big letters was created by Thonmi Sambhota. Prior to the King Songtsen Gampo since it seems that there was no language specific to Tibet, we must have been using the language of Shang Shung. Of the two forms that were used in Shang Shung, *maryig* was the written language of Shang Shung used in Tibet prior to Songtsen Gampo.

Now in Tibetan language we have two written forms, *uchen*, with the big letters and *umed* which is a form of cursive writing to write quickly. Cursive writing definitely had its origin in the *maryig* script of Shang Shung.

Generally I have a great consideration for the books of Gedun Choepel, but concerning the language I am in disagreement with him. He says that the *umed*, the small letter script, came about as a result of writing the big letters quickly. I cannot agree with this. For example, the Bhutanese use a quick form of the big letters, but even though it is a quick form, they always remain big letters. However quickly we write the *uchen* (big letters), they will never become *umed* (small letters) of the other script that we use in Tibetan. With the *uchen*, we usually start from the right and go to the left but with the *umed* we mainly write the letters from left to right. So it is a kind of a contradiction to say that if you write the big letters quickly they can transform into small letters. At that time I asserted at my conferences that the small letter came from the *maryig*, the letters of the *mar* script of the Bönpo, even if I didn't have all the proof.

There were many other professors and I was junior to them and they started to say, "Oh, he's a junior professor, he's also young and he's speaking with such an insistence and arrogance of his view that does not agree with the view of many great Tibetan scholars. All the great Tibetan scholars of the past said that at the time of Songtsen Gampo, Thonmi Sambhota went to India and brought back the script that became the Tibetan script." Many people started to dislike me but since I am a Tibetan and I had in mind to preserve my own culture, I asserted my view with that aim.

In any case because I had that in mind, I definitely made up my mind to pursue my investigation until the end.

I continued to pursue my studies and the very first outcome of my research was the book I wrote called, *The Necklace of Jewels*. In this book I quoted many sources from the Bönpo texts on the origin of Tibetan culture and language.

After I had written the book I was reluctant to send it to a publisher because I heard some criticism from some of the people who had read the book; the monasteries and so on who were accusing me of making propaganda for the Bönpos. Although I had written it, I withheld its publication thinking that it would be the source of a great deal of criticism for me.

Then I thought that actually that is not the way to do it because if I don't put forward my view on the origin of Tibetan culture nobody will, and we Tibetans will be damaged by this. I thought that maybe it would be better to present this book

to His Holiness the Dalai Lama first, although I was still a little afraid because in some way it could be interpreted as a criticism toward the Buddhist teaching.

After I sent him the book I got an answer immediately from him. In his letter he told me, "You are Tibetan and this view about Tibetan

killed their King, the last king of Shang Shung, Ligmigya). Songtsen Gampo invited a Bönpo master called Nangsher Lhodpo from Shang Shung to take away the curse and when it was taken away, as a reward Songtsen Gampo gave them a document giving some land to the Bönpo to continue to preserve their culture. That document is still preserved today in Dolanji in India. It is written in the ancient language of Shang Shung. And so the Bon culture continued and

already fields of knowledge such as language and so on.

And when Songtsen Gampo sent Thonmi Sambhota to India, if he came from a land of ignorance without any culture, unable to understand the language, he would have needed a long time to learn Sanskrit and study the language in order to be able to communicate and eventually bring back a new script. If you look at history you will know that he didn't stay that long in India. So for these, and many other reasons, we

These texts find their origin in the Shang Shung script in the Shang Shung region. Moreover, inscriptions on metals were found in Northern India and many scholars tried to find out which language they were in thinking that it was a language in existence in Northern India. When the inscriptions were studied in the West, scholars determined that this language was the language of Shang Shung. Now it is possible to reconstruct the language of Shang Shung to see how it was shaped.

Last year when I was in China, I had the opportunity to speak with some Chinese scholars who went into the Southern region of Tibet. They found inscriptions there that they determined to be in the language

of Shang Shung and while I was in China I saw a book describing their research and findings. They were very happy because they had finally found evidence to confirm the assertion of the existence of the land of Shang Shung.

Because of all these recent findings showing the existence of the land of Shang Shung, there are not many professors who criticize me. On the contrary, they are all doing study and research on the language and culture of Shang Shung. Many scholars and Tibetans requested me to write a book on the history of Tibet and the source of our culture that would serve the purposes of future generations of young Tibetans. I've written this book in Tibetan, *The Light of Kailash*, on Shang Shung and Tibet, which I have now given to the Amne Machen Institute to print.

When I was younger I had many ideas to do this and that for Tibetan culture and I've done what I can. Now I've become old and I'm still doing whatever is in my possibility to help the preservation of Tibetan culture. And if this is helpful to you I am very glad.

That is all I have to say today.

Translation by Elio Guarisco  
Transcription by Liz Granger

*I had many kinds of texts and scriptures at my disposition, so I started to look at them to see if there was some proof to say that Tibetan culture originated in Tibet itself.*

culture comes from a Tibetan. We need this type of view in modern times and I appreciate it very much. If you wish, I will have this book published." Then I was quite happy because if the Dalai Lama himself was in favor of the publication of the book other people would not have much chance to criticize me. So it was decided that the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives would publish it.

For some reason the book was not read by many people, I think because I wrote it in scholastic language, the language of the college where they study dialectics and debating in Tibet. I did that because I thought it would appeal more to Tibetan scholars, but this did not favor the common people so I decided to write a shorter form of it so I wrote *The Necklace of Zi*.

From that point on I enlarged my analysis of Tibetan history. Gradually I came to find many reasons and much proof for my assertion. Nowadays to find reason for the assertion is quite important. I found a source for the proof of the existence of the Shang Shung language.

At a certain point Songtsen Gampo had an illness related to the nerves of the legs. His Bönpo priest told him that this was not an illness that could be cured with medicine but was a curse of the Bönpo priests of Shang Shung (because he had

among the sacred objects there was a seal by this King in the Shang Shung *maryig* script which today is in Dolanji).

If we look at the history of Tibet, there are many texts that state that prior to Songtsen Gampo Tibetans were using the language of Shang Shung. If you look at the work written by Pawo Tsuglag Trengwa called *The Feast of the Sages*, you can clearly see that Songtsen Gampo sent Thonmi Sambhota to India because Tibet needed its own language and writing. It means that if he sent Thonmi Sambhota to create a language that is specific to Tibet, it indirectly proves that Tibetans were using another language which was not their own. The language that Tibet was using prior to Songtsen Gampo was the language of Shang Shung.

Even in the biography of Vairocana it is clearly mentioned that Thonmi Sambhota modified the Tibetan script. Modifying the script means that there was a script to be modified, because you cannot modify something that does not exist. In the history books Songtsen Gampo himself was called "one who is learned in the five sciences" but if Tibet, prior to Songtsen Gampo, was really a land of darkness, how could there be someone learned in the five sciences? It means that at that time there were

will find that this story saying that Thonmi Sambhota came from a land without language and so on is not credible.

People say that it was possible because Songtsen Gampo and Thonmi Sambhota were manifestations of bodhisattvas and they don't need such a long time as us to learn things; they just learn immediately. I'm not saying that they were not bodhisattvas. Who can say? It is said that Songtsen Gampo was an emanation of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. We can believe that. But if he was really an emanation of the bodhisattva and had the ability to know everything, there was no need to send Thonmi Sambhota to India. Thinking this way is called reasoning.

Therefore it is clear that in Tibet prior to Songtsen Gampo we had a culture and a language. I think it is very important for us Tibetans to assert this. Therefore I say that our Tibetan culture has its own origins in the kingdom of Shang Shung.

There are many aspects of Tibetan culture which have been imported from countries surrounding Tibet, but the basic source of our culture comes from Shang Shung. We have many documents of Tun Huang, which are very ancient, and prior to the introduction of Buddhism, that speak of medical therapies such as moxabustion and so on.



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# Lives of the Great Masters



## Yeshedo or Jnanasutra

by Jim Valby

This hagiography of Jnanasutra is adapted from Longchenpa's account in his "rdzogs chen snying thig gi lo rgyus chen mo rin po che". The story of Jnanasutra's birth, education, and meeting with his Master Shringha was presented in *Mirror* issue #42.

Jnanasutra wept bitterly saying "Oh, oh, alas! If the teacher — the flame of the lamp — goes out, who will remove the darkness of the world?" Shringha himself passed down his last testament entitled "Seven Nails" into the palm of Jnanasutra's hand saying

"The books on the Innermost Essentials are in a pillar in Tashitri-go's Samle Shrine. Go live in the Bhasing Cemetery."

The cemetery was quite a distance east of Budhgaya. From the North, a river flowed down from a black mountain which looked like a sleeping black elephant. From the South, the scent of sandalwood trees arose from a mountain which looked like a standing yellow tiger. In the West there were Garuda nests on a mountain which looked like a lion leaping through the air. In the East there were herbs on a mountain which looked like Brahma's face.

The Sonam Dzogpa Stupa was situated in the central area which possessed whatever was necessary and desirable. It was constructed with copper, iron, and jeweled materials. Its main axis contained a serpent-like sandalwood tree whose highest point formed a canopy with plentiful lotus leaves. The middle section described a circle with overlaid rings of sky-blue jewels. The bottom section was sided with tiers which resembled a closed lotus.

The lowest tier was completely sided with the King Sengha tree. All the branches of the tree were intertwined, just like a woven net of turquoise stones which formed an intricate lattice-work. On the lower tiers were many animals which lived in the cemetery surrounded by many goddesses. The area above

that was surrounded by many female lay devotees who held fans. Above that there were many families of magical birds.

A shrine gate with crystal images of worldly divinities was situated within hearing distance directly south of the Stupa. Within the gate was Yama of the Bardo who was black with tangled hair, fangs, and a perpendicular eye on his large belly. He was surrounded by a thousand wicked worldly Mamo spirits.

Above Yama was situated the Divine Lord Tsundhari who shakes the world. He rode naked on a red ass with his bloody hair dragging on the ground. Smoke issued from his eyes, fire flamed from his mouth, and a trident in his right hand impaled human corpses. He held a flask in his left hand and was surrounded by 800 groups of demons whose duty it was to suck blood from the living. As well there were some tormented spirits who had broken their commitments.

There were some incredibly greedy corpses on top of a huge pile of new and old corpses. But some beings who lived in the cemetery enjoyed the various fruits of the trees and did not desire flesh and blood.

In the East, amidst homes of moist human heads everywhere, the accomplished Palgi Lodro was totally naked and rode a Garuda traveling throughout the 3 realms. She had 5 dark red faces and a garland of skulls around her twisted plait of hair. Her 5 right hands held a wheel, a lotus, a spear, a baby corpse, and an arrow. Her 5 left hands held a monk, a lion, a wolf, a dagger, and a bow. She was adorned with various cemetery paraphernalia and attended by a 1000 Dakinis of peaceful demeanor who lived there.

In the South, yellow Semma, the queen of the Dakinis, rode on Tsogdag. She had one head, 2 hands, and wings of turquoise and

lapis lazuli stones. Naked and ferocious, she held a skull filled with sow's beer in her right hand and the symbols of realization in her left. Her eyes were squinting, her face scarred, and she was surrounded by a group of 1000 Dakinis.

In the West, naked Barma Chenmo, with her hair tucked-up, held a Vajra in her right hand and a long leash in her left. She rode an animal and was attended by 1000 Dakinis of a powerful type.

In the North, green naked Kuntu Zangmo with freely-flowing hair held an owl in her right hand and a falcon in her left. She was riding on a wolf and was accompanied by 1000 Karma Dakinis.

In the Northeast was Meker Loggi Trengwa Zinpa. He was naked, green, and had his hair tucked up. He held a string of swords in his right hand, pointed a finger of his left hand, was riding a buffalo, and was surrounded by 7 murderous Mamo spirits.

In the Southeast, naked, pale-blue Shabari, with freely-flowing hair, held a large rotting corpse in his hands, rode a hungry elephant, and was attended by 7 servants who did the organ plucking.

In the Southwest, Trag Chingmo, pale-blue, with her knotty hair tied in the back, carried the lion standard in her hands, screamed "HUM", rode a corpse in the moonlight, and was attended by 7 flesh-eating female spirits.

In the Northwest, dark brown Chagmedma with a single strand of hair twisted right to left, one eye which saw 3000 worlds simultaneously, one tooth which chopped off the root of life for vow-breakers, retained all vicious diseases at once in her single hand. Her one breast simultaneously nourished all beings, while her one leg encompassed both samsara and nirvana. She was attended by 7 female death spirits who desired flesh and blood.

As well, there were innumerable kinds of quadrupeds and an untold number of magic female spirits present in the cemetery.

South of these, in the jeweled center, Jnanasutra sat in lotus position upon tiered steps of a jumping tigress. He was offering the sublime mudra under an unfolded parasol of peacocks amidst various ensigns and fans. He was teaching the very explicit Secret Innermost Essentials to the Dakinis.

At that time Vimalamitra himself was riding a blue ox in the Thachung Cemetery, holding a parasol of fans in his hands with his outer robe hanging over his right shoulder. Once when he was really into his practice, the Dakini Palgi Lodro exhorted him from the sky:

"Oh you lucky one! If you desire the profound Innermost Essential Instructions more than you did before, go to the forest of the great Bhasing Cemetery."

With great effort, Vimala joyfully journeyed to the Bhasing Cemetery and developed an extraordinary intensified reverence for Jnanasutra who was sitting as described above. Despite their previous equality and the fact that Vimala had once been the Guru's teacher, Vimala did not judge who was more important, but prostrated before, and circumambulated Jnanasutra. Offering gifts Vimala said:

"Indeed you are a real person! Since you certainly embody teachings which are unlike any previous ones, I wish to follow in your footsteps."

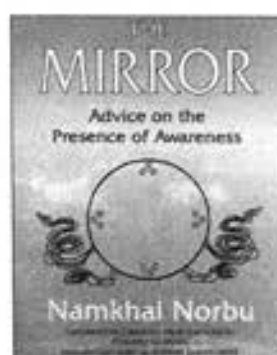
Nodding his head, Jnanasutra

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# BOOK REVIEWS

## THE MIRROR: Advice on the Presence of Awareness Namkhai Norbu

Translated from Tibetan into Italian and  
edited by Adriano Clemente.  
Translated into English by Andrew  
Lukianowicz.  
1996, Station Hill Openings  
Barrytown, N.Y. 99 pp.



### The Only Real Alternative

*THE MIRROR: Advice on the Presence of Awareness* by Namkhai Norbu. This book should be read by anyone interested in making the present life worth living and preparing for its inevitable end. It teaches us how to get out of the cage we have built, and inside which we insist on existing—how to become, in an ultimate way, a free, autonomous person. In a few pages, this extraordinary Dzogchen text shows how to regain that freedom of being which is potentially available to us all. "Freedom" in this case means a state in which one is no longer conditioned by dualism, by the passions, and by one's mental habits and beliefs. Instead, one proceeds from pure presence, uncontaminated clarity, in knowledge of one's own state. Chögyal Namkhai Norbu wrote this book to explain the principle of such awareness and the practice of continuous presence, the only alternative to the rules, models and limitations of the various religious attempts to gain transcendence.

The knowledge Dzogchen transmits is not merely intellectual, nor confined by the principles of a religious or philosophic position. It concerns the reality of our experience in its immediacy. Thoughts and passions, for example, are not to be rejected or transformed but simply recognized as the energy of our primordial state. However, this way of "self-liberation", as the author makes clear, is not mere distraction or indiscriminate surrender to impulse. There may be no rules, but there is self-discipline—the most radical kind, based not on control but self-observation, not on imposition but on responsibility. Presence is the opposite of distraction, and without distraction we recognize what is, and act from that awareness, without making judgments or having to block our own actions.

When we live the teachings in our activity, they affect us deeply, provoke reawakening, and promote our evolution. And this without the creation of a further cage, for example a monastic or otherwise religious structure to contain and guide us. Compassion, for instance, in this view develops out of awareness, out of clarity, rather than being instilled by precept and constructed with effort. If we know our own feelings and condition, we will understand others. Similarly, practicing awareness, we recognize the circumstances and situations of our relative condition as they arise. Thus we take positive action, also toward ourselves, not because of rules and punishments, not out of guilt or the fear of error, but because we see and respect limits, opportunities and needs. Dharma is the understanding of how things are, of what is the case, and not, as the nineteenth century translators would have it, "the Law."

Here, awareness is healthily

complete. There is a "felt sense", but also an explicit knowledge of our nature. Awareness, as described in these pages, is not only "experiential" (as in current American usage) but equally implies cognition. Since the purpose of awareness is to live what we are, feeling and sensation are not enough; conceptual understanding (for example, that we exist as body, energy and mind, and all this means) plays a comparably important role. Experience, even of our state, takes us nowhere without understanding, while words and ideas without sensory and perceptual experience do not constitute "direct transmission" and real knowledge.

In psychological terms, natural mind possesses, in seamless unity, both conceptual and organismic, bodily awareness. Modern, neurotic man splits them, in anxious reaction to the chronic emergency, inner and outer, in which he lives. To cope with an overwhelming situation he tries at least to "feel" what he does not understand, or to intellectually master what he is unable to grasp by feeling. Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, and the masters of the Dzogchen teachings who came before him, find underlying unity self-evident and offer many methods for the profound relaxation which makes it possible.

