

THE MIRROR

Newspaper of the International Dzogchen Community

June/July 1998 • Issue No. 45



Tibetan children at celebration of opening of the Dang-che school

What is Happening with A.S.I.A.?

by Andrea dell'Angelo

The Mirror staff has been waiting so long for this article that they have resorted to using their magical powers to disturb our dreams; so here in the torrid heat of A.S.I.A. in a cave-like office suffocated by the car and motorcycle exhaust of those who park in front of our windows, we have finally decided to write a note about the activities of A.S.I.A.

The year 1998 has seen remarkable growth in the organization and above all has warranted the trust that major public donors have in us. A.S.I.A. is a noted example of international cooperation in the territory inhabited by Tibetans in both China and Tibet. By the end of August, A.S.I.A. will have thirteen Western specialists and many more of their Tibetan colleagues spread over a territory as large as Europe. All of these workers are committed to an array of projects which include emergency relief for the population that was struck by blizzards in Western Tibet, the construction of schools and hospitals in three different Provinces, the actual practice of medicine, and the teaching of English and Computer Science.

In Italy, unfortunately, the structure of the organization has remained underscale and sometimes the staff is very hard pressed to deal with an enormous amount of work and responsibility. The Rome Office has to oversee all ongoing projects, plus the upcoming organization of the missions of more specialists, the selection of personnel, the administrative accounting for various public bodies, the continuous need to organize exhibitions, concerts and conferences, and to participate in television programs in order to make public opinion aware of our activities so that we can raise the funds necessary for these many projects.

A debate has been going on among those who cooperate with A.S.I.A. on how to develop the organization in a professional and harmonious manner. One of the main topics of discussion has been

on whether to staff the organization with only unpaid volunteers or to set up a permanent, salaried staff. The risk with using only volunteer staff is that the work will not be completed in a timely way and in the fashion required by the organizations that support us. We are also concerned that we may lose serious and motivated volunteers through lack of recognition and remuneration as soon as they are offered a well-paying job outside of the Association. Our main concern about employing a permanent and professional salaried staff is the risk that those who volunteer for A.S.I.A. at the moment might lose sight of the objectives or their motivation and ask for financial recompense for any job done.

We continue to ask ourselves whether A.S.I.A. forms a part of the Dzogchen Community or not. Most of us feel that the inner core of the administrative staff should be members of the Dzogchen Community and that the Community itself should be the source of ideas, contributions and a professional approach. Unfortunately, at this point, the contrary is true. Most of the people who work for A.S.I.A. are people who do not belong to the Community and most of the economic and professional support comes from outside sources.

The work continues to go ahead but certainly these problems need to be resolved in such a way as to ensure that A.S.I.A. and those who work for it can carry out the many projects in a harmonious and less stressful way in order to guarantee a better future for Tibetans.

THE GAMTHOG PROJECT

The Gamthog project is financed by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Dutch Embassy at Beijing and A.S.I.A.. Thanks to the tireless efforts of Punzog Wangmo and Giorgio Minuzzo the project is proceeding very well.

In the past few years, we have constructed a fifteen hundred square meter hospital and a twelve-

classroom school. The renovation of two village houses is underway and these will be made available to the Tibetan and Western Medical personnel who work in the hospital and in various cultural and economic programs. A Tibetan Association for the Development of Gamthog Village has been established. After the election of the representatives and the drawing up of the rules for the administration of funds, a number of projects were initiated that include the acquisition of a lorry, the construction of a small saw mill, the publication of two unpublished episodes of the folk saga of Gesar and the establishment of scholarships for about thirty young monks for their enrollment in a course of study that will lead to a Khenpo degree.

Recently, Carlo Landini, a surgeon with extensive hospital experience and Paola Cossino, a professional nurse arrived in the village. Carlo and Paola will be at Gamthog for six months and during this period, with the aid of Phuntsok, they will set up hospital equipment, select the Tibetan and Chinese medical personnel, and begin clinical and surgical procedures. In August, they will be joined by Alberto Porro, a biologist and Maria Egia, an epidemiologist, who will both stay for three months. Alberto plans to set up a laboratory with a team of local lab assistants, and Maria will collect the necessary information to establish what are the prevalent pathological conditions in the Chamdo Province.

At the end of September, another doctor and nurse will arrive and will stay on site for seventeen months. Their aim will be to develop the clinical and surgical procedures to serve the local population to the greatest possible extent and to set up teams of qualified and experienced Tibetan medical practitioners. Obviously, we still lack all the economic resources for this project. Giorgio and Phuntsok continually send appeals to A.S.I.A. to help

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His Holiness Sakya Trizin and Chögyal Namkhai Norbu at Merigar

L. GRANGER

His Holiness Sakya Trizin Teaches at Merigar

by Liz Granger

On a hot summer day late in June, His Holiness Sakya Trizin was welcomed to Merigar by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and a crowd of his students. His Holiness, present head of the Sakyapa lineage, had been invited by Norbu Rinpoche to give teachings and the initiation of Vajra Kilaya during his brief visit. He was accompanied by his son, Dunge Rinpoche, two assistants and a retinue of five monks.

His six day stay at the Italian Gar of the Dzogchen Community coincided with a period of very hot weather and cloudless blue skies. Only the chatter of a thousand noisy birds in the wood below the Gonpa and the welcome late afternoon breezes were to punctuate the soundless waves of heat that enveloped the green mountain slope on which the Gar lies.

After a period of rest at Gadeling, the residence of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, on Thursday June 25th, His Holiness entered the Temple of Great Liberation heralded by the droning Tibetan ritual 'gyaling' sounded by the monks to begin his three days of teaching. His throne had been placed under the panel of figures depicting the Sakya lineage with Kunga Nyingpo, the son of Konchok Gyelpo, the founder of the Sakyapa tradition, at the center. In fact this was only the second time that a Sakyapa teacher had taught at the Gar, the first teaching was given by His Holiness's sister which meant a moment of reorientation for those entering the Gonpa who were so used to sit facing the panel of Primordial Masters under which Chögyal Namkhai Norbu sits.

His Holiness began by giving a full morning and afternoon session of teachings on 'Departing from the Four Attachments' by the first master of the Sakyapa

lineage. He opened the teaching by talking about the 'three containers' for receiving the teaching and the six paramitas. He briefly outlined the history of the teaching and then launched into the preliminary part of the pith instructions which covered detailed explanations on taking refuge and the motivation for enlightenment.

The main part of the teaching was a lengthy and detailed commentary on the four lines of the teaching which encapsulated the explanation of the four attachments which are to be renounced.

His Holiness spoke untiringly in an excellent English and presented his explanations in a very clear and concise way that was

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Most of the people here at the teaching are not newcomers. So, if you are not a newcomer, you more or less know what is going on. New people are waiting because they don't have much of an idea of what to expect. In general, we have an idea of a retreat or teachings; how we start and how we finish. Our intention from the beginning is that we are going to receive a teaching. Within that, we think there can be a kind of initiation, ceremony, or explanation. There are different methods.

I'm sure most of the new people are waiting for something like this. My main intention when having a retreat is that we try to understand each other. It is not sufficient that we spend some days talking and then I say good-bye. When things go that way I am not very satisfied. When I feel that people have understood at least something a little concrete, then at the end even if I feel a little tired, I really feel satisfied and happy. That is my purpose in giving teachings and collaborating with people who are interested. It is not so easy at all. I have had this intention from the beginning, it is not something new. It is now some twenty years that I am teaching in the Western world but still many of my students or people who follow the teachings from me are more or less at the same point. Of course, then it means that it's not so easy to realize my desire; but I know there are many people who follow the teachings with me and have their own evolution. I am not asking them to change anything. But when we have such knowledge and understanding of the teaching, it is not necessary to change but to manifest one's knowledge and understanding. What I really need is that, so that even when we only spend a few days together we try to do our best in this way.

In general people are very concerned with the title or name of the teachings they receive. That could be important sometimes. But if we are only going after that idea, then it is like going into a shop to buy objects. If we are going into a shop to buy a jacket, for example, and the shop doesn't have what we need, then we don't find it. When we enter the shop and find what we want, then we are happy. That is an example of the material level.