With the same boundless simplicity, presence is understood and explained not only in terms of "here and now," as in current fashion, but with openness to all three times. For example, spontaneity must not preclude thinking, prior to action, of probable consequences. In the natural serenity which Chögyal Namkhai Norbu teaches us to cultivate, there is harmony between past, present and future. By failing to give adequate weight to each dimension, our contemporary culture risks destroying the continuity of life. However splendid the marble, a bridge must connect both banks of the river.

Analogously, awareness embraces the spiritual and the material, and meditation itself, in Dzogchen, accepts and integrates the external world. There is not only sitting, but also action. Practicing without distraction, the space of meditation expands until there is no distinction between meditation and daily life. The master warns, in these pages, against the fantasy and confusion which sometimes embroil practitioners. We can say that everything is illusion, like a dream. But even a dream is real, while we sleep. "As long as we have a body, we must respect all of its limits and its needs."

In his transcribed oral commentary, published here with the original written text, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu explains why it is difficult to find material about the vitally important principle of awareness: "...in all the Buddhist teachings, from the sutras to the tantras, the

continued on page 8



principle in general is that there are rules to be observed. The Dzogchen masters in Tibet, who taught people who had practiced sutra or tantra teachings, always limited themselves to advising them simply to have awareness. Since they were addressing disciples who would have been familiar with this principle, in their writings they never gave explanations of what awareness is and how to apply it. How grateful we can be, then, for his kind decision to provide this precious "advice."

Adriano Clemente, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's dedicated translator from the Tibetan, has once more the great merit of making the wish-fulfilling jewel accessible to

the world. He has, as usual, given us an accurate, intelligible rendering. In addition, he has written an introduction (from which this review shamelessly borrows) which is at once scholarly and helpful. Andrew Lukianowicz, in this new English version, conveys the purity, clarity and bright surface of *The Mirror*. Like Andy's other work, the present volume is modestly free of a plethora of translator's prefaces and forewords. The Tibetan-language text, in the author's hand, is included. The book is physically handsome, the print is clear, the text is unmarred by typographical errors. Station Hill, George and Susan Quasha, deserve our thanks.

Barrie Simmons

# CREATION AND COMPLETION: ESSENTIAL POINTS OF TANTRIC MEDITATION

Jomgon Kongtrul

Translated by Sarah Harding.

1996, Wisdom Publications, Boston, MA. 129 pp.

Jomgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye expressed in his life and work the fullness of the Rime, or non-sectarian approach. In her introduction to *Creation and Completion: Essential Points of Tantric Meditation*, Sarah Harding describes the petty political intrigues Kongtrul experienced as a young man. He was born the son of a Bonpo lama, Sonam Pel, and trained thoroughly as a Bonpo priest. When Sonam Pel was thrown into prison as a result of some local feud, Kongtrul followed him to Derge. The Nyingma lamas in Derge were impressed with his knowledge of Bon and invited him to study at Sechen Monastery. He accepted, and three years later in 1832, took full monastic vows. But when his reputation spread he was requisitioned as a secretary to a high lama at the Kagyu monastery of Palpung. The Kagyu lamas advised him to retake his vows under Situ Rinpoche. Apparently his Nyingma vows were not regarded as sufficient by the Kagyu lamas in charge of such things. Then to guarantee that he would not be requisitioned away by the government, they arranged to have him recognized as a reincarnation of a servant of the previous Situ. In this less than inspiring fashion, he was recognized as "Kongtrul". Throughout his life he was devoted to Situ Rinpoche, but in his late thirties when he experienced an illness he attributed it to not fulfilling his Nyingma samayas. His vast writings show an immense appreciation for all 8 lineages of the day, including Choed and Kalachakra. He produced enormous volumes of practices and commentaries on the entire canon of both the Nyingma and Kagyu Lineages. His own terms fill ten volumes, and he compiled a work containing the great works of all 8 lineages. His monumental work, *The Treasury of Knowledge* traces the development of knowledge in the Indo-Tibetan sphere from the beginning of the universe, including science and philosophy and practices of all Tibetan traditions. Throughout his career he fostered a sense of appreciation and respect for each method with an emphasis on personal progress on the path rather than the purity of a single approach. His run-ins with the practitioners at Palpung led him to stress the importance of skepticism about one's own level. Knowing how easy it is to fall into self-deception, he offers many ways to discover which error one is presently cultivating.

Central to this text is a method of dealing with disturbing emotions by integrating the Three Turnings in one sitting. First, using mindfulness to recognize the emotion, we establish an attitude of rejection or renunciation. Second, we take in the pain of that emotion so that all others may be free of it. In the third stage, to reach that state where thoughts of desire may arise as wisdom, you transform into the Heruka. And finally you "look directly at your own mind as the inseparability of the deity, the Guru and the emotion."

## WHAT ARE THE THREE TURNINGS?

An analogy sometimes used to describe Dzogchen is an old dog flopped down alongside the road. No matter who passes by, the dog watches but remains limp as if to say: "so what." Usually when we start on the path, our relationship to our thoughts resembles a dog who chases every car that goes by. The dog may be running in hot pursuit or through his annoyance at being disturbed, may angrily chase the car out of his territory, or just mechanically follow his pack instinct. No matter, at this point, renunciation is essential. If the dog, or the meditator, does not stop chasing, no training can occur. This corresponds to the First Turning of the Wheel of the Dharma by the Buddha. We calm the mind by training in the Four Thoughts such as impermanence and the futility of worldly activities which lessen our fascination with thoughts of hope and fear. The dog, by understanding that chasing after cars is ultimately unsatisfying, has reached the level of not harming himself or others.

But a being with qualities to become a seeing-eye dog can proceed beyond this level. She begins with discipline, commitment, and loving kindness then progresses by learning skillful actions and gaining understanding for the sake of benefiting the person who she knows lacks the ability to see as she can. This training corresponds to the Second Turning or Mahayana. The experience of emptiness or shunyata is introduced in the Rinzai Zen tradition with the question: "Does a dog have Buddha Nature?" This question leads to a searching for, piercing through, seeing farther quality of mind beyond concepts, after all possible answers are exhausted. This non-conceptual state is the fruition of the Second Turning. In Tibet, reasoning and logic of the Madyamika (Middle Way) was used to bring students to the realization that no concepts are definitive: at best they are provisional or relatively true. Things as they are empty of all possible concepts. Neither you nor the dog can be said to exist or not exist.



In the Third Turning, Buddha nature is affirmed as existing. Emptiness alone does not describe our state. Enlightenment consists of manifesting our qualities, seen now as wisdoms. Let's imagine the dog practitioner had an experience of emptiness but was still subtly clinging to that, preferring it to his emotional reactions, and regarding this experience as true and fixating on it. To fully unveil the wisdoms and qualities of his nature he must embrace all manifestations as free in their nature. His passion for cars, his wrathful reaction to disturbances, his ignorant confusions all can be recognized as inseparable from his own original nature, and so in this way can manifest as discriminating awareness wisdom, mirror-like wisdom and wisdom of all encompassing space. The two methods used in the Vajrayana tradition based on the understanding of the Third Turning are Creation Stage practices and Completion Stage practices. A wisdom being in canine form might manifest through a practice suitable for this car chaser: perhaps it isn't terribly disrespectful to suggest a luminous blue collic with one paw subduing a small red Cadillac, while holding a leather steering wheel and large silver keys. This symbolism of body, speech and mind might function for him. By engaging his energies, formerly regarded as poisons, so he can totally enter this symbolic vision, a dog at this level may reverse his karmic vision.

To become an old dog is not just to have a few new tricks such as letting cars, or thoughts, go by without chasing them. Any effort, or centralization into a self as a meditator or realizor blocks the spontaneous experience of the natural state. In the completion stage neither the calm state, nor the experience of emptiness as a subtle concept or fixation, nor the simple absence of thoughts, is the effortless state of the old dog. For an old dog, cars are just the happenings of the road; they approach and disappear leaving no trace. For him there is nothing to do.

## WHY CREATION STAGE?

But why is Creation Stage necessary? For all but the most gifted practitioners, the experience of emptiness or shunyata comes and goes. When the experience is prolonged, it is a fabrication, in other words, a way of the self preferring one experience to another i.e. dualism, ignorance. The way of the Second Turning uses this memory of emptiness as an antidote to anger and other disturbing emotions. But how do we arrive at the effortless state? In the Dzogchen teachings, it is said that when a student recognizes his own nature he clarifies his doubts and gets used to that state. So why bother with visualization of Herukas or Dakinis? Again, we are habituated to a false view of reality and are so attached to images and concepts of our identity, that we don't recognize them as thoughts. Furthermore, we tend to be blown away by our strong emotions. Visualization is a skillful means of using the imaginary nature to arrive at the real. Entering another vision of reality, being involved by our senses of vision, hearing, feeling and even tasting is the means. But to be effective the vision must arise out of wisdom (emptiness) and be seen as a manifestation of the Guru's mind, one's own true state. The realization is union: unifying the two aspects of our mind, clarity and emptiness, form and emptiness. Kongtrul emphasizes that this state of union can only be said to exist when thoughts arise as meditation. In developing our clarity, we are developing the form kayas which will allow us to benefit others. In the Creation practices emptiness is unified with form, in order to cut through the clinging to emptiness, and to cut the attachment to form that inevitably arises when it is not seen as emptiness. In this way we purify our karmic vision and in the union we can simply continue regardless of what arises.

Jomgon Kongtrul's text, with Sarah Harding's extensive notes and concise introduction make a complete teaching text on the path of creation and completion. The large wood block prints of the Tibetan text are included, and the whole reminds me that Sarah Harding is the generous source of the Tibetan Language Course and served for some years as a teacher at Naropa.

Here is a sample of Kongtrul's verse in Sarah Harding's clear translation:

How to practice Dzogchen:

In the path of Great Perfection  
you look inwardly right at the one who perceives whatever  
thoughts arise, and you encounter the essence of reality.  
Deluded appearance and thoughts disappear in their own ground  
without your paying attention to them. (p.50)

When to do visualization practices:

When your mental powers are weak and maintaining (the state)  
without focusing on something is difficult,  
practice developing mindfulness in creation stage and other  
techniques that are in keeping with your condition.

All practice is working with paradoxes; Kongtrul's irony is sharp.

The clear form of the deity is the luminous appearance of your  
own mind, and the unclear dissatisfying experience is also your  
mind.

So, also, mind is the one who desires clarity and tries again  
and mind is the wisdom deity and guru.

Everything is mind's appearance, and yet mind itself is  
uncontrived.

Summing up the two stages:

In general, creation stage is contrivance,  
but the path of contrivance leads to the authentic natural state.  
With the conviction of emptiness...resting in that state is the  
completion stage itself.

To reach the effortless natural state beyond mind-made meditation:

Simply place the mind on the bare apprehension of the nature of  
reality.

This is not a thought-object of the rational mind because the  
absolute is beyond intellect and without reference point.

If the intimate connection between thought and object is not  
severed, although you call it "uncontrived", it cannot reverse  
delusion.

Severing the inner perceiver and the external object  
may be called self-arising self-liberating, but it is still duality.

When there is no antidote it is self-arising self-liberating.

Whether you are subduing the urge to chase thoughts, transforming your  
passion in creation stage practices, or continuing in the state of the old dog,  
allowing thoughts to liberate as they arise, here are some pithy instructions  
straightforwardly laid out.

Alexis Merritt

# Great Masters

*continued from page 7*

discharged 995 unified light rays from the opening between his eyebrows. Vimalamitra was very surprised by this, but the Holy Man said "There is no reason to be surprised". When Jnanasutra turned his eyes toward the sky, Sambhogakaya manifestations magically appeared everywhere.

An innumerable variety of techniques were at the disposal of this Holy Embodied Buddha, and he had completely passed beyond suffering where the emotionally-tainted aggregates can never arise. He said:

"There are remarkable instructions which you did not receive before. Because you are really eager and a person of noble lineage, I will completely bestow the 4 initiations."

When Jnanasutra had completely bestowed the elaborate empowerment, the opening between Vimalamitra's eyebrows shone brilliantly as a sign of realization.

After Jnanasutra had transmitted the non-elaborate empowerment for one year in a God's shrine, smoke similarly issued from the opening between Vimalamitra's brows as a sign of realization. Then for 6 months on the peak of Srodjed Mountain, Vimalamitra practiced the rushen of samsara and nirvana.

After Jnanasutra had completely bestowed the very non-elaborate empowerment, Vimalamitra developed an extraordinary experience and a drop inscribed with the red letter "A" appeared on the tip of his nose as a sign of realization.

After Jnanasutra had transmitted the super non-elaborate empowerment for 6 months, Vimalamitra mystically experienced the very highest state of the Nature of the Mind. At that time, these two very accomplished persons were 103 years old.

During the first empowerment, Jnanasutra taught from the books of the first three cycles. During the second empowerment he taught from the unsurpassable books. During the third he taught the accompanying oral instructions. During the fourth he completely taught the various condensed essences of the Innermost Essential Instructions. During a period of 14 years, Vimala eliminated all doubts.

At the time when 994 years had elapsed since the Buddha's Parinirvana, Jnanasutra taught the method of completely passing beyond misery where defilement cannot arise. He filled the sky with light, transforming his aggregates.

Vimalamitra fainted and fell down. Regaining consciousness and looking up in the sky, he saw the Guru sitting in a circle of blazing energy. The entire radiant sky was filled with parasols of divine substance, victorious standards, ensigns, and so on. He saw that the entire earth was filled with various gods and men. In great distress he wept saying:

"Oh, oh, alas! If the teacher — the flame of the lamp — goes out, who will remove the darkness of the world?"

Jnanasutra extended his right arm up to his elbow and placed a basket generously studded with five different jewels into Vimala's right hand. With this, the authentic state was transmitted from one vessel to another vessel with neither overflow nor shortage, and Vimalamitra unerringly realized the state. He left the cemetery to ripen what was not yet mature. ■



# In the Presence of the Master

*A brief account of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's recent travels in Himachal Pradesh and the retreat in Delhi*

by Liz Granger



Rinpoche and Daboom Tulku Rinpoche in Delhi

G. DALLORTO

After giving teachings in Kathmandu at the beginning of September, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu spent several weeks visiting various pilgrimage sites in India sacred to Buddha Sakyamuni.

During the month of October, he passed many days at Tso Pema ("Lotus Lake" in Tibetan or Rewalsar) in Himachal Pradesh, a pilgrimage place sacred to Padmasambhava. Located an hour's bus ride away from the main town of Mandi which marks the place where the Kangra and Kullu Valleys meet, the small lake is set like a jewel amongst the foothills of the mountains. The area consists of a tiny village and market and three Tibetan monasteries, as well as a large Sikh temple, all set around the shores of the lake and is populated by local Hindus, Tibetan monks and nuns and a continuous flow of pilgrims. A well-paved path encircles the lake where from sunrise to late evening pilgrims can be seen passing, fingering their malas or spinning their shining prayer wheels. On one side of the lake is a wide paved area where people can make food offerings to the numerous and enormous fish who, unafraid, wide-mouthed and almost flinging themselves out of the lake in their eagerness, jostle each other for the offerings thrown to them by pilgrims. Often tribes of small brown monkeys crouch wide-eyed at the same spot for a forgotten biscuit or even dare to snatch one from a pilgrim's hand while an occasional cow wanders by to receive her offering, too.

Scrambling and panting up a long steep series of stone steps about an hour's walk from the lake, one arrives high above the village on grassy peaks almost hidden by the passing clouds where sheep and goats wander with their tinkling bells and hawks swoop down into the valley below in search of prey. This lofty and sacred place is where Padmasambhava meditated with Mandarava, and pilgrims visit their sacred caves where a towering gilded statue of the great Master can be seen. The cave adjoining his has a smaller statue of Mandarava and at different places on the rocky slopes one can see the signs his footprint and shoulder print left on the rocks. Not far from these two caves is another which is reached down a narrow flight of stone steps and where Guru Rinpoche also spent time meditating. Today one can see a clay statue of the Master there as well as his eight manifestations. Many yogis and yoginis live and practice up in the numerous caves here and the area is cared for and maintained by the Drugpa Kagyu monastery at the lakeside presided over by Lama Wangdor.

According to historical sources, during Guru Rinpoche's travels in Zahor (as this area was previously known), he gave teachings to the King's daughter, Princess Mandarava. People started to gossip about them and when it was reported to the King, became enraged and imprisoned his daughter in a pit of thorns (a cave shrine in the town of Mandi that is still worshipped today by local Hindus) and condemned Guru Rinpoche to be burned alive. But the Master transformed the pyre into a lake at the center of which he appeared on a lotus. The King named him Padmasambhava ("Born from a Lotus").

In this special place, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu spent many days and part of this time in the company of several of his students who had followed him there. He and his wife Rosa were hosted in an apartment at the invitation of the Nyingma monastery and were frequent guests of Lama Wangdor at the nearby Drugpa Kagyu monastery. He was a familiar figure in the streets of the tiny village and walking around the lake.

Rinpoche's students were fortunate to accompany him on various occasions, assisting him to hang strings of five-colored prayer flags around the lake and sometimes walking with him around the lake. On two occasions we all had dinner together in one of the few restaurants with space enough for us all to sit: once on the occasion of Rosa's birthday.

One day we accompanied Rinpoche on his visit to the sacred caves above the lake as guests of Lama Wangdor and had lunch there with them on the roof of the small temple. After lunch Rinpoche himself guided us around the rocky terrain and showed us the different caves as well as the footprint and shoulder print of Guru Rinpoche. We just managed to squeeze into the Guru Rinpoche cave where we sat and kneeled around Rinpoche gazing at the great golden statue as we sang the Song of the Vajra. During the walk in great good humor he paused and pointed to some marks on a rock and said that when Padmasambhava went down to the lake to drink, in order to get up to his cave more easily he manifested as Dorje Drollo riding a tiger. The marks were the claw marks of his tiger on its landing.