But the teaching is not like this. The teaching can be presented or manifest in hundreds of different forms and methods; but if we really understand and get into the sense of the teaching there is a unique understanding. Once we have understood and we get into the sense of the teaching, we get it forever. Therefore it doesn't depend very much on the school or tradition. It depends very much on us. We are very limited. We are living with a dualistic vision in samsara, in a very limited condition, therefore we consider the teaching something like that. If we follow the teaching with this kind of an idea, then of course even if we receive a teaching about going beyond limitations, the knowledge we receive always remains limited. So, it's very important that we understand this and try to get into the sense of the teaching.

In the Dzogchen teaching we say *shechig kundrol* which means if we know one, we know all. If we learn the biographies of the Dzogchen masters, we can also understand. There have been many teachers who have not studied in an ordinary way, but received Dzogchen teachings from a correct teacher and seriously did practice and through this practice got into the state of knowledge of Dzogchen.

There was a very famous teacher called Jigmed Lingpa. When Jigmed Lingpa was very young he studied how to read and write Tibetan in a monastery. He had an uncle who taught him to read and write, and he also learned a little astrology. In that time, there was a good teacher in that region teaching and giving transmission of Dzogchen. In Dzogchen the most important teaching is Guruyoga. Guru means teacher and the teacher transmits knowledge and understanding; we consider transmission the principle in Dzogchen. The principle is not how we do visualization of a deity, how we chant a mantra or how we perform a puja. In Dzogchen, what we transmit is how to discover the real nature of each individual. The teacher transmits that to the student and when we receive that transmission and discover our real nature, just that state, that nature, is also the state of the Guru or teacher.

When we try to be in that state, that is Guruyoga. So, Jigmed Lingpa received that kind of teaching and transmission. It was not a complicated teaching, but very simple. When someone is really dedicated and wants real knowledge and the real sense of the teaching they don't need many complicated things. So, Jigmed Lingpa went to a mountain to do a personal retreat of only Guruyoga. He received contact with his teacher Longchenpa through visions after spending three years doing this retreat. He received more the essence of the Guruyoga teaching. He decided to continue this practice and spent six or seven years applying only this practice. Then he became Jigmed Lingpa, which means that Jigmed Lingpa was not a simple practitioner living in a cave or something.

Today we consider him to have been a scholar. He wrote commentaries on the sense of Sutra, Tantra and Dzogchen. He has written many volumes, including historical texts. It seems Jigmed Lingpa knew everything; there was nothing he didn't



Rinpoche returns to Merigar

L. GRAF

Guruyoga

A Friday evening teaching given in Austria, 1998

know. Since that time he has been called *Kunkhyen* Jigmed Lingpa - *Kunkhyen* means omniscience. Someone can study for many years in a college and at the end become a learned person, but even if one becomes very learned and a scholar they can remain very limited. But with Jigmed Lingpa something woke up inside and he knew everything.

If we study these kinds of histories there is not only Jigmed Lingpa, there are many such examples. For example, among our practices there is one called "Konchog Chindu", which is a practice mainly of Guru Padmasambhava. This practice is specifically a terma teaching of Guru Padmasambhava which was discovered by a Terton called Jatsen Nyingpo. Jatsen Nyingpo was a Kagyupa monk, but not a very studied one. He decided to do practice and retreats. He did a lot of Guruyoga practice. At the end, he awoke and received all these terma teachings. Not only this, but he became an expert in all fields of Buddhist teaching. So we can study these kinds of biographies in order to understand a little. I think that is very important.

In general we do not do this when we follow the teachings. For that reason, people are very interested to know, for example, which kind of teaching it is. If we hear some very impressive title then we are interested. Title is very relative, like writing a name on a bag of medicine - sometimes you can write it in a different way and people don't understand what is contained inside. In the same way, we can also consider and give a very nice name for a teaching. If we do not have the possibility to meet a good teacher who really has that knowledge, or a teaching not transmitted in a really concrete way, even if it has a very nice name or title it doesn't mean very much. So we must not go after titles and names.

If we follow the teachings seriously, we must not become dependent on books or these kinds of things. We can't really have knowledge or understanding only through a book.

If we follow Sutra teachings it is possible, because with Sutra teachings it is not necessary that we receive a particular transmission. The main thing is knowledge; the knowledge that Buddha explained from the beginning: the nature of universal suffering. We must discover the cause of suffering and how we can stop that cause; which kind of paths we have to stop suffering definitively. We must understand good actions and bad actions; how we renounce bad actions and increase good actions. This we can learn from a book. Of course, if you have a teacher who gives an explanation, it is easier. But it is not indispensable. You can always learn the teaching of Buddha from a book, apply and follow it.

For that reason when we say teacher, people consider that a teacher is always the same, but a teacher of Sutra and Tantra are completely different. In Sutra a teacher is not considered so important. For that reason, in general, we call the teacher *gewe shenye*. It means virtuous friend. In Sutra the teacher part of the Sangha. Buddha, Dharma, Sangha; Sangha also means all practitioners. In Sutra the teacher is never considered as a Buddha. The teacher is just the same as we are and part of the Sangha; we are collaborating with each other. Sangha means that we are traveling somewhere and help each other. This is how the teacher is considered. Why is this a Sutra idea? In Sutra initiation or introduction does not exist like in Dzogchen. What exists in Sutra is giving a vow. With that attitude, when people are following the Dharma they say "I took a refuge vow with this Lama and that teacher, etc." We consider a refuge vow very important. In the real sense it is not so very important when we take refuge from someone because it is from the Sangha, not Buddha. How can we understand that? If you want to receive a vow of full monk or nun, even if you consider the teacher very important, that teacher alone cannot give a vow. To receive the full vow of monk or nun you must receive it from a Sangha. Sangha means there must be at least four monks. Three monks

are not a Sangha. So, when there are four monks to give a vow, one is considered the main teacher for giving that vow. That monk is not called teacher, but *nay ten*, which means elder. In a group of the Sangha, one is the elder. The elder asks the questions and receives the answers.

You can understand the difference. If you receive or follow Tantric teaching, then you should have a completely different consideration of the teacher as indispensable. You cannot do practice of Tantric teaching without receiving transmission. You cannot receive transmission of Tantra from a Sangha. You must receive it from a teacher who has that qualification or knowledge. Qualification means firstly the teacher has received that teaching from his/her teacher and then that teacher has entered into that application of knowledge, that path. The teacher has experienced that path, fully experienced that knowledge, and if there is something to do like a practice, like mantra, or visualization, everything is done in a perfect way. There is also a possibility of transmitting that knowledge for others. So why do they need initiation for this kind of transmission of Tantra? Because Tantra is different from Sutra. Sutra was taught by Buddha Shakyamuni in his physical body. Even though Buddha Shakyamuni is an enlightened being, in India he had a physical body. Everyday Buddha and

his students received food at mid-day in the village. If Buddha was an enlightened being why did he need to get food? Even though Buddha was enlightened he had a physical body. In this case, it is necessary to eat and drink to maintain this physical body. Buddha even had problems with his health and at the end manifested death. That is called the *Nirmanakaya* dimension; the dimension of the material level. Of course when he was giving teachings, he explained with his mouth and his students listened with their ears. There is a saying in the Sutra, "One day Buddha Shakyamuni and some monks were in Rajgar and other places. Then Buddha gave this teaching, etc.". In Sutra at the beginning of a teaching, there is always an explanation like this. So everyone who is present at this moment can listen, can hear something concrete. This is the way of Sutra teaching.

In Tantrism the teaching is not something the Buddha taught and is listened to physically. For example, we say Buddha Shakyamuni manifested the Kalachakra and transmitted the Kalachakra teaching and knowledge. When it is said that Buddha Shakyamuni manifested the Kalachakra it doesn't mean that his physical body is another physical body called Kalachakra. The Buddha has infinite potentiality and the essence of that potentiality is like the five colors of the elements. Through that potentiality the Buddha manifests the Kalachakra. If Buddha manifested the Kalachakra, most of the people around him at that time couldn't have even seen that manifestation. Ordinary people have no capacity to see the essence of elements. We only see the material level. When the material level dissolves in its nature, for us it disappears. When we say, for example, a teacher, a realized master, manifests a rainbow body, for us it means that when the rainbow body manifests the material body disappears. The real meaning of the rainbow body doesn't mean it disappears. We have a very nice picture in our minds that the rainbow body means rainbows are manifesting everywhere. It seems that there is a center point at the heart and many rainbow colors coming out everywhere. We consider that the dimension of Padmasambhava. That is our idea of the rainbow body.