Our last stop there was the Gonpa where the monks and nuns did a Choed practice and a Ganapuja. After this most of us started the long walk back to the village just before it got dark.

From Tso Pema, Rinpoche, accompanied by Rosa, Fabio Andrico and Catherine Braud, traveled by car to McLeod Ganj, just a few hours drive from Tso Pema where they remained for several days. Perched above the town of Dharamsala and situated at almost 2000 meters above sea level on the first slopes of the Western Himalayan range, amongst towering pines and icy streams, this small ex-colonial cantonment is home to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government in exile, as well as the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, several monasteries among which Namgyal monastery and the Buddhist School of Dialectics. It is also home to hundreds of Tibetans, both those born in India and those newly arrived, a kind of "little Tibet" where one hears Tibetan music being played, standard restaurant fare is momo and *thugpa* (Tibetan soup) and the smell of incense is carried on the chill mountain air.

The day after his arrival Rinpoche had a private audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Another day the rest of us, along with several hundred other people and after a long queue to leave our passport details with the security, were finally admitted into the grounds of His Holiness' residence where, one at a time in single file, we were able to greet and shake hands with the small stooped smiling figure and receive a red protection cord from one of the attendant monks. A powerful blessing in such a brief moment.

During the days that followed Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche gave several talks in Tibetan at different venues in McLeod Ganj. This was organized by Tashi Tsering of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives. The first day he gave a morning conference at the TIP (Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts) and later in the day a talk on "The Role of language, culture and religion in a nation's survival" at the Amne Machen Institute. The following

It was the Hindu holiday of Diwali — the festival of lights, and the car taking us along the serpentine roadway from Mandi to Tso Pema was suitably decorated; a garland of marigolds was draped around the windshield and small bouquets

## Tashi Deleg

by Woody Paparazzo

prise after a week of rice and vegetables!) We shared photographs of our home, the Community "schoolhouse" and the environs of Conway.

Through an interpreter, we expressed what was quite unnecessary to say: how happy we were to meet at last.

Over the years, we had received many letters from Tsaltrim, but the language barrier presented limitations on our correspondence. His letters, often written by others, were brief but always reiterated how he prayed every day for our happiness and "success at every step". Even though we asked to know something of his personal history, he never revealed much about himself. Later, from Lama Wangdor, we learned that he had lived as an ordinary layman, and late in his life, after his family obligations had been met, he dedicated himself to meditation. Eventually, we came to accept that, for Tsaltrim, the details of his "story" were of no importance. The essential knot of our relationship was a simple one: he accepted our help with deep gratitude, and in return, he did his best to send good influences our way through prayer and sincere wishes for our well-being.

From the perspective of our modern Western culture, one might think this relationship a bit superficial. Eventually, I came to understand that, in truth, the bond between us was deep and extraordinary. From opposite poles — culturally and geographically — we were bound by the common thread of our aspirations and our respect for one another.

In the days that followed, we took all our meals together with Tsaltrim. Generally, we didn't bother trying to converse through the awkwardness of an interpreter. We were content to simply be together. Our time at Zigar Monastery was filled with many wonderful experiences including one night of unbounded exuberance as we joined in with the young monks — led by 14 year-old Palga Tulku — and shot off innumerable rockets, firecrackers, sparklers, pinwheels, etc., etc., in a rollicking celebration of the festival of lights.

At the end of our brief stay, we celebrated with a special meal of momo's which the monks prepared for us. Tsaltrim offered us gifts and glowed with joy in presenting them to us. It was very sad to leave. The unspoken understanding was that Tsaltrim will likely be gone before we can make a return trip. But, this meeting brought us all such joy. We'll always cherish the memory.

(Postscript: There are still many monks at Zigar monastery and meditators in the holy caves who need sponsors. In particular, an 18-year old monk from Bhutan named Rinzin has asked us to help him find a sponsor. If anyone is interested, we would be happy to help make the connection. Send a message to The Mirror or write us at [woodyd@javanet.com](mailto:woodyd@javanet.com).)



Woody and Barbara with Zigar Tsaltrim in Tso Pema

were affixed wherever they could be. The flowers, together with the statue of Shiva, trident and incense holder on the dashboard transformed the car into a kind of rolling temple. After so many planes, rickshaws, and trains, in our long trip halfway around the world, it was a fitting vehicle in which to arrive at our destination — the Zigar Monastery.

We pulled into the sandy courtyard at the monastery late in the afternoon, and soon several young monks began to appear as we unloaded baggage from the car. I glanced up to catch a glimpse of Tsaltrim whom I immediately recognized from the photos he had sent over the years of our correspondence.

Some eight or nine years ago, Lama Wangdor Rinpoche came for the first time to Conway, Massachusetts to give Dzogchen teachings. Later he asked people to help support his work by sponsoring one of the monks, nuns or yogis in his small community at Tso Pema. My wife Barbara and I offered to do so and thus began our long-distance friendship with Zigar Tsaltrim — a yogi living then in one of the holy caves of Padmasambhava near the monastery. Tsaltrim was no longer young when we first contacted him, and now his short bristling hair was entirely white.

My heart fluttered as I hurried to greet him. When our foreheads touched, it was as if a current of electricity flowed between us.

We were shown into the monastery — up the steep back stairs that turned back on themselves several times and were a little tricky due to the Indian peculiarity of mixing steps of different heights. Through colorful banners which served as a door, we entered the large room on the upper floor of the monastery that served as a gathering place for the monks. We were received by Wangdor Rinpoche, and enjoyed a simple meal with tea. (Toasted cheese sandwiches were a delight and a sur-

day he spoke to a hall full of monks at the Kirti Jegpa Dratsan and in the evening visited the Tibetan Children's Village where he was their dinner guest. The third day he gave a talk at the Amne Machen Institute on "The Status of Women in Tibetan Society".

Throughout his stay in McLeod Ganj it was a familiar and joyful sight, especially for many of his students who had not been with him for some time, to see the Master passing through the streets there dressed in a bright orange track suit and a big brown Tibetan hat, his long hair held back in a pony tail.

A couple of days before the Delhi retreat of November 7th-9th, which was organized by Tibet House, the Cultural Center of H. H. the Dalai Lama, Rinpoche left for the capital. The retreat was held a few kilometers outside the city under canvas in the pleasant green gardens of the Jamia Hamdard University. Many people attending the retreat took rooms on the university campus while others traveled across Delhi by car and taxi to attend. Many of Rinpoche's Italian students arrived the morning itself of the retreat and others had followed the Master from Tso Pema, Dharamsala and even Kathmandu to attend his three

days of teaching. Lama Daboom Tulku, the Director of Tibet House, was there to welcome Rinpoche and introduce him before the first session of teaching.

The retreat was organized so that the morning sessions consisted of an hour and a half of teaching, a coffee break and then another hour of teaching. Those people who wished to do Yantra Yoga could attend Fabio's morning class held before the teaching or Laura's afternoon session, held before the afternoon practice sessions which were led by Rinpoche.

Rinpoche began the first morning session by talking about the fortunate circumstances of having the retreat in India, and went on to say how Sutra, Tantra and Dzogchen are related to different levels of the teaching. He talked about the Path of Self-Liberation and the importance of experiences of sensation, clarity and emptiness. During the afternoon practice session he explained the essential practice of Guruyoga with Green Tara and gave the lung after which we did the practice together.

Before the morning session of the second day, Rinpoche freed a few white pigeons from

continued on page 18



# A Pilgrimage to the Middle Land

*An account of the recent pilgrimage with Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche to the four main sites of Buddhist devotion in India*

by Liz Granger

“Ananda, there are four places the sight of which will arouse strong emotion in those with faith. Which four places? ‘Here the Tathagata was born’ — this is the first. ‘Here the Tathagata attained Enlightenment’ — this is the second. ‘Here the Tathagata set in motion the Wheel of the Dhamma’ — this is the third. ‘Here the Tathagata attained final Nirvana without remainder’ — this is the fourth. And the monk, the nun, the layman or the lay woman who has faith should visit these places. And anyone who dies while making a pilgrimage to these shrines with a devoted heart will, at the breaking up of the body at death, be reborn in heaven.”

*Digha Nikaya*

The ‘Middle Land’ or central Ganges Valley was the area in which Buddha Sakyamuni passed his life, meditating in the forests and teaching in the towns and is home to the four main sites of Buddhist pilgrimage. The climate is dry and hot, the environment harsh, and early pilgrims passing from place to place traveled the long dusty roads facing physical hardships and the dangers of political strife and local bandits. However, since it is the sacred home of Buddhism, throughout the centuries the Middle Land has inspired Buddhists to face numerous and great difficulties to visit the places linked to the history of the Buddha.

Pilgrims of past centuries crossed fearful deserts and high mountains. Those traveling by sea risked storms and pirates. Of the many who set out, some never returned or even arrived at their destination. But those who successfully returned home, even after years of travel, had a stronger faith and were changed by their experience since such a quest called for qualities of faith, patience and perseverance.

Although today it is much easier to go on pilgrimage to the Middle Land than in times past, the obstacles, dangers and discomforts of travel are still there in modern form — natural extremes of climate still make the going hard, the robbers of yore have become today’s local tradesmen, the threat of wild animals has become that of malaria, intestinal amoebae, etc.. Modern means of travel have made few inroads and moving from one holy place to another usually involves many hours of bouncing up and down in ancient buses over pot-holed roads while the temperature blazes.

The scene — simple thatched mud huts, patchworked green rice paddies, sleek shiny gray buffaloes meandering along the road, hard brown feet slapping hot dust, bright shades of saris and turbans, the birdlike chatter of flocks of village children, so many scenes of daily life bring the modern pilgrim into a timeless zone where it seems that little has changed in the daily lives of the people here since the time of Lord Buddha. The quiet and powerful tranquillity that can be experienced in these power places is contrasted by the whining beggars who line the temple entrances and the insistent local businessmen plying their wares to pilgrims. It is not a trip for the faint-hearted, but those who travel these dusty paths carry the experience in their hearts long after.

Our modern day pilgrimage begins just before 5am, on a dark Kathmandu street in late September where an old white bus lies waiting to ferry its 24 passengers to the site of the Buddha’s birth in Lumbini in Nepal, close to the border with India. All of us would-be pilgrims have attended Chögyal Namkhai Norbu’s recent three days of teaching in Kathmandu, and are off on pilgrimage to the Mid-

dle Land, where we plan to meet the Master in Bodhgaya in three days time. We are going to stop in Lumbini, the scene of the Buddha’s birth, on our first day, cross into India on the second and continue on to Kushinagar, the place of His Parinirvana. The third day will be a long haul to arrive in Bodhgaya, the place where the Buddha attained enlightenment.

Silently in twos and threes, on foot and by cycle rickshaw, we unite, take our places in the bus and pull out of Kathmandu on our pilgrimage adventure at 5am precisely.

The bus is fast and takes us quickly through the green Nepali hillside scenes where we try to catch a glimpse of the snowy Himalayan peaks through the morning monsoon clouds. Then we gradually wind down towards our destination through the greenness towards the hot dusty plain of rice paddies and palms. By lunch time we have arrived in the isolated spot near the village of Lumbini where Prince Siddhartha was born. The temperature is high, our faces damp and clothes clinging to our bodies with sweat.

Here in the large open space of the park surrounded by swaying white bulrushes Maha Maya delivered the Buddha as she held on to the branch of a ‘sal’ tree. At the center of the park is an ancient tree decked with prayer flags which towers over and shades the brick tank where, according to legend, Maha Maya bathed after giving birth. Dotted here and there in the grass are the remains of stupas and temples not much higher than the grass itself. The principal and most ancient monument here is the pillar erected by the Emperor Ashoka in 249 BC which proclaims in Pali that Sakyamuni was born in this place. The small building nearby is home to a badly damaged stone slab showing Maha Maya holding the sal branch during her delivery. The whole area visually seeming to gently vibrate in the still hot afternoon sun breathes an air of tranquil silence punctuated from time to time only by the shrill chatter of birds in the ancient tree.

We clamber down from the bus in the intense heat and, in small groups, search for a little shade where we can eat our lunch. After we have each explored the few simple sights of veneration, we gather together under the shade of the great tree which has overlooked this sacred pond for more than a millennia and we do a short tun. As we sing the Song of the Vajra, even the noisy birds chattering in the leafy green above our heads fall silent. It is a magic and moving moment that we share in this first place of pilgrimage in the Middle Land.

In the late afternoon we climb aboard our bus and head off for Sonauli, the Nepali town on the border with India about an hour’s drive. Just as pilgrims of the past faced the dangers and difficulties of travel in their time, we certainly have our share on arrival in this dusty border town, contending with the dangers of modern day robbers (called hotel keepers), epidemics (of fleas in our beds) and serious health risks from the local cuisine.

We all meet at 7.30 the next morning, weary and battle-scarred from our first night of pilgrimage in this uncomfortable and unhygienic place. It would take more than a single night for us soft Westerners to integrate with the local conditions.

The road spanning the border between Nepal and India is more than a 500 meter stretch between the two border posts so we hire a string of cycle rickshaws to make things easier and wind our way along the crowded thoroughfare, the rickshaws piled high with bags, among cows, wandering sadhus, bicycles and smoke-belching trucks, through the

border checks and finally to our awaiting bus, a bumpy Indian affair, with tiny high-backed chairs which are less accommodating to our well-built Western frames. Border regulations do not permit our Kathmandu bus to cross the border so, as we have already organized in Kathmandu, we take an Indian bus from this point. A moment of panic when we cannot find the young Tibetan traveling with us, some baksheesh to the local authorities and the heavy Mafia type who seems to be in charge of the area and off we go, rumbling along the dusty road to Kushinagar, the next stop on our pilgrimage.

We are not yet home free when the Indian customs stop us a few kilometers from the

dha’s cremation stupa before the sun sets and the park closes. It is an enormous simple mound of ancient red bricks covered in grass and set in a well-cared for park with trees and bushes all around. We pass round and round the sacred place as the hot sun sinks and sing the Song of the Vajra together. It is a moment of peace and calm after a long hot day.

Traveling conditions, the heat and dust, bumpy roads, the old bus, unaccustomed food and hygienic conditions are already testing even the most patient among us. Although the hardships and discomforts we are starting to face are relatively insignificant in comparison to those that confronted the early pilgrims, nevertheless they seem to be a catalyst in

bringing out our annoyance, attachment and intolerance. While some pilgrims remain serene even under the stressful conditions we are undergoing, others are angry or worried about the situation, wishing only to relieve their discomfort with little consideration for others. Sometimes we cannot even agree on such a simple matter as when and where we should make a stop for going to the toilet! The situation itself is a great teaching, for while we observe others, we observe ourselves more clearly. The Middle Land itself has a powerful energy and the places sacred to the Buddha even more so and this fact seems to add to the intensity of the whole situation. In this sense the pilgrimage is, indeed, a learning process for those who undertake it.

The third morning we leave quite early

for our third port of call and the last on this three day bus ride — Bodhgaya where the Buddha attained enlightenment. The drive takes more than 14 hours, the day hot, the road dusty and bumpy. If the first day of the trip we had been cheerful and chatty with the excitement of the trip, the second a little tired, long-suffering, sometimes irritable, the third day we pass in silence, each involved in his/her own thoughts.

Early in the day just outside the busy town of Gorakpur, the transmission of the bus falls onto the road with an ominous clunk. We climb down from the bus expecting a long wait to repair it and find our driver-mechanic skillfully fitting bolts and nuts into place as if he did the same repair job practically every day (which he probably did). (Note: It seems that long distance drivers in India are practically all mechanics since you find them in the most unlikely places carrying out all types of repairs on their vehicles.) In about half an hour we are moving again, on the long trip to Bodhgaya.

Our driver takes a long short cut deviating from the main road and stops for us to have a quick lunch in a tiny village whose men folk gather round the benches where we sit, devouring us with their curiosity as we clumsily try to eat dhal and rice with our fingers (there are no spoons). How childlike our eating must seem to them!

The long day trip ends in the late evening when we pull into Bodhgaya and part company to find resting places for the night.

The small town of Bodhgaya is situated on the banks of the Niranjan river and it was here in 528 BCE, after six years of practicing austerities, that Prince Siddhartha became the Fully Enlightened One. The sacred place around which all devotional activities revolve is the great Mahabodhi Temple, a large rectangular building with tall inward sloping walls leading up to a spire. Inside is a shrine on which a large gold Buddha statue rests on the very place where the Buddha attained enlightenment. At the back of the Temple is



Top: Rinpoche & Lama Wangdor at Gura Rinpoche Cave, Tso Pema. R. DALLORO  
Bottom: Rinpoche hanging prayer flags around Lotus Lake. LANTONELLI

border for a final check. An unshaved Otello B, weary from a Sonauli night, has the air of a hippie drug smuggler and the brown uniformed officers pounce on his bag to search ... and find his vajra and bell and other yogi paraphernalia.

Our bus bumps us through scenes of a rural India little changed over the centuries — roaming gray buffalo, groups of half-naked brown children, endless green rice paddies, mud huts and the present day trucks roaring and belching along the road. We arrive in Kushinagar in the late afternoon.

This is the fourth place of the four mentioned by Lord Buddha himself, the place of his passing away or Parinirvana. The Nirvana Temple there, built by the government of India in 1956, houses a six meter long reclining stone statue of the Buddha, about 1500 years old. The Buddha lies on his right side with his right hand under his head and his left hand on his thigh. The body of the statue is draped in yellow silk and only the golden head and feet can be seen.

We hear that the temple closes at 6 pm so after finding accommodation, we all immediately go to the Nirvana Temple where we circumambulate the statue, sit quietly among the orange robed monks who are there and gaze on the stone forms that fills the temple. There is an atmosphere of tranquillity, of power, of lingering sadness for the passing of Lord Buddha. His last words give a simple yet most profound teaching. ‘I say to you — all conditioned things are subject to decay; strive on with diligence.’

*Dighe Nikaya*

A young Indian monk tells us that there are three aspects to the reclining Buddha statue. When it is seen from a place in front of the face of the statue, it appears to be smiling; from the middle of the body, thinking; from the feet, in Parinirvana.

The hour is late and we leave the Nirvana Temple to walk swiftly along the road for a couple of kilometers in order to visit the Bud-



the Bodhi Tree, or 'ficus religiosa', planted in the 19th century to take the place of its predecessors which had died or been destroyed. At the foot of the Tree is the

"Diamond Throne", a stone slab which may have once marked the place where the Buddha sat until he reached enlightenment. Set in a well-cared for garden of trees, perfumed flowers and bushes which is dotted with numerous votive stupas and statues, there are inner and outer pathways of polished marble circling the Temple.

At any moment while the precincts are open (4am - 9pm), one enters the flow of the faithful turning around the Temple, amidst the delightful perfume of a hundred different incenses, and the murmur of a thousand different prayers. Hidden between the stupas, the monks do their prostrations, groups of pilgrims gather under the Tree for their prayers, devotees from all of India, Vietnam, Japan, Thailand, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Tibetan and many Western countries circle round with bare feet to pay their respects and give homage to this most sacred place. At night, the Temple and garden are resplendent with thousands of offering candles.

The day after our arrival is a Dark Moon day and we meet together to do a Ganapuja at the Bhutanese monastery where many of the group are staying. Later in the evening as we eat at the little Fujia Tibetan restaurant near the Temple, we see Rinpoche and his wife Rosa stroll past. They have just arrived from Varanasi. We are happy to be able to spend the next few days with Rinpoche visiting the holy places around Bodhgaya.

The following day we plan a short trip to visit Pragbodhi ('Prior to Enlightenment') or Dongeswar where, according to tradition, the Buddha spent considerable time meditating in a cave before his enlightenment. The cave, known as the "Mahakala cave", (probably because in this cave Mahakala appeared to the Mahasiddha Savaripa, one of the first tantric Buddhist masters), is situated on the side of a mountain about 5 km from Bodhgaya and there is a small Tibetan temple there.

Early next morning new arrivals from the English Community join us and we all set off for Pragbodhi in two small buses following Rinpoche and his group in their taxi. Taking the road which leaves Bodhgaya across the river, we turn off onto a bumpy dusty track which winds through villages of simple mud huts scattered among the trees. This area is part of the state of Bihar, one of the poorest areas in India, and as we pass, the local children start to run alongside the bus with their hands outstretched asking for money and simply having some fun trying to keep up with us.

Finally we arrive at a grassy open space below the monastery where the buses park and we follow Rinpoche slowly up the steep track towards the little Tibetan monastery. By this time, the rough upward path is lined with ragged beggars, many of them children, who have run behind our buses. In relationship to them we must appear to be plump and well-fed, infinitely rich with costly clothes and shoes, cameras and bags. They repeat their desperate plaint, over and over, for alms, their hard brown hands outstretched. The sun is high, air hot and we pause from time to time as a group clustered around the Master in whatever thin shade we find in that stark place.

We arrive at a shady terrace in front of the monastery where we are served hot tea and biscuits by the monks. Rinpoche climbs the last steps to the cave and enters. When he comes out we take turns to visit it as it is small and very hot inside. There are two statues within, a large figure, the Buddha, emaciated from austerities in meditation posture and a similar smaller statue. A room next door contains large gilded statues of the Buddha and some of the Arhats while the small Gonpa is guarded by a huge dark blue six-armed Mahakala statue flanked by a white Mahakala and what may be a statue of Brahmin Mahakala. After visiting the caves and Gonpa, we return to the courtyard and rest

before starting the slow descent towards the parked buses.

By this time every step of the downward

as it was unsuitable for one who had renounced the world, and making his way to a tree where he wished to meditate, he met a

remained in meditation marked by an inscription in English. Close by a group of school children sit cross-legged in the shade in front of their teacher reciting their lessons in chorus under his gaze.

Following Rinpoche's example we pass reverently around the tree a few times then taking our places on the grass we remain in silent meditation for some time. The air is hot and still. Even the hordes of beggars and street merchants that have followed us here fall silent. The voices of the children at the school chant over and over their English lesson 'ABCDEFGH' and then a few lines of the sixties hit, "We shall overcome".

After these moments of quietness we follow the Master behind the Hindu temple where we see a statue of the emaciated Buddha with an inscription in Tibetan nearby. Then we start to gradually retrace our steps, pausing from time to time.

The day was warm when we started our trip at 6.30 but as it progresses it gets hotter and hotter. Throughout the trip we are surrounded by the by now familiar hordes of children and people begging. The ragged little children in particular, with dull eyes and reaching palms chant their own little plea

which sounds like, "Oh samsara, oh samsara". Yesterday Rinpoche had given away so much money that today he says he will give nothing and he passes over the responsibility of alms-giving to his "administrator". Otello B. At one point during the walk when a couple of fellows came out of the temple with an "official" book, asking for a donation Rinpoche quite wrathfully tells them, "Can't you see I'm an important person! You don't ask an important person for things because you won't get anything from him. You must ask his administrator!"

For me, a first time visitor to this country and this place, I find today's scene, as yesterday's, typical of India — one visits a very beautiful and sacred power spot and finds it set in an area of great poverty and misery, like the lotuses we see along the roadside rising up from the muddy pools. Among the beggars are those who are genuinely old, destitute, weak, and handicapped but it seems that many of them have simply decided to make begging their way of life perhaps because it's an easy way to make money. Rinpoche comments that there are many ways of living in poverty with dignity.

We return to the starting point of our walk and in small groups under the midday sun we leave for Bodhgaya. Laura E. makes the return trip by cycle rickshaw taking with her the tiny feverish baby she has noticed slung on the hip of the baby's young sister, the sister (dizzy and frightened from her first ride in a moving vehicle) and the children's aunt to a charity clinic in town where she expects the baby to be treated.

On the third day of sacred excursions with Rinpoche in this area we plan to visit the archaeological site of Nalanda and then the Vulture's Peak. The plan is for the group to travel to Nalanda by bus early in the morning and then to meet up with Rinpoche after lunch to visit the Vulture's Peak together.

Nalanda, of which today only the ruins remain, became a great center of learning for

*"He is so patient, so caring and impartial, that a sense of calm soon has its effect even on those poor people who previously had been frantically whining and scrambling over each other, afraid of receiving nothing..."*

path is flanked by a beggar with uplifted palm. Rinpoche and many others buy plastic bags of change (paisa — a rip-off since the change usually only amounts to a fraction of the asking price). The money merchants have followed us even to this lonely spot! Slowly, a step at a time, Rinpoche starts his descent down the track, placing a coin in each outstretched palm. When he sees a mother and child he gives two coins, one for each of them. He is so patient, so caring and impartial, that a sense of calm soon has its effect even on those poor people who previously had been frantically whining and scrambling over each other, afraid of receiving nothing, jealous that their neighbors might receive more. This line of human misery runs from tiny children, mothers, those distorted and paralyzed by disease, the sick, the old and even one frail skeleton of humanity who lay dying on the ground at the bottom of the path. Many of us are affected beyond words by the scene and even more so by the loving impartiality of the Master who in his simple gestures has given us such a profound teaching!

In the grassy field below, we follow Rinpoche over to a modern school building where he sits in the shade of a tree while we and the troupe of beggars gather around. He tells us that the school has been built on the most famous and most important of the eight funeral grounds in India (Sativarna (Tib. Sil ba'i tshel) translated as "shady grove"), a site which had been visited by all the Mahasiddhas of the past, a place where they stayed and practiced. Although the building of the school had been an act of charity, he said, in ignorance it had been built on this holy and powerful place.

We have all brought some food and Paolo S suggests to Rinpoche that we have a picnic. Rinpoche asks, "Where do you want to have the picnic? In the cemetery? The best place to do it is in the cemetery. In ancient times all the Mahasiddhas went to the cemetery for their picnics."

Paolo replies, "Here there's only one Mahasiddha".

"How do you know how many Mahasiddhas there are here? Among even these (indicating the beggars), how do you know? One may seem to be stupid and be something more elevated. One who seems to be intelligent may be the most stupid person of all."

Anyway, it's not very suitable to have the picnic here. You have a bite, and ten person eat mentally along with you. What do you do? It would be very difficult to swallow the food. In this case I prefer to sit quietly. So maybe it's better to go to a place near the river for the picnic."

Our drivers take us to an old Hindu temple on the bank of the broad mud-colored river opposite the town of Gaya. We spread out our things in the shade and eat and enjoy each others' company. Later we investigate the little temple complex then stroll along the hot sandy river bank with Rinpoche, rest in the shade of the new bridge a few moments and then return to our buses and back to Bodhgaya.

The following day we meet Rinpoche in front of his hotel to visit together a series of sacred places close by the town. Here a historical note may be helpful.

According to the ancient scriptures, the Buddha realized after six years of practicing extreme austerities, that this was not the path to Enlightenment. One day, just before he entered town to get some food, Sujata, the daughter of a village chieftain passed by and offered him a golden bowl of rice. After his meal he threw the golden bowl into the river



Top: Sarnath, Dhamekh Stupa

Bottom: Nalanda Main Temple

L.GRANDER

L.GRANDER

man cutting 'kusha' grass and asked him for a bunch to make a meditation seat. Then he remained under the tree in meditation until his awakening. This is the area we tread today.

Leaving the hotel we form a long procession behind Rinpoche and stroll through the noisy bazaar and then along the new Bodhgaya bridge that spans the Niranjana river, wide and shallow even in the rainy season. (In fact we can often see people wading waist-high through the river rather than making a long detour to the bridge.) Lord Buddha bathed frequently in this river, it is said, during his stay in the area. According to ancient commentaries, the river derives its name from "pleasant" and "blue" "water" although the description is not so apt today as it more resembles the color of a cappuccino and is used by the locals for their daily hygienic needs.

Close by the river we stop at our first place of pilgrimage. There is an enormous tree here with a wall around it which is packed with earth where Rinpoche sits. (In India all these holy trees have a similar structure around them which is also a comfortable spot to sit.) Close by is a modern painted plaster statue of the standing Buddha receiving kusha grass from a kneeling peasant.

After a brief pause we continue our walk single-file along a little dirt track through a small village and then across rice paddies under a burning sun until we reach a large Hindu temple where, according to tradition, Sujata offered the milk and rice to Lord Buddha. Again there are modern statues depicting the scene and Rinpoche poses there for our photographs.

Crossing a little muddy creek shoes in hand we eventually arrive in a simple unmarked wood where there is an enclosure with different buildings including a Hindu temple. At one side of the place are two large trees one of which has a cement platform large enough for several people to walk round at the same time. At its base is a simple slab of a cement seat where the Buddha



# Pilgrims in Tibet

A Summer Journey with Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche

by Michael Katz



Rinpoche with Michael and Merrill at Ralung

We arrived in Lhasa at dusk. It felt utterly foreign. I had only the clothes on my back, and we were already feeling the altitude. My wife Merrill began to cry from the tensions and remoteness. Perhaps paradoxically, despite some altitude sickness, I was feeling increasingly exhilarated. We had made it to Tibet—cradle of the Dharma. My clothes were missing, but what better place to practice non attachment.

We settled in at our Hotel—The Banak Shol. The Tibetans who run it are very friendly, and we began to feel more comfortable. One of them assisted me in calling Puntsok's home.

Although we were told that Phuntsog had been out of town, she apparently would be arriving later that evening. When we reached Puntsok directly the next day we discovered that their party, including Rinpoche and Rosa, had arrived late the previous night. They had been traveling for days across the length of Tibet by jeep.

Arriving at Phuntsog's family compound we found Rinpoche playing bachen, the Tibetan tile game. He let out the traditional cry of greeting and surprise, "Wei". In a manner of speaking, the turtles had found the life preserver.

For the next week we toured central Tibet and Lhasa visiting with Rinpoche in the evenings as he rested from his trip. Lhasa itself is currently booming as is all of China.

Upon hearing of Rinpoche's intention to visit Tibet this past summer, I was hoping that it might be possible to join him, so my wife Merrill and I agreed we would try to meet Rinpoche in Lhasa. Initially Rinpoche's plan called for him to be in Lhasa around the last week of August.

Over the next few months the dates of Rinpoche's published itinerary varied wildly. As best we could we tracked Rinpoche's progress as he toured in Asia. There were many obstacles. It became clear that we would need to make our plans and hope for the best.

I left New York in late July, en route first to teach dream work and Yantra Yoga in Hawaii. At that time Rinpoche was somewhere in Tibet traveling overland, and completely out of touch with the Western world. It seemed dubious that he would stick to an itinerary.

You've heard the metaphor about the precious human life: Finding the precious human body is about as likely as if someone were to throw a life preserver, when simultaneously the only turtle swimming in a vast ocean happened to come up and put its head through it. There are many vagaries of travel in this area of the world and we had many loose ends. These would include making travel arrangements from Nepal, and ultimately dealing with the Chinese and the constantly shifting political landscape. The likelihood that we would rendezvous with Rinpoche in Lhasa seemed increasingly remote. To complicate matters, we had no idea how we would contact Rinpoche assuming we happened to make it to Lhasa simultaneously.

I remember hearing stories of Community members who had wandered for days searching for Rinpoche in foreign countries. With this in mind I shared both my fears about missing him as well as my rather tenuous plan with Melinda, a member of the Hawaiian Sangha. Someone had suggested I go to a particular hotel in the Tibetan quarter where some Westerners hang out. Once there I could inquire after Phuntsog, a member of Rinpoche's family, who presumably would know where he was. At least Melinda was able to shorten the odds by giving me Phuntsog's address and phone number.

Despite the common misadventures of making plans in Nepal, we were able to make travel arrangements from Kathmandu to Lhasa. After much insecurity and frantic phone calls, as well as a countrywide strike called "band", we finally received our tickets by courier the day we needed to fly. Relieved and excited we boarded China Southwest Air. The flight was spectacular. The Himalayas poke through the clouds in ghostly majestic form, and the mountains and valleys of Southern Tibet are entrancing. After the short flight we debarked at the main airport situated in the Kyichu River Valley, still several hours from Lhasa. All my luggage was missing.

## The Nuns' Story

A True Tibetan Tale

by Martha Heinen

Once upon a time there were two young nuns from a Nyingma monastery in Amdo, Tibet, who went on a pilgrimage with the final goal of visiting the city of Lhasa, the most sacred city of Tibet. After a long journey from the Northeast to Central Tibet, they finally reached Lhasa. Upon their early morning arrival, they went to the famous Jokhang Temple to do a circumambulation. Happily they started to do a *kor wa* around the Jokhang, which means walking around a sacred place saying mantras and prayers.

While doing this *kor wa* in the early autumn morning, they found a little baby in the street wrapped only in a sheepskin. They picked him up and at first didn't know what to do. They waited many hours, hoping the parents would come to claim him, but no one arrived. Finally, they understood that someone must have been in great poverty to leave the child for someone else to take care of.

So they took the little three month old baby boy. They rented a very modest and cheap room in a house in the outskirts of Lhasa. First they searched for people to take care of the child. It wasn't so easy. Days, weeks and months passed and meanwhile the little boy became very attached to his new mothers and the young nuns developed a deep love for him and, in the end, were unable to give him up. They also were not able to return to their monastery.....two nuns with a child!?

So, now they live in Lhasa in one small room, without a stove, no bathroom, no kitchen, and surely no income, but with only a little help from some very poor and friendly neighbors and Phuntsog, Rinpoche's niece.



Nuns and baby in Lhasa

M. HEINEN

One evening in August, Rosa, Phuntsog and I went to visit the family and were very moved when we later heard the whole story of the nuns and their little boy who still has no name. These young women are very brave, since they try their best to be good mothers for this little being and have sacrificed so much to care for him until he is a little older and possibly can be sent to school.

The nuns didn't ask us for help, but it was so apparent that they need it. The child sleeps in a bed made of paper boxes, and he is still wrapped in the fur he was found in. The nuns themselves are very modest.

If there is anyone who would like to be a sponsor or partial sponsor for this unusual family, or give a donation to help them, please contact:

Martha Heinen  
Stephan Blattman str.25  
78120 Furtwangen, Germany  
or  
The Mirror  
PO Box 277  
Conway, MA 01341 USA  
Tel: 413 369 4208  
Fax: 413 369 4165  
Email: 102121.130@compuserve.com



Rinpoche at Ralung Monastery

M. RUDIN

However it has sadly lost much of its Tibetan flavor. Currently Chinese far outnumber Tibetans here. Although some of the monasteries in Lhasa proper now seem to be museum like shells, there is also plenty in Lhasa and central Tibet which will inspire the pilgrim. We made particularly memorable trips to the retreat caves of Drak Yerpa where Guru Rinpoche, Vimalamitra and many other Mahasiddhas lived and practiced. Signs of their accomplishments including miraculous terms, footprints embedded in stone, and miraculous manifestations of devotion abound. There are currently more than 100 monks and nuns here. Many other extraordinary pilgrimage places are also within a days drive of Lhasa.

We had also made plans to take an extended pilgrimage to Samye, but shortened it to a day when we heard that Rinpoche would be visiting Ralung monastery.

Ralung, an important Drukpa Kargyu monastery, is located off the road to Shigatse. To get there from Lhasa one must cross two major mountain passes and drive past a sacred lake. Rinpoche has a strong connection with this monastery which extends across several lifetimes. Rinpoche is recognized by the monks who reside there as one of the principal Tulkus of this tradition.

Our entourage of two jeeps departed Lhasa quite early for a journey which lasted most of the day and carried us through spectacular scenery. For several hours we traveled steadily upwards, finally reaching the first of the two passes. We were eager to stop the jeep and take photos of the breathtaking panorama en route. However Catharine, a French sangha member who had journeyed this way previously, restrained us. Once over the top we understood why. The famous and holy turquoise lake appeared suddenly presenting an extraordinary photo opportunity.

Excepting Rinpoche, who was concerned about altitude sickness, we all piled out of the cars. The Tibetans offered scarves and prayers to the wind while the Westerners posed. I was also feeling quite strange from the altitude. After a few more minutes we pushed onward. Shortly we passed the infamous hydroelectric plant which the Chinese have built on the shore of this otherwise pristine lake. We stopped for lunch at a rest stop

beyond the far shore, having already driven 3 to 4 hours.

Once there we feasted on traditional Tibetan foods including momos and dried yak prepared by Puntsok's mother. These dishes were very tasty. However, we were uncharacteristically throwing caution to the wind by eating as freely as we did over this period. Later I would pay and require medication to cleanse from both gardias and amoebae travel mates. As we picnicked, a crowd of Tibetans gathered and stared at the unusual crew, which included a Tibetan Lama as well as the four Westerners. This was only one of the many occasions during which we were the object of intense scrutiny by the Tibetans who no doubt found us as alien and exotic as we found them.

Back in the cars we continued onward, this time past a glacier and eventually through the second pass delineated by the omnipresent prayer flags. At the peak of this pass renowned as near the point where Tibetan resistance to the English turn-of-the-century invasion, led by general Younghusband was broken, a squall of snow and hail erupted. This was interpreted by

continued on page 18

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# INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY NEWS

SHANG SHUNG INSTITUTE MERIGAR

## Course of Astrology of the Elements

held by Doctor Thubten Phuntsog at the Shang Shung Institute, Merigar

JANUARY 17TH 1998 (EVENING LECTURE),

FEB. 21 - 22 (Cost: 100.000 lire. Please register before Feb. 10th)

MARCH 21 - 22 (Cost: 100.000 lire. Please register before March 10th).

The courses will cover the following themes:

- 1) The origins of the 'byung rtsi and skar rti systems of astrology
- 2) The four elements
- 3) Positive and negative influences of the four elements on the basic constituents of the human body
- 4) Relationship between the nature of the four elements and the cosmos
- 5) The influence of the four elements and the positions of the planets.
- 6) Methods of astrological calculations according to the mother-son and friend-enemy relationships of the elements
- 7) Lo, sPar pa and sMe ba. methods of calculating the Tibetan calendar
- 8) Methods for determining the unique nature of the elements in three aspects: inner, outer and other.

Individual charts and consultations on request.

FOR INFORMATION AND BOOKING CONTACT THE SECRETARY OF THE  
SHANG SHUNG INSTITUTE, TEL: +39 564 966941 OR  
E-MAIL 100043.1433@COMPUSERVE.COM

## A Course on Tibetan Medicine

At the invitation of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, Doctor Thubten Phuntsog will spend three months in Italy as a guest of the Shang Shung Institute and the Dzogchen Community to teach Tibetan medicine. Doctor Thubten Phuntsog, born in Eastern Tibet, is presently professor at the Department of Tibetan Studies of the Central University of Peking where he teaches Tibetan medicine, astrology and astronomy and other disciplines related to Tibetan culture. He is the author of numerous books and publications.

The course of medicine, organized by the Shang Shung Institute, will last three years and covers the fundamentals of Tibetan medicine on the basis of the Four Tantras, dealing particularly with physiology, the nature of diseases and how to prevent and treat them according to Tibetan medical science. The course is open to anyone wishing to deepen the knowledge of oneself to understand how to keep and improve one's health and to know the relationship between inner and outer energies. The Shang-Shung Institute will provide a certificate of attendance.

**Dates.** The first year course will take place from Monday February 2nd to Saturday February 7th, 1998 (first week) and from Monday February 9th to Saturday February 14th (second week). For anyone who cannot stay two weeks, the second week course will be repeated from Monday March 2nd to Saturday March 7th 1998. The course will be simultaneously translated into English and Italian.

**Place:** The course will be held at Merigar, Arcidosso, Italy.

**Discounts at hotels.**

**Meals:** lunch at Merigar for Lit. 10,000.

**Registration:** Fees: Lit. 1,200,000 for the two weeks. Registrations before January 10th 1998, together with a down payment of Lit. 300.000 to be paid either by postal order, specifying for Tibetan medical course, sent to Istituto Shang Shung, Loc. Podere Nuovissimo, 58031 Arcidosso (GR), Italy, or by bank transfer, specifying that it is for the course of Tibetan medicine. Account: c/c n. 5764.48 Monte dei Paschi di Siena, Agenzia di Arcidosso, Italy, in the name of Istituto Shang-Shung. The remaining sum can be paid at the beginning of the course.

ISTITUTO SHANG SHUNG, c/o Podere Nuovissimo, 58031 Arcidosso (GR), Italy.

Tel: 0564966941

fax: 0564966846

E-mail 100043.1433@COMPUSERVE.COM

Office hours: Monday-Tuesday-Wednesday 10:00-1:00 and 3:00-6:00.

## Dugu Chögyal Rinpoche Finishes Painting

Last July, Dugu Chögyal Rinpoche and his assistant finished painting the last panel in the Temple of the Great Liberation at Merigar dedicated to the lineage of the Dzogchen Primordial Masters. He thus fulfilled the commitment he took five years ago to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and the Dzogchen Community which was carried out during his three visits to Merigar.

His work is the final and most precious part in the work of the decoration of the Gonpa which was planned by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu down to the finest details.



R. Bizzotto

## DZOGCHEN COMMUNITY OF ITALY 1998 MERIGAR PROGRAM

### JANUARY 23-26: RETREAT ON THE SEMZEN

Each session will start with the preliminary practices of the Base Level of the Santi Maha Sangha. The retreat starts on January 23rd at 4pm and is free.

### FEBRUARY 6-8: RETREAT OF THE COMPLETE DANCE OF THE VAIRA

This year there are many Vajra Dance practice retreats scheduled at Merigar. The retreats are free but an offering should be given to cover the organisational costs. Since places on the Mandala are limited it is necessary to reserve a place beforehand.

### FEBRUARY 14-15: YANTRA YOGA COURSE

for those who have followed at least one beginners' course

Held by Laura Evangelisti

The course will start on February 14th at 10 am and will finish on Sunday afternoon. The cost is Lit. 80.000 with 30% discount for members. It is necessary to book in advance and pay Lit.30.000 deposit. If there is not a minimum of 12 participants the course will be cancelled.

### FEBRUARY 20-26: PRACTICE RETREAT OF PURIFICATION OF THE SIX LOKAS

The retreat will start on February 20th at 9 am with four sessions a day. The retreat is free.

### FEBRUARY 27: LOSAR

7 am Amitayus Long Life practice  
12 am Ganapuja

### MARCH 13-15: PRACTICE RETREAT OF THE COMPLETE DANCE OF THE VAIRA

### MARCH 29: PRACTICE RETREAT OF THE DANCE OF THE THREE VAIRAS

### APRIL 24-26: PRACTICE RETREAT OF THE COMPLETE DANCE OF THE VAIRA

### MAY 1-3: PRACTICE RETREAT OF THE COMPLETE DANCE OF THE VAIRA

### MAY 15-17: INTENSIVE PRACTICE RETREAT ON THE FOUR IMMEASURABLES

The retreat will start on Friday May 15th at 9 am and will consist of four sessions a day. The retreat is free but an offering should be given.

### MAY 24: PRACTICE RETREAT OF THE DANCE OF THE THREE VAIRAS

### JUNE 5-7: PRACTICE RETREAT OF THE COMPLETE DANCE OF THE VAIRA

### JULY 5TH: PRACTICE RETREAT OF THE DANCE OF THE THREE VAIRAS

### JULY 15-21: TRAINING COURSE FOR TEACHERS OF THE FIRST LEVEL OF VAIRA DANCE

Held by Prima Mai and Adriana Dal Borgo

The courses will start on Monday September 7th at 10 am.

The cost is Lit. 420.000 without discounts. To register for the course participants should be up to date with their membership fees and send a written application letter to the secretary of Merigar before June 15th. Candidates will be notified.

### AUGUST 2 - 9

### TRAINING COURSE FOR YANTRA YOGA TEACHERS

Held by Fabio Andrico and Laura Evangelisti

The course starts at 4 pm on August 2nd. The cost is Lit. 420.000 without discounts.

To register for the course participants should be up to date with their membership fees and send a written application letter to the secretary of Merigar before June 30th. Candidates will be notified.

### AUGUST 7 - 13

### COURSES OF DANCE WITH THE SONG OF THE VAIRA - 1ST PART

Held by Prima Mai

The course will start on August 7th at 10 am.

The cost is Lit. 280.000 with 30% discount for member. It is necessary to book before June 30th and pay a deposit of Lit. 50.000.

### SEPTEMBER 7-13: COURSES OF DANCE WITH THE SONG OF THE VAIRA - 2ND PART

Held by Adriana Dal Borgo

The course will start on September 7th at 10 am.

The cost is Lit. 280.000 with 30% discount for member. It is necessary to book before July 30th and pay a deposit of Lit. 50.000.

### SEPTEMBER 20: PRACTICE RETREAT OF THE DANCE OF THE THREE VAIRAS

## SMS UPDATE

Information Update on  
Santi Maha Sangha

According to Chogyal Namkhai Norbu's latest clarifications, to take the 1st Level Exam it is necessary to have completed all the practices required for that Level, including the practices of gradual and non gradual Sutra systems, external and internal Tantras, and the main contemplation practices from Sodogpa's text on Semde.

The possible postponement of the completion of some practices until the 3rd Level Exam regards ONLY the specific practices of the Base Level. Consequently the practitioners who want to take the 1st Level Exam in Russia next May have to have completed at least all the practices required specifically for the 1st Level.

To do the 1st Level Tantric practices it is useful to listen to Rinpoche's instructions given at Tashigar in January 1997 during the training.

For an up to date list of the Base Level practices, the new booklet of Tantric practices for the 1st Level, the above mentioned Tashigar audio tape and other information on the Santi Maha Sangha please contact the following people:

### MERIGAR:

Igor Legati - e-mail:  
merigar@dueffe.it  
c/o Merigar, Arcidosso,  
58031 GR Italy

### TSEGYALGAR:

Jim Valby - e-mail:  
73711.257@compuserve.com  
PO Box 277, Conway, MA 01341,  
USA

### TASHIGAR:

Ricardo Sued - e-mail:  
rsued@onenet.com.ar  
Marcelo T. Dealvear 386,  
Cordoba 5000, Argentina  
NAMGYALGAR:  
Angie Gilbert - e-mail:  
namgyalg@acr.net.au  
PO Box 14, Central Tilba,  
NSW 2546, Australia

### RUSSIA:

Grisha Mokhin - e-mail:  
mokhin@niir.msk.ru  
NIR Radio, Kazakova St. 16,  
103064 Moscow, Russia

Adriano Clemente has suggested that all the SMS trainings given by Chogyal Namkhai Norbu at the various Gars be transcribed and published for the practitioners who are following the Santi Maha Sangha. Those who would like to transcribe a training course in which they have participated should get in touch with the people on the contact list.

### SANTI MAHA SANGHA IN MERIGAR

### 3RD LEVEL EXAMINATION August 28th - 30th

### TRAINING OF THE 4TH LEVEL August 31st - September 4th, 1998

The costs are 200.000 lire without discounts.

### TRAININGS OF LEVELS 1, 2 OR 3

Please note the following:

In the gar where a fourth level training takes place, Rinpoche will no longer give courses of the precedent levels. Practitioners who are interested in courses of the first three levels, need to travel themselves to another gar. For instance, the Base and First Level exams and the related training of the First and Second Level will take place in Russia, April 1998, and in Tashigar in February 1999. Furthermore, the exams of the Base, First and Second Level and the related courses of the First, Second and Third Levels will take place at Tsegyalgar in the summer of 1999. ■



## The Future of Namgyalgar

At Christmas time in 1997 at Namgyalgar, we were once again blessed with the presence of our gracious Master, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. The message of his Teachings was clear after the earlier problems in 1997, as he spoke about the meaning of Transmission, foundation practices such as Semdzin and Rushan and Guru Dragpur practice.

Since the retreat many people have said that the energy at Namgyalgar feels very good and that a collaborative spirit is more evident. Earlier in the year in May, it had been necessary for Rinpoche to tell us that Namgyalgar couldn't proceed as a Gar at the time. Our lack of collaboration was the main factor. Seriously this meant we were not upholding our Samaya, nor being responsible for the Teachings. It became very important for each of us to honestly examine ourselves and our intentions and think about the meaning of our Transmission. It is still very important. Before he left after May, Rinpoche advised us to focus on our practice. During the rest of the year we held several practice retreats at Namgyalgar including one on the Six Paramitas and a Four Immeasurables retreat. In my experience these retreats were a time of people sincerely coming together

to practice and question. No new projects were to go ahead at this time, therefore the only developments at Namgyalgar were the Development Application, which necessarily needed to keep moving, and preparations for the summer retreat.

The summer retreat is now over. We have elected a new Gekod and a new Gakyil for this year, with some old members staying on and some new people coming onto the Gakyil. Tony Laurent has spoken to Rinpoche about the progress of the Development Application and it is to keep moving ahead slowly. The focus for the next two years at Namgyalgar is practice. Rinpoche advised the Gakyil that it is not so important to invite teachers here during this time, but to practice and to organize practice retreats. Rinpoche has offered to come back here at the end of 1999 for a retreat.

We did not ask Rinpoche if we were a Gar again, nor did he say, "Now you are a Gar". I think we will know when we are a Gar again, because if we have good intention and are trying to practice and collaborate together in the right way, the Gar will happen.

Angie Gilbert  
President

## Three Auspicious Events

*The Singapore Retreat.*

by Keng Leck

The Singapore Dzogchen Community celebrated the year end with the visit and teachings of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. For the Community, it was an auspicious and exciting time.

The first auspicious event was that this was Rinpoche's second visit to Singapore in one year - something rare that has not occurred before in our Community's history. Rinpoche and Rosa arrived early morning in Singapore on the 8th of December, the day of Rinpoche's birthday, the second auspicious event, which we joyfully celebrated together. The third auspicious event was that we received the Chinese translation of *Crystal and the Way of Light* from the press two days before the teachings began.

Over 100 participants attended this weekend retreat. Besides the Singapore - based old and new members, we had people coming from Denmark, America and Taiwan to attend the teachings.

A feature of this retreat was the Guru Vajrasattva Six Lokas Purification Practice, which Rinpoche explained in depth and practiced with us. We also had a course in Yantra Yoga with Fabio Andrico.

All in all, Rinpoche and entourage had a relaxing time in Singapore. A special thanks to Bruno and Dominique Espaze for hosting Rinpoche and for being meticulous hosts.

Thank you Rinpoche!



Rinpoche in Singapore

## Kundroling

*Community Land in the United Kingdom*

by Geoffery Blundell

On December 12th 1997, the English Community purchased a house, barn and land in Wales which is very suitable for our needs. On the ground floor, 20 people or more doing a group practice in the large living room is easily imagined. This room is heated by a wood burning stove and from it there are elevated views to the Black Mountains. There is a large kitchen with a stove providing heating to radiators upstairs. On the top floor are four rooms which will provide some sleeping accommodation. We have bought some of the furniture so that the property is usable immediately. Lol Kane is staying there on some weekends, but visitors are being discouraged until we have planning permission to change the use of the barn. This precaution is being observed because we lost a previous property when the local people generated a petition to block our application.

In fact, this is very unlikely here because the property is very isolated, so far off the beaten track that the last few miles of the access road is single track with no passing places for cars coming from the opposite direction! It will probably require planning to provide passing places. Despite such conditions the house is an excellent bargain.

The land is situated about 7 miles south of Builth Wells and not far from Hereford. It stands on 2 acres of ground. We are purchasing a further 2 acres which gives us direct access to National Trust Property and magnificent hiking areas with a large variety of bird and wildlife. The land is sloping so that a flat area will have to be created for camping. It would not be suitable for a large retreat but will easily accommodate groups of 30 when the barn is modified.

Our planning application for the barn will provide a teaching area plus more sleeping accommodation. At first the local architect could not understand why we worried about the drystone walls, saying they could breathe easily and there would be no damp problems. It's possible that he couldn't perceive much difference between meditating sheep and people. But we could see water draining down the sloping hillside and turning the warm teaching room into a sauna! But these are minor details. Once we can accommodate larger groups, then many community members have skills which they are prepared to donate to the Community to provide a regular income so that we can pay back our loans.

I believe the acquiring of a center has been a very powerful unifying thread in the history of the English Community. The first "Kundroling" had wonderful views to the sea, but needed too much work which we were incapable of providing. But it woke up our community spirit, so that we created a funding base which has now come to fruition in the new center. Two people, especially, Judy Allen and Julia Lawless, held the vision clearly, searching everywhere for a suitable location. ■

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Address: 4-7-35 Shibakoen Minatoku Tokyo, Tel. 03-432-1439  
Costs\*: (see note below): 30,000 yen for 2 days.

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Contacts: Tsugiko Kiyohashi (before March 15th) Mitsuru Nakazawa (March 16th-18th)  
5-11-23 Shimomeguro Meguroku Tel./fax. 03-3807-8505  
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On the day after Christmas a group of about 25 members of Tsegylgar joined together for a 5-day retreat based on a program designed by Rinpoche. The program consisted of early morning Yantra Yoga, a practice combining the Garab Dorje invocation in the Short Tun, periods of *shine* practice (with and without support), Vajra Dance and ended each evening with Guardian Practice. Everything combined to make this a special and wonderful retreat. In the process our Community learned some valuable lessons.

Several things made this a different retreat for the Tsegylgar Community. First, it was truly collaborative. Unlike past retreats when a small group worked very hard and most retreatants simply practiced and enjoyed themselves, this time everyone contributed. The organizers identified all the tasks to be accomplished including leading practices, buying, delivering and preparing food, collecting money, cleaning the Gonpa, cleaning up after meals, turning on the heat and lights and arranging for snow removal and parking, etc. At the very outset of the retreat everyone was asked to take on a specific responsibility and everyone did, joyfully. As a result there weren't two classes of participants... everyone was equal. This allowed everyone to participate in all the practices and increased the bond and connection with the teachings, our teacher, the practices and ourselves.

## The Gift of Collaboration

by John LaFrance

Secondly, the older, more experienced students of Rinpoche, shared their insights, awarenesses and experiences about the practices. This was truly marvelous! Each contribution added another dimension to the understanding. One gave us the purposes and goals of *shine* and how it fits into the Four Yogas, another shared their experience of how helpful the Guardian Practice is as an aid to individual practice, and frequently Jim Valby explained the practices for those less experienced practitioners and also shared some meanings from the Semde texts he's translating. Another level of collaboration.

Thirdly, we kept on schedule! Rinpoche had sent a very specific program and everyone honored it by being in place on time to commence practice. This created a strong sense of commitment and importance to the teachings and reflected the retreatants respect for the program.

So, what did we learn? We learned that, with Rinpoche's guidance, we can very well conduct a meaningful and powerful retreat. We don't need to rely on outside teachers... we can teach ourselves. There is an amazing

wealth of knowledge and experience among the older students and when they share it in the context of Rinpoche's program, it is very powerful.

We also learned the value of universal participation, so that the burden doesn't fall on a few. As a result of staying together from 7am to 7pm for practices and meals, a wonderful bond developed. There really is nothing like being with Vajra sisters and brothers; no other set of relationships has the same quality. We learned to simply enjoy each other's presence, and, by staying together all day, the energy of the retreat didn't dissipate as it sometimes has in the past with groups going off to eat elsewhere.

Among the comments heard at the end of the five days were, "this was the best retreat I've ever attended"; "as a Community, I think we're really on to something"; and, "this has been wonderful, I'm so grateful to everyone involved". Since the retreat ended, a group in the Conway area is continuing to get together at 7am to practice Yantra yoga and the Community is scheduling more retreats. What a great New Year's gift... the gift of collaboration. ■

## Passages

**Married:** The Dzogchen Community is happy to announce that Yeshe Namkhai and Egle Purulyte were married in Vilnius, Lithuania on December 20th, 1998.

"We would like to thank all those friends who accompanied us in this happy event, all those who thought about us sharing the joy of loving profoundly." Egle and Yeshe



Yeshe and Egle

**Married:** Judy Herzl and Charles Hoy were married in Hawaii on November 24th at sunset.

**Died:** Our dear Norwegian Dzogchen sister Sissel Jamne died peacefully on the afternoon of Tuesday, January 13th, 1998 at 46 years old and is now in transition. She was among the first to join the Buddhist community when the Karmapa visited Norway in 1974 and had great respect and devotion to both Buddhist and Bönpo teachers. Since 1981 she was a student of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and active in the Dzogchen community. Her quality of openness and kindness made her many friends. She had four joyful and happy children who carry on the friendliness and joy of their mother as actors and musicians.

When she passed away we all felt how her presence brought us together and that she left her body like a bird into the vast expanse of freedom. She was buried Thursday, January 22nd, 1998 in the presence of both Buddhist and Christian family and friends as a great example of how spiritual communities can be brought together in equanimity and peace. May we all follow her example with an open heart to all traditions!

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## For Paolo

by Igor Legati

On Saturday, October 4th, at about nine o'clock in the morning at his family home in Radda, Chianti in Italy, Paolo Pagni left his material body. Watched over throughout the night by Elisabetta, a Vajra sister from Siena, Paolo slowly took his last three breaths and passed like a spent candle, serenely and without a tremor.

Don't be sad in the face of death, be calm—this seemed to be the last of many lessons that Paolo gave us.

He came to the teaching already aware that he was HIV positive and knew how to transform his heavy karma into a precious opportunity to walk towards liberation. Spurred by the whip of impermanence which for him had become terribly concrete, in a few years he became an exemplary practitioner: extremely devoted to the Master, present at numerous retreats with Rinpoche, an assiduous practitioner, an expert at Yantra Yoga (he was the best "locust" of all of us yogis including the teachers), and an excellent practitioner of the Dance of the Vajra in all its varieties.

Not only this, but Paolo offered the Master and the Community at Merigar an immense amount of Karma Yoga—there is hardly a stone from Gadeling to Merigar 2 that has not had his hand on it.

Last year at Christmas he went to the retreat at



Jim Valby with Paolo after successful SMS exam in Merigar

Tashigar in Argentina fully aware that this would be the last chance for him to see the Master. Even after the retreat he remained with him for a long time.

On his return his condition started to deteriorate rapidly. He had to be cared for more and more by the family and in the hospital and started to visit the Community less frequently. It

was in this period that Ura, the gentle white dog that lived at Merigar and was devoted to Paolo, disappeared.

All those who knew him and all those who went to visit him in his last months while his body painfully wasted away, never heard him complain about his fate and his physical suffering. The day of his death, his father tearfully told me, "I never heard him complain about his pain, not even once".

The practice gives its fruit and it is difficult to find a better example of this than Paolo. His modesty, perseverance and generosity are proof that a practitioner can reap the harvest which Rinpoche has sown. This is the truth which invites us not to be sad for the loss of this brother, but to be serene and trustful of the possibility to realize that of which the Master always speaks.

*Editor's note: news of Paolo's passing was sent immediately to Rinpoche who was in India. On pilgrimage to the Vulture's Peak where Lord Buddha turned the Wheel of the Dharma, and accompanied by many of his students from around the world, the Master led a practice there dedicated to Paolo and others. ■*

## A Requiem for Hugo Berboto, The Tashigar Gekod

by Patricia Feldman and Alicia Caballero



Hugo Berboto

In Cordoba, on December 14th 1997, the Tashigar gekod, Hugo Berboto passed away peacefully.

That day, his Vajra brothers and sisters and his wife "Colorada" were at his side. He shared with us his last worries; there was so much to do in Tashigar! We were involved in many important projects: the building of Rinpoche's house, the remake of the Gonpa, the project of the bungalows for practitioners, etc.

Hugo was always very aware of death; he had had a heart transplant earlier and it had extended his life for almost 8 years, a time that surpassed the life expectations for those cases according to our doctors and the scientists of our local region. He was really the first heart transplant case in Argentina with such successful results and long survival.

His case was special for many reasons; his cardiac sickness began when he was thirty; seven years later his heart could no longer function at all. At that time, people were not used to the idea of organ donations and a TV program was made under the auspices of a foundation called "A Heart for Hugo". In the interview he explained his case and asked people to start donating organs so that others could continue living. An 18 year old boy saw the program and told his parents "If anything happens to me, I want to give my heart to Hugo". Some time later, the youngster had a fatal accident, a brain death, and his parents fulfilled his wish.

When Hugo had his heart transplant, he experienced something that he remembered after and told us in detail. He saw his body inert on the bed and people crying around it, and he felt himself walking through a tunnel and a light at its end. He felt so much peace and wanted to arrive at the radiant light he was seeing as a rain of sparks, when he saw some deceased relatives getting closer, like his son and a sister, telling him that he should stop and come back. Then some of them gave him personal messages to deliver to the living relatives. He did! In fact, one of them had to be sent for a day to the hospital when he heard a precise and coded message from the beyond. Hugo recovered promptly, and soon after met "Colorada" and then a very fascinating and lively encounter with the Dharma took place.

When he was young, he was attracted to the religious life, and received training to become a Catholic priest which he renounced some six months before taking robes; nevertheless, he continued working as a teacher of Comparative Religion and theology at Catholic schools and colleges, but had little or no

knowledge of Buddhism. So, he became fascinated with the Dharma Teachings, especially the Dzogchen Teachings, when he arrived at Tashigar for the first time. He became a member of the Community and soon

became very active and involved in Community affairs.

His most important concern was whether he would make it to meet Rinpoche personally or not, because by then, in 1993, Rinpoche had suspended his activities due to his illness. When Rinpoche finally came to Tashigar, Hugo met him at the end of 1996. Hugo took the exam of the Base Level and the First Level Course.

In the same retreat he offered to serve as Tashigar's gekod during 1997. Rinpoche agreed and Hugo moved to Tashigar and devotedly worked and practiced hard and evenly. But, by the end of this 1997, his heart started to fail again, and the doctors said that science had no solution for it then. Hugo felt that he had still so much to do yet and applied for a new heart transplant again.

He was the Vice President of the Transplant Foundation in Cordoba, and his job was to encourage people to go through the transplant process or help them in the death process when everything else failed. But his own time was over now, and he died suddenly that Sunday, leaving us, his Vajra brothers and sisters, confronted with the inexorable truth of impermanence.

We continue to practice Shitro for him and try to learn from this extraordinary opportunity that life gave him to come back again, meet the Teachings, meet Rinpoche, and practice before dying. His ashes were scattered on Tashigar land, around the trees he was helping to grow. ■

### SIZES RELATIVE VISION

by Yeshe Wingerd, 5th grade  
Conway, Massachusetts, USA

Our universe could be a tiny little atom on a giants' finger. A little atom on your finger could be a universe for some other beings. There is not regular size, size is unlimited. Just like we think elves are small and giants big. Elves think we are big and Leprechauns small. Leprechauns think elves are big and so on. Giants think they're a regular size. That's why I think there is no regular size.

So, the next time you see a monster truck that you think is the biggest ever don't say it is. Because a giant that has an atom on his finger that's our universe could be driving a monster truck. ■

### SONGS FROM TSEGYALGAR

Never add on to.

Only the demon of attachment  
finds pleasure in adding on to.

The great perfection does not  
need adding on to.

Never subtract from.

Only the demon of aversion  
finds pleasure in subtracting from.

The great perfection does not  
need subtracting from.

Never change anything.

Only the faded eyes  
of cultural limitation needs change

The great perfection does not  
need change.

Never can the behavior of Samantabhadra  
be anything but perfect.

Never can the light of our Master's heart  
be anything but Samantabhadra.

Never may I forget

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This paper reviews archeological discoveries made at gNam mtsho and Dang ra g.yu mtsho in the last few years. During the course of seven expeditions to gNam mtsho and Dang ra g.yu mtsho the author has documented a variety of archaeological sites which with few exceptions are attributed to the pre-Buddhist period in Tibet. These attributions are primarily derived from oral histories.

#### BRA GU RTA RA

Bra gu rta ra (the Horse Corral of Bra gu ngom ngan) is associated with the legendary progenitor of the A po hor pastoralists of gNam mtsho, who is probably the most important mtshun lha (ancestral deity) in the gNam ru province of the Byang thang. His corral, located between sNying do and Ngang pa do according to the oral history of the region, is ascribed to the prehistoric period. It is a huge stone wall enclosure much more massive than any that have been built in the contemporary period. Brog pa say that they lack the skill and manpower to build something this large, which adds to its mystique.

The walls of Bra gu rta ra are 2 to 2.5 meters tall and over one meter in thickness. It is rectangular in shape, approximately 55 meters long from east to west and 30 meters wide from north to south and covers the top of a ridge that bisects the valley of Ma ra ri des. It suffered severe damage during the Cultural Revolution but was rehabilitated during the Communist collectivization period and used as a holding pen for sheep and goats. Bra gu rta ra has now reverted to a ritual function as a shrine to the 'brog pa genealogical gods. Against the southern wall in the middle of the enclosure are ruins of an unknown function. Also against the southern wall, to the east of the ruins, is a lha tho more than two meters tall consisting of heaped up stones with prayer flags strung across them. This is the ritual heart of the site. To the east of the compound is a two-meter tall boulder called Thang lha'i rta phur (gNyan chen thang lha's horse stake), an important shrine where the veneration of horses is conducted. At this juncture the archaeological value of bra gu rta ra is unknown; however it is a very important sacred cultural site.

#### DANG RA G.YU MTSHO SITES

##### PHYUG 'TSHO GROG PO

Less than eight kilometers from the agricultural village of Phug 'tsho is a spectacular site of three major arrays of ruins. The largest group of ruins is known as Phug 'tsho grog po rdzong. At its zenith it must have been as large, or larger, than Lha rtse chos lde rdzong or the old fort at Phun tshogs gling in gTsang province. It covers the summit and sides of a rock outcropping which exceeds 180 meters in length. There are no fewer than three dozen dilapidated structures many of which were multi-roomed and probably of more than one story in height. These structures are primarily built of stone with a small percentage of them constructed of mud bricks. Most of the walls are built in a square fashion but some also exhibit rounded corners, a fairly unusual building technique in Tibet (cf. Tucci 1973: 75, m76).

Along the southern base of the outcropping is an edifice of four or five rooms with two of the rooms still intact, complete with roofs. These remarkable well-preserved rooms afford a fascinating window into ancient construction techniques and the ecology of space. Passing by a large boulder, which acts as a gateway, one of the ruined rooms is entered. Immediately adjacent to it are the two rooms with roofs. Each of them is small—about seven square meters in size. One of these rooms has two small windows, called khra ma by the native pastoralists. The other room is windowless. The interior and exterior walls are made of unplastered raw stone blocks. In the room with the windows there is a one-meter-tall fire place made of adobe with a sophisticated ventilation system built against an outer wall. The 'brog pa predictably call it a thab kha. The rooms each have a smoke hole in the ceiling called skar khung.

The most unique architectural feature of the rooms is the all-stone roof. The slabs of stone composing the roof are supported by stone braces resting on the wall plate, two or three per wall. These stone braces act as the structural template for the radial arrangement

## A Preliminary Archaeological Survey of gNam mtsho and Dang ra g.yu mtsho

by John Bellezza

Part IV of a series about the lost city of Zhang Zhung



gsum. Thug rdo ring near rTa rgo rin po che (Dang ra g.yu mtsho)

J. BELLEZZA

of roof slabs that lie on top of them. In the room with the windows two of these stone braces span the entire length of the ceiling and thus function as rafters. A parallel to this style of construction is found in the villages of Gangs lung and 'Om bu further to the north, where the roofs of the homes are also built of stone slabs, the difference being that they rest on wooden beams rather than stone ones. According to the resident 'brog pa these rooms functioned as gzim khang (sleeping quarters) for the old fort.

Despite inquiring from many within the most knowledgeable people in the region, nothing concrete could be learned about Phug 'tsho grog po. The most informed opinions assert that the fort was founded in Zhang Zhung times but that it remained viable until the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama when it was destroyed by his governor, the Mongolian dGa' ldan tsho dbang, during his military campaign in Nag tshang.<sup>20</sup> The historical validity of this claim could not be verified, but the tall precariously perched walls of the ruined edifices do indicate that at least certain portions are not more than a few centuries old, because more ancient structures would have been leveled by now. If it was older, more disintegration of the structures should have occurred, especially the mud brick variety.

Also at Phug 'tsho grog po is a large complex of dark-colored stone chortens called either mchod rten smug rang (brown stupas) or Brum bu nag dpal which fell into a state of disrepair an untold number of centuries ago. Among the most curious sets of ruins at Phug 'tsho grog po are the ones situated on a mount above the fort commonly called Zhang Zhung dgon pa by the local 'brog pa. The ruins extend for about 2,000 square meters in a dense agglomeration, an index of their erstwhile size and importance. The buildings were oriented to the compass points and were built primarily of stone. Interestingly, one of the mud brick structures had its walls shored up with courses of stones. When they were built and who built them are unknown.

##### SKYID GSUM

Located on prominences in the environs of the village of sKyid gsum (Three Happinesses) are the traces of three forts, which are said to explain how the village received its name. The names of these three forts are Gyang rdzong, Ar pa'i rdzong and Grag chung

rdzong. Local histories are ambiguous as to the significance of these forts, which are often labeled as belonging to the Zhang Zhung period without any degree of critical verification.

Historiographically there is good reason to believe that one or more of the forts of sKyid gsum were operational well after the 8th century up to at least the 12th century.<sup>21</sup> It seems likely that during the Sa skya Ascendancy period Nag tshang was one of its vassal states or feudatories.<sup>22</sup> If this is indeed true, then it is plausible that the Sa skya princes maintained a symbol of their power in the Dang ra g.yu mtsho regions, the only agricultural enclave in Nag tshang. Of all the local villages sKyid gsum is the most likely candidate for the center of power in this period.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, it is not improbable that fortresses of a more diminutive size, like the ones found at sKyid gsum, could have survived into the 17th century and the invasion by dGa' ldan tsho dbang, or even later. Sadly, historical documents which could shed light on the history of sKyid gsum or other settlements in the Dangra g.yu mtsho region have not yet been discovered.

##### GYAM PA'I RDZONG

In the proximity of Dang ra g.yu bun, a monastery founded in Zhang Zhung times (Karmay: 47) are reportedly the remnants of a fort and palace called Gyam pa'i rdzong. The ruins cover a hilltop and the flanks of the hill are in an advanced stage of degeneration. Consequently, it is difficult to assess their signifi-

cance. It is ironic that the physical evidence of Gyam pa'i rdzong is much more extensive than that of Dang ra khyung rdzong, which is far more celebrated in Bon literature and lore. According to sLob dpon bstan 'dzin mam dag, both Gyam pa'i rdzong and Dang ra khyung rdzong are associated with the renowned dynasty of Zhang Zhung kings known as Lig mig rgya. In addition to the structural remains is a large cave on the site called Gyam pa'i lha khang which is believed to have housed a temple in the Zhang Zhung period, according to the g.Yu bun sprul sku bstan 'dzin tshul khams. In the vicinity is another mountain cove called Gyam bu, which may also have ruins of archaeological interest, although they have nearly completed their retrogression into the earth which makes detection difficult.

John V. Bellezza is an independent scholar who has been based in Dharamsala, India since 1983. He is an avid explorer who has traveled widely on foot throughout Tibet and the Western Himalayas. His latest book Divine Dyads: Ancient Civilization in Tibet examines the history, mythology and archaeology of mountains and lakes in Changthang.

20. The invasion, subjugation and consolidation of Nag tshang during the reign of the 5th Dalai Lama is mentioned in a history of the province (cf. La stod 'jam dpal 1989 (?): p. 259). 21. In 1127 Ghenghis Khan defeated the Minyak dynasty and conquered the Byang country of Ngam ring, which lies adjacent to Nag tshang (Stein 1972: 34). It is unlikely that the Dang ra g.yu mtsho region could have escaped the devastating invasion of Ghenghis Khan. 22. The Tibetological historian Robert Vitali has formulated a hypothesis that explains the political status of regions like Nag tshang as being under the control of the Sa skya rulers during their Ascendancy period (interview 1995). It does seem unlikely that sparsely populated Nag tshang could have eluded the might and domination of the Sa skya pa and their Mongol overlords. 23. During a period that corresponds with the second diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet, the rdzogs chen master gShen rgyal lha rtse founded a hermitage at g.Yung drung lha rtse with the patronage of a sponsor from sKyid gsum (cf. Biographies of the Lineage Lamas of the Zhang Zhung sNyan rgyud rdzogs chen Tradition: 40-44). sKyid gsum might have dominated the region for centuries, because there is another reference to its influence in which it is stated that in the late 17th century Dang ra g.yu bun dgon pa was under the control of the sKyid gsum bla brang (cf. Bod ljongs nag' chu sa khul gyi lo rgyus: 581). Today sKyid gsum occupies fourth place in the population figures for the Dang ra g.yu mtsho agrarian villages. ■

## Heartdrops of Dharmakaya

### Bön Dzogchen Teachings



H.H. Lopön Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche

#### Mountain Retreat:

April 27th to May 3rd  
in Austria at Scheffau / Tyrolia

#### Public workshops and lectures:

April 23rd in Munich / Germany  
May 5th and 6th in Freiburg / Germany

It is a great honor to announce that Lopön Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche will hold public lectures in Germany and conduct a week-long residential retreat in a beautiful mountain resort in the Austrian Alps at the invitation of the Rang Rig Sangha.

Lopön Rinpoche, who speaks excellent English, will give teachings and empowerments from the Shang-Shung Nyengyid, the equivalent of the Menngagde or Upadesha teachings of the Nyingma School including instructions on Thödgäl and the dark retreat.

Lopön Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche is one of the foremost Dzogchen masters of our time and living heir of the long Bön tradition. Their most profound teachings are the "Oral Lineage of Shang Shung" which dates back to prehistoric times and the ancient kingdom of Oimolungring, otherwise known as Shambala, and contains the earliest stream of transmission of the Great Perfection. Lopön Rinpoche, who is considered the greatest living proponent of the Bön lineage has almost single-handedly kept this tradition alive in exile. He founded monastic colleges in India and Nepal, which trained a new generation of Geshe and Lopöns. He has taught at Cambridge, London, and Munich Universities and has given Dzogchen teachings in the West at the invitation of H.H. the Dalai Lama and Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche.



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## A Pilgrimage to the Middle Land

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Mahayana Buddhism after the passing of the Buddha and remained a renowned center of Buddhist scholarship for about 700 years until the rise of Brahmanical philosophy and the Muslim invasions brought the University to ruins. In its heyday, the University had more than 8000 students and about 1500 teachers. It is situated about 13 km from Rajgir, the one time capital of the Kingdom of Magadha, where Lord Buddha gave some of his most important teachings and where his cousin, Devadatta, tried to kill him by releasing a mad elephant. Rajgir is about three hours drive from Bodhgaya.

We set off very early by bus and arrive at the main site of Nalanda which is set in a well-cared for and spacious park. The main temple there is one of the few places remaining where images of the Buddha can still be seen even though many have been damaged or 'beheaded' in order to be sold as antiques. Not far off is the stupa dedicated to Sariputra, one of the main disciples of Lord Buddha. The rest of the area, a vast series of temples and monastic residences of baked red bricks set amongst the short green grass have been practically razed to the ground and the visitor can do little more than imagine how great a complex this great university once was. We rest a while in the shade while the local women, slim and brown in their bright saris, carry out some simple gardening work.

Continuing our exploration we discover the remains of a stone temple whose four walls are each decorated with a row of assorted figures and designs cut into the stone. Finally just a step outside the boundary of the grounds we visit a large black Buddha statue still worshipped by the local inhabitants as a Hindu god and the nearby earth mound which houses one of the last discoveries of the archaeologists — the remains of a huge statue of Buddha Sakyamuni, just the crossed legs and the lotus throne. A trip to the small museum to see the statues there and we climb back onto the bus and head for Rajgir for lunch.

On our arrival we meet Fabio and make an appointment to meet Rinpoche after lunch. We meet up at a restaurant outside town where the

mala sellers are hard at work trying to ply their wares. They meet their match with Rinpoche who bargains for a large number of malas made of local seeds that grow on the Vulture Peak and have a kind of triangular mark on the bead. A little further down the road we come to the chair lift that goes up close to the Peak. The chairs accommodate one person at a time and after deftly dropping onto the moving seats we silently make our way to the top of the hill one after the other. There is a moment when the entire line of hanging chairs stops and we rest alone in silence on our individual chairs high above the rocks.

At the top of the hill Rinpoche rests and invites those who feel like walking to make a *kor wa* around the newly built Peace Stupa with its golden Buddha statues bright in the sunlight. After a little time Rinpoche moves towards the pathway leading to the Vulture Peak and we follow him. At a bend in the pathway, a policeman joins us on the walk — the area, we have heard, is still dangerous for individual pilgrims who risk being robbed by local bandits. In fact tourist brochures warn about the dangers of roaming the hills alone and traveling at night.

The path descends, bends to the left and then winds up towards the Peak about 2 km distant. The path of cement slabs is named after Bimbisara, the King of Magadha, who passed along this same road in order to meet Lord Buddha so many centuries ago. We visit the cave just below the Peak before climbing up to the main terrace above where we sit on either side of Rinpoche facing the stone seat where Lord Buddha taught. It is simply adorned with a few flowers and some sticks of burning incense and is set against the backdrop of a vast blue sky. Rinpoche tells us sim-

ply that Paolo Pagni has just died and that we will do a practice for him and others. The Song of the Vajra resounds from that lonely but powerful place where once Lord Buddha taught the prajnaparamita to 5000 monks, nuns and lay people. This is the place of the Second Turning of the Wheel of the Dharma. The Master, the place, the moment, together create a strong experience for all those who are present.

Slowly we put our shoes back on and move back to the road, this time down its length until we arrive at the foot of the hill. This is our last moment of pilgrimage with

Rinpoche as he leaves tomorrow for various destinations. He fixes a date for us to meet him in Dharamsala a couple of weeks later. Sad for his departure yet joyful for the moments shared, we wave good-bye as he drives off with Rosa.

Here the paths of the Master and the sangha divide until our reunion in Dharamsala a couple of weeks later. Most

of the group head for Varanasi, though this time in separate groups. Our group of five is the last to leave Bodhgaya and we travel the pot-holed 'highway' to Varanasi in an old Ambassador car, a kind of modern mechanical bull-cart. It is early evening when we finally arrive at our hotel which is situated on the most southerly ghat along the banks of the Ganges. The Durga festival is in its final throes and throughout the night until dawn we can hear the frantic drumming and shrieking flutes of the religious merry-makers celebrating their rites.

Varanasi or Benares, sacred city, is one of the most powerful spots in India. It is the place Hindus come to to die, or have their bodies brought to be cremated since their ashes will be sent into the sacred water of the Ganges. It is 'Shiva city' where the fires on the two cremation ghats are never spent; death takes no holiday. Set on the bank of the holy Ganges thousands of the faithful immerse themselves for their ritual bath with the first

light of day and have probably done so for centuries. The river is the city's blood — it is used for rituals, ablutions, swimming, taking with it the ashes of the cremated, bodies of children, lepers and holy cows, and in the evening adorned with hundreds of floating candles twinkling along with the current.

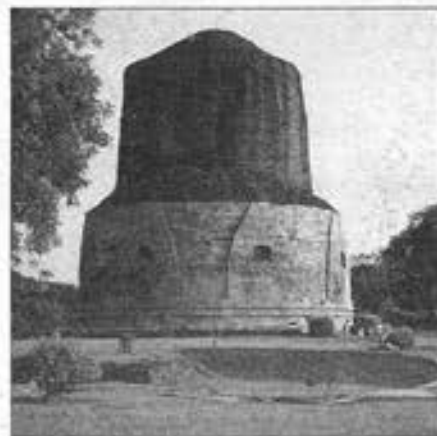
Our final place of pilgrimage is Sarnath located about 14km from Varanasi. The Deer park at Sarnath was home to the first disciples of the Buddha and after his enlightenment, he traveled there and set in motion the First Turning of the Wheel of the Dharma, presenting the Four Noble Truths to them. A small group of us make the trip there one afternoon by motorickshaw to do a Ganapuja.

We do a few *kor wa* of the Dhamekh (which means Dharmachakra — where Lord Buddha put in motion the Wheel of the Dharma) Stupa which marks the very spot where Lord Buddha's taught and then wander among the ruins set in a park of majestic trees and flowering bushes. Like many other historical points throughout India there is an Ashokan pillar with an inscription as well as the ruins of monasteries, stupas and temples lying broken in the still green grass (the monsoon has just finished and the grass is still fresh). A broad red brick stupa called the Dharmarajika Stupa lies leveled as if beheaded — a couple of centuries ago a local Maharaja dismantled it to use the bricks as building material. A casket found within and believed to contain relics of Lord Buddha was kept in a museum while its precious contents were thrown into the Ganges!

We find a shady place in view of the main stupa under one of the grand trees and arrange our things for the Ganapuja. Nearby two orange robed monks are reciting their prayers in front of their offering candles.

— A —

With this practice we have completed our pilgrimage to the four great places linked to the life of the Buddha as suggested by the Enlightened One himself. The pilgrimage has been a great opportunity to learn about ourselves under the difficult situations we have encountered and it has increased our knowledge of the life of Lord Buddha. Most of all fueled our devotion and given us precious moments with the Master. Of course our trip goes on to Dharamsala and Tso Pema, but that's another story. ■



## Pilgrims in Tibet

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Rinpoche as the greeting of a local protector.

Once through the second pass we began to see Tibetan pilgrims who had traveled from substantial distances to receive Rinpoche's blessing. At three separate places they had lined the road and awaited with katas and incense amidst the snowstorm. Rinpoche paused briefly to accept their scarves. We then turned off the road and proceeded across the tundra like plain, and across a spectacular dried river bed for the last 10 kilometers to Ralung.

Approaching the outskirts of Ralung the main body of pilgrims were gathered. Before we were stopped our vehicles were engulfed by a mass of excited Tibetans. Rinpoche was helped onto a horse and with a ceremonial umbrella over his head, the parade entered the monastery proper. The devotion and excitement of these pilgrims was intensely moving for all involved.

As the group entered the main compound of the substantially rebuilt monastery I lingered behind taking in the ambience, also feeling dizzy and nauseated from the altitude and whatever else I had contracted by then. It is impossible to fully convey the scene. Ralung is situated at approximately 16,000 feet, is

located on an alpine tundra surrounded by snow capped mountains. It is beautiful, but harsh and desolate even in the summer when we visited. I found it almost impossible to imagine living here year-round.

Herds of animals and some traditional black tents of Nomads were observable on the plains nearby, as were many ruins. These were the remnants of a far more extensive monastic complex.

I rested for a short time and then rejoined Rinpoche and our party as he was greeting pilgrims in Ralung's shrine room. Ever the Dzogchen teacher, Rinpoche inquired after my condition. I was quite sick. "Strong experience", he sympathized. The monks catered to our entourage offering butter tea and snacks. They greeted us in the traditional Tibetan fashion with tongue fully extended. Rinpoche noted that these Tibetans were almost all wearing clothes that they had made themselves, not the typical store-bought Chinese.

I felt increasingly nauseated and eventually left the shrine room to vomit. As always, my activity was the object of intense fascination. Despite attempting to gesticulate the onlookers away, I finally positioned my wife between myself and the most intensely curious.

For the next two days we stayed close to Rinpoche. He continuously greeted colorful, often beautiful albeit unwashed pilgrims, and accepted the gifts of raw wool and butter proffered. All the while he offered observations about the people and life at the monastery. He also taught the monks, and injected his opinions into the political debate of the monastery. Suggesting, for example, that the monks also make room for more nuns and even lay practitioners. At night we slept in a dorm with pressed mud walls and floor, and warmed by a stove which burnt yak dung for fuel. The monks and many pilgrims watched us and examined our accouterments. Clearly privacy and personal space are interpreted differently there.

Over the two plus days, we all made strong connections with many of the monks and some of the pilgrims. When it was time to leave, the good-byes were heartfelt. After Rinpoche again patiently received the pilgrims we were back in the jeeps and retracing the route towards home. Despite having spent hours saying good-bye at the monastery proper, we had only gotten a few kilometers when we were waylaid. New crowds of pilgrims, as well as many who had already said good-bye, gathered en route to say Tashi Delek.

Our visit to Ralung was a memorable end to our month long trip which included visits to many extraordinary pilgrimage sites in Nepal and Central Tibet. Three weeks later as I sat at my desk in New York I received a call from Air Italia. Although we had not traveled anywhere via this airline,

they reported that they were in possession of my luggage, including more than a dozen rolls of unexposed film. Apparently for unknown reasons it had traveled to Pakistan and Rome, and more than a month later was forwarded to me in New York. ■

## In the Presence of the Master

continued from page 9

a cage which he had been given. During the first session he said that the Path consists of the view, application and behavior which are related to the different aspects of mind, voice and body. According to the view, visions are an ornament of our primordial state; our behavior should be that of working with awareness (*Kuntuzangpo*) rather than accepting or rejecting. Rinpoche went on to explain that Dzogchen exists in all the Tibetan schools and mentioned the names of many Dzogchen masters of different traditions.

On the third and final day the Master talked about practice in daily life, bearing in mind that time is always going ahead. He explained a simple *shine* practice and Vajra recitation and then spoke at length on the practice of natural light during the hours of sleeping. He compared the moment of going to sleep with the bardo of the moment of death and stressed how important this moment is for a practitioner. Then he explained in some detail a practice of the natural light that can also be done during a dark retreat. The three days of teaching closed with a Ganapuja.

Afterwards, Lama Döboom Rinpoche thanked Chögyal Namkhai Norbu for his teachings and expressed his gratitude to both Fabio and Laura for their Yantra Yoga instructions. Rinpoche and his wife, Rosa, left Delhi the following day for Goa for a period of rest. Those of us who had been fortunate enough to pass the previous weeks with the Master left for different destinations. ■



## HOW I MET THE TEACHINGS

An Interview with Elio Guarisco



L. GRANGER

**The Mirror:** Would you tell 'The Mirror' readers who you are.

**Elio:** I am a middling student of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. (Let's not put ourselves down too much saying that we are the worst. Others may really believe that and we would lose our status! Ah ah!)

**The Mirror:** How did you first come into contact with the teaching?

**Elio:** I was born in 1954 in North Italy, close to the Swiss border. Following my natural talent for drawing, I studied arts and ended up at the Brera Academy of Arts in Milan.

None of my early attitudes or behavior foretold that I would embark on what people usually call a 'spiritual' quest. On the contrary my youth was flavored with a strong sense of rebellion against socially established values. I first became the feared and then respected political leader of the students of the Institute of Arts at Cantù (in north Italy) and then joined extremist left wing groups.

However some experiences with psychedelic substances saved me from entering the armed red brigades and possibly from a few years of prison that damned the lives of a number of my friends. At that time I was known as the 'Indio' for my long hair and weird look. Psychedelics, though not as a rule, can shake the belief in the reality of things, problems, society, etc., so my dream of changing society through politics vanished.

I felt I should search out the meaning of my life in an unfamiliar context, so I traveled to India in the early 70s. There I soon came in contact with a Buddhist master, Oshonka, an illustrious exponent of Vipassana meditation. I tried to practice Vipassana meditation for two years. The change that this brought about in me was radical. Not even my close friends could believe that I had changed so much. The change was, however, more like a smoothing of my rebellious tendencies and assuming a Buddhist point of view, though I did have some insights. I studied with a number of other Vipassana teachers like Mr. Coleman, Mr. Hover and Ruth Denison; all of them shared with Goenka the same teacher, the Burmese government lay employee, U Ba Kin.

**The Mirror:** When did you come in contact with Tibetan Buddhism?

**Elio:** The very first Tibetan master I saw was Dilgo Khyentse. I met him in Bodhgaya, on the roof of the temple that marks the place where the Buddha became enlightened. His presence and simplicity, the sense of 'completeness' that he diffused made a strong impression on me. In my naiveté I prayed that I would find the means to become like him. At that time, however, the heavy ritual aspects that largely characterize so-called 'Lamaism' kept me away from it.

**The Mirror:** Then how did you become involved in Tibetan Buddhism?

**Elio:** That happened one or two years later. When I got back to the West I went to live with some friends in the eastern part of Switzerland. They had studied with Tibetan masters in India and I was inspired by them. They told me about a spiritual assistant of the Dalai Lama who was living in

retreats in the hills above Dharamsala. He accepted and taught a few Western students. When I saw his picture on the wall of a friend's room, I felt captivated. His name was Tamdrin Rabten. In 1976 he came to Switzerland on suggestion of the Dalai Lama and at the request of some Westerners.

A month before meeting him, one day, around one o'clock in the afternoon, between sleep and the waking state, I felt as if a snake was coming out from the lower part of my body as it shook violently. In the night I dreamt of a procession of monks going up a hill. In the center of the line of monks there was one who I thought was Tamdrin Rabten. He was certainly a predestined teacher with whom I had a connection from the past. He had been my true father. Among the six types of masters he is the 'dren pa'i bla ma', the one who brought me to the gateway of the teaching.

**The Mirror:** Why did you pass over from Vipassana meditation to Tibetan Buddhism?

**Elio:** Actually as Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche says, there is really nothing to change, one's real condition always remains the same. So to say, "I was 'this' and I became 'that'" is a kind of illusion, the working of impermanent thoughts. But at that time I felt I needed a wider approach to the situations and problems of life; although Vipassana is a wonderful method, (due to my own shortcomings) it seemed to be a bit narrow as a path.

**The Mirror:** How long did you stay with your first Tibetan teacher?

**Elio:** I stayed with Tamdrin Rabten for ten years up to the very moment he died. During that time I studied a few aspects of Buddhist philosophy and received teachings on the principles of the Buddhist path with an emphasis on their application in accordance to the gradual way. From time to time we received Tantric initiations and Tantric teachings from important masters who came to visit the monastery; these authorized us to engage in Tantric retreats. Engaging in these retreat somehow gave us a 'revitalizing break' from our studies. The studies were particularly trying for me as at the beginning I did not know a word of Tibetan and was not used to analytical investigation.

**The Mirror:** Were you a monk at that time?

**Elio:** At that time the monks, particularly the monks, were saying that if you want to practice, the best way is to become a monk. I was influenced by that view.

I also felt that when you are very confused and have a hard time to regain your clarity it may be useful to follow some rules for a time. That was exactly my condition. So I decided to become a monk with the intent of also providing myself with the space and time for learning.

After some years, however, whenever I was outside the monastery, I experienced an uneasy feeling of being a monk out of context, a freak among normal

people. Without any sense of loss I left the robe as a snake, at the end of the season, leaves its old skin on the path. To be a monk has never been part of my nature.

**The Mirror:** Is translation your main occupation now?

**Elio:** Yes and no. With the passing of the years I gained a bit of proficiency in Tibetan language although I never studied with the intention to become a translator like many people do nowadays. I simply learned a bit of Tibetan to be able to approach my teacher without the "treacherous translator" and in order to have direct access to the scriptures and the teaching. But then people started to ask me, "Please can you translate for this master, we have nobody else who can do it" and it was difficult for me to refuse.

So nowadays people say that I am a translator. But that's not what I think of myself. My inclination never leaned towards such intellectual work; nor do I enjoy to be like a tape recording and repeating what I sometimes don't even agree with. I don't feel at ease with translators who boast knowledge and secretly covet the master's seat. They always talk about their work and books. I much prefer conversation with simple people about food and maidens. Though their work is indispensable and invaluable, today translators are unlike those of the past. I think of myself as being a practitioner of the teaching. I cannot claim I am doing very well in that, but still that's what I try to do.

**The Mirror:** You are currently working as a translator in India — what books are you translating?

**Elio:** The last time he came to the West, Kalu Rinpoche, a master for whom I had a considerable respect and faith, asked me to collaborate in the translation of a book. It was an honor for me that Kalu Rinpoche asked for my collaboration. I accepted thinking that it would not take a long time to translate a single book. However, things worked out slightly differently. The series of books to be translated comprise one of the major works existing in Tibetan literature, *The Infinite Ocean of Knowledge*, more commonly known as *shes bya kun khyab*. The author of this work is the first Kongtrul, a very important nineteenth-century figure who played a vital role in the revitalization and preservation of the teaching in Eastern Tibet.

**The Mirror:** When did you meet Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche?

**Elio:** When I came back from

India in the early seventies, I talked enthusiastically about the teaching to my dear friends in north Italy. Most of them picked it up and sometime later became students of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche.

During the following years I heard of and met Rinpoche incidentally on several occasions. Once, while I was serving as translator for Kalu Rinpoche in Turin, the organizers offered a long Italian wedding-style lunch that went on for several hours in honor of Kalu Rinpoche. Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche also came to the lunch with a group of his students. I was sitting next to him.

I remember a funny detail of that occasion. Kalu Rinpoche asked Namkhai Norbu whether the Gelugpas were strong in Italy and Namkhai Norbu replied "No". This struck me. Probably because at that time I was a monk student of a Gelugpa master but unaware of the long-standing rivalry between schools in Tibet and sectarian attitudes. Although I was studying at a Gelug monastery, we never thought of ourselves as Gelugpas. We were just Westerners studying the teachings, no more no less than that.

I was exposed to different opinions of Tibetans and Westerners alike, and, at that time, many people criticized Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche because of his views on Tibetan history, culture and language. So for a few years I really wondered what kind of master he was.

To form an opinion about someone only on the basis of what people say is not logical. So when my first teacher died, leaving me in the midst of sorrow, after some time I thought it would be better to see first hand what kind of teacher Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche was and what kind of Community was developing around him.

The opportunity to check things out came when two masters from Tashi Jong, whom I knew, Dorzong and Chögyal Rinpoche came to Merigar to teach. I decided to go and meet them. When I arrived, I had the clear impression that Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche knew who I was, what my ideas were and maybe also that I would become his student. He asked me if I could translate for Dorzong Rinpoche. During the time I stayed in Merigar, in a nice caravan just outside the yellow house. I became friends with many people and felt as if rejoining my family.

I could see that what people were saying about Rinpoche and the Dzogchen Community was the result of fears and sectarian views and it did not correspond to the reality.

**The Mirror:** What are your plans for the future?

**Elio:** Krishnamurti used to say that the future is just 'a movement of thought'. I have no worldly plans for the future. We are living a short existence and what I am trying to do is to work as much as possible on myself to awaken to my real condition and to be of some help to others. What else shall we do?

Also I would like to collaborate as much as possible with the Dzogchen community. Whenever I have been asked to help the Community I always accepted willingly. I am certain of the importance of Rinpoche's activities in various fields, for instance the invaluable work being carried out in Tibet for the sake of preserving the different aspects of Tibetan culture and I hope to be one of the small instruments for the unfolding of his activities.

*Elio Guarisco, born in 1954 in the province of Varese in Italy, was a disciple of Geshe Rabten from 1974 until the Geshe's passing. Elio studied Tibetan language and took complete ordination as a Buddhist monk, studying psychology and logic as well as Madhyamika philosophy in Switzerland and Italy. In 1986 he gave up his vows and moved to Milan. Since 1987 he has been working with the translation committee at the monastery of Kalu Rinpoche in India translating the works of the famous master Kontrul Lodro Taye.* ■



### THE MIRROR

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Did I tell you? This summer I became a grandfather. I thought I did tell you, but then I'm not sure...

I was walking through the woods, down by the little river at the bottom of the hill, just below the driveway that leads up to our house in Tuscany, near Merigar. It was in late August, and hot — very hot.

Wasn't it you that I saw there?

The cry of the cicadas was so shrill it was like some strange intense radar coming from another planet. I crossed the brown baked earth of the cut field and wandered past the stacked bales of mown grass in the stifling heat, walking down the narrow sheep track into the cleft in the hillside where, in spring, the river flows in a torrent, thundering through the channel beneath the trees to make a waterfall.

Although the wide, round pool below the wall of rocks over which the waterfall would tumble and boil in the rainy season was still full, the river itself had almost dried up after weeks without rain, and the pond's still surface was broken only by the expanding circles the water-beetles made as they skimmed across it, supported somehow on their long skinny legs.

It was quiet there: very quiet.

The leaves of the overhanging trees shut out the harsh glare of the sun, and as I approached the pool, walking carefully up the dry river bed looking out for snakes, I was enclosed in a dim, cool green world of mossy banks and dappled shadows where only the occasional faint murmur of a car on the distant road reminded me what century I was in.

I sat on a boulder and looked at my reflection in the barely moving surface of the pool: it remains quite deep all summer, despite the mere trickle of water flowing into it down the rock wall where the waterfall flows so fiercely into it in winter and spring.

I kicked off my shoes, and put my feet in the cold water. Small fish moved inquisitively around them. The leaves rustled. Deer come there to drink, and I thought one might appear at any minute, as had happened when I took the children there for a picnic and a swim the day before. But this time there was no crashing in the underbrush to announce the arrival of an antlered friend who would startle and run away on smelling my scent.

I sat on a boulder. I was sleepy. It was a relief to get out of the sun. I took my feet out of the water, and lay back against the cold rock, feeling its coolness through my shirt.

And then suddenly, you were there, standing a little way from me, before coming closer, with that familiar, almost mocking smile you always have when you are about to tease me about something.

I said: "Rinpoche, I thought you were in Tibet."

You said: "But I am."

So I said: "Then how come you are here, too? Is it possible to be in two places at once?"

You said: "Maybe."

I said: "Oh."

Then we didn't speak for a while, but you were there, beside me, letting the silence deepen, and finally I seemed to see you more clearly. You were sitting beside me on the rock, with your down jacket folded underneath you to serve as a cushion.

I said: "Did I already tell you I was a grandfather? I thought I did,

but I'm not sure. My son, Rob — you know he's twenty-four now — and his wife Claire, they had a baby girl this week, she's called Skye Shane, and she has red hair and green eyes like Jo, my wife, and like my daughter Susannah. Did I already tell you this?"

You said: "You talk too much, but that's OK. You know, you don't have to tell me all these things."

I said: "I'm glad you're here."

You said: "Oh?"

I said: "I've missed you. It's been the longest time."

You said: "But I'm always here."

I thought about that, and then I said: "I know. But I've missed you all the same, and I wanted to tell you: I've just become a grandfather. Or did I already tell you that?"

You said: "You did. But it doesn't matter."

I said: "Oh."

Then there was a long pause, until I said: "I'm glad to see you looking so well. You know, I've been feeling your presence all this time, but I'm only now able to acknowledge it in me. It's a good feeling, knowing that you are there."

And then it was evening. The bats were swooping among the trees, the mosquitoes were biting my legs, and I felt cold. I rubbed my stiff limbs and climbed the steep hill back up to the house where the family was waiting. Guests had come for the dinner: there was a big bowl of pasta and a few bottles of good wine on the long wooden table under the porch in front of the house. We drank a toast to the new baby — my first grandchild.

But then, I already told you I was a grandfather — didn't I?

Susannah was six this November. By then we were back here in Bermuda — the kids were back in school and I was back at work — far away from Tuscany and Merigar, in another world I could almost say, a world of palm trees and in the Autumn of wild tropical storms, where the tree frogs sing at night and the vast ocean that surrounds this tiny island is never very far away, its waves ceaseless in their motion, its thousands of life forms all making their unseen presence felt, pressing in on my consciousness when I lie down to sleep at night.

At Susannah's birthday party, after the ritual lighting of the candles on the cake, after the six pink candles had been blown out, and after everyone had sung 'Happy Birthday' in several languages, the children — all in paper party hats — played their usual party games. There is one that is a particular favorite: it's called 'Pass the Parcel', and they play it every year.

Perhaps you know it — though I'm sure, Rinpoche, they don't have it in Tibet?

Anyway, it goes like this: the kids all sit around in a circle, music is played, and while the music is

playing the children pass around a parcel wrapped in layer after layer of paper. When the music stops the kid who is holding the parcel unwraps a layer of paper. Then the music starts again, and the parcel is passed on once more, until, when the music stops for the second time, the child holding the parcel gets to unwrap the next layer of paper. Then the music starts again, the parcel is passed, and so on, until the

ings in more and more concrete ways.

After Susannah's party, when all the guests had gone, I was sitting on the sofa with Jessie and Susannah — Jessie's twelve now — and we were talking.

We were talking about growing up, and about how children become teenagers — which is what is happening with Jessie. She's blossoming in a very beautiful way, but then again it's hard for both parents and children to let go of established roles, even when those roles have been outgrown.

I was looking for a way to explain to Jessie that, as she grew and came to be an adult, she would look at her parents differently, seeing our faults and our weaknesses as well as (hopefully) our good points. She would have to accept things about us that she couldn't see when she was a small child. I wanted to acknowledge to her the fact that we, her parents,

were fallible, but also to explain that we were doing our best with what had in turn been given to us by our parents.

In a way we are all sitting in a circle in our paper party hats (the roles we play in life) waiting for the music (our stressful life situations) to stop so that we can get a chance to open the parcel that has been handed to us, to get to find the precious gift inside. But somehow there's always one more layer of wrapping between us and the real thing; although someone else may seem to be getting it — it never

final layer is unwrapped: then the lucky child who is holding the parcel gets to keep the gift that has been hidden inside all along.

Now that sounds simple, doesn't it? But just try playing it with a bunch of little kids.

There are so many styles of play: there are some children who just won't let go of the parcel at all. Then there are others who, when the music stops, want to take off all the layers of paper, at once, without waiting to pass it on to anyone else.

And as the parcel proceeds around the circle, it's fascinating to watch the attachment manifesting in the children (and their parents), as they try to hold on to the parcel for as long as possible, hoping that the music will stop while they still have the package in their hands. Then, when the music does stop, and the child holding the parcel begins to unwrap it, it's interesting to observe the anticipation mount as they can't wait to see if the layer they are taking off is the last layer — or will there be still another layer underneath?

As the music starts again, and the child must let go of the parcel, the disappointment is as visible as the anticipation that preceded it. That's the nature of the game, and I remember you saying to me once, Rinpoche: "In relation to one who has real awareness, anyone who does not have awareness is like a child." And at the time I felt we were all children in relation to you, with all our attachments, all our passions, and all our expectations.

Now I think about it, Rinpoche, you were always passing on a gift to us, weren't you? Though, at first, you tried to give us your special gift without any wrappings at all, perfect unadorned presence was too intangible for us to fully comprehend, and so you gradually proceeded to reveal the outer forms of the precious treasure of the teach-

somehow seems to be quite our turn — unless we wake up to the moment through our practice.

Sitting on the sofa in our living room, I said to Jessie: as parents we want to give the very best of everything to our children, we want to pass on only the best of ourselves — which is just what our parents also wanted to give us. But somehow there's always another layer of wrapping in the way.

Down the generations the 'gift' (of life itself, of clarity and pure presence) has come to be wrapped up in layers of 'stuff' (our conditioning — our confusion, our guilt and fear). And even though in every generation parents try to unwrap the gift so that they can pass it on in as pure a way as possible to their children, somehow inadvertently a little more 'stuff' gets added, even as some 'stuff' is removed. It's very hard to bring children up completely without conditioning them, but no matter how hard it may seem, each generation has to try to do it.

I told Jessie that if she should ever feel that the 'gift' has been passed to her in a bad way, she should try to remember that it was a waste of time to spend her life judging the person who gave the gift to her: you can't go back to change the past, but you can affect the present, and the future. Whether we are parents or not, I said, we are all continually passing on what we have experienced, what we have learned in life, and to do this without conditioning others is our biggest responsibility.

Pass the parcel is a game played in a circle: the person to whom we give the gift today, will be passing it to someone else — perhaps back to us — tomorrow.

And Rinpoche, at the season of giving of gifts in the Western world — the world in which most of your students grew up, I just want to say thank you for the gifts you have given me — the wonderful gifts you have given us all — down the many years you have accepted the great responsibility of being our teacher.

Oh, and by the way, did I tell you that I became a grandfather this summer? ♦

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