In the real sense the rainbow body is not like this. If we have a physical body how does it look? What kind of shape do we have? In the rainbow body everything remains completely as it is. It doesn't disappear or become another body of rainbow color. Instead of manifesting this physical body on the material level, it manifests with the light of the five colors. For example, if we have the pure vision of Padmasambhava we can recognize the rainbow body of Guru Padmasambhava, there is no confusion about whether it's Padmasambhava or Garab Dorje or Vimalamitra, we know who it is. If there is only a center point and some rainbow color emanating from it, we wouldn't understand who it is. The rainbow body does not remain at the material level, but its aspect, form and everything is maintained just as it is. That is called rainbow body.

For example, if Buddha Shakyamuni manifested the rainbow body through the essence of the elements we would not have the capacity to see or receive that transmission. Tantrism is not an oral teaching. When we read Tantras that say that since the beginning they were never taught, it is because they have never been taught with an idea or oral explanation. Just the manifestation is the teaching. When we have contact with that manifestation, we wake up or that knowledge arises within us.

Teaching is related to the experience of clarity and clarity is the manifestation of form and color. Later, Mahasiddhas or those who received that teaching or knowledge, in order to explain or to get into that state of transformation wrote it down and put it in oral teaching form. For receiving this kind of transmission the teacher enters into this dimension of transformation. Then with oral teaching, the teacher gives you some kind of advice like which kind of con-

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Teaching continued

centration or visualization you should use, and how you can get into that state of transformation. You receive all the information, apply it and try to be in that state. At that moment the teacher has already manifested that dimension and empowered it with mantra, etc., so it becomes something real. That is the real sense of initiation.

In an initiation you are told how your transformation looks. They introduce that and tell you how your dimension must be to be like the mandala. After that, you have an idea of how you can get into that state. That is the path. When you receive that teaching you can apply it because you have received the transmission. But from whom did you receive that transmission? From the teacher, not Kalachakra. Not from Buddha, so the root is the teacher. If there is no teacher there is no transmission. You couldn't get into that state of realization without transmission. That means that initiation or that kind of transmission is indispensable. You cannot do practice if you don't receive transmission. You cannot go to do practices or methods of Tantrism or follow this teaching with the idea of Sutra.

Sometimes when people follow Tantrism they consider the teacher to be like a teacher of Sutra. They don't understand the importance of the teacher. Sometimes we say that the state of the teacher is what's important, not really the physical teacher. But how can you have contact with the state of the teacher without having contact with the physical state of the teacher? So you must know that the physical aspect is related to the state of the teacher.

For that reason Milarepa manifested in that way; we can understand a little by considering the way he followed Marpa - how he sacrificed and followed him. That means if there is no teacher there is no possibility of having realization. So it's really very important to understand that the teacher is important and you must consider that the teacher is something indispensable. One must not think that only the state is important and not care about the physical teacher.

You must remember how Guru Padmasambhava explained this. Guru Padmasambhava is the most important teacher of the Tantrism that developed in Tibet. When he gave the initiation of Vajrakilaya to all his students and introduced the mandala of Vajrakilaya, it is said that with the power of his visualization he manifested in space as the mandala of Vajrakilaya and he gave the introduction from there. This is how the real mandala of Vajrakilaya looks. So you must be in a dimension something like this. Now you pay homage to the mandala. If there is no Guru Padmasambhava and there is no transmission, how can there be that mandala? Later when all the teachings were finished, Guru Padmasambhava said for the future of these teachings, the lineage of Yeshe Tsogyal would be very important. That meant it would be very powerful for having realization. Why? Because his consort Yeshe Tsogyal realized what the root and the main point of the transmission is.

Some people think to respect a teacher, the teacher must have a worldly position. In this way they are using the fact that the teacher is

important. I am not saying that this is the correct way. In some Kagyu-pa teachings, it says whether the teacher is doing good or bad you must always have pure vision. In general, we need to have a view like this. That is correct, if you really find a correct teacher, a correct teaching, and you have received that knowledge of the teaching, then even if the teacher is doing something wrong you should not consider it and you should have pure vision.

But if you meet some kind of teacher not giving the correct teaching, not seriously transmitting, or through that transmission you haven't had any experience of knowledge, and then the teacher says, "You received my initiation and you must follow or you will go to Vajra hell", for example, and asks you to have pure vision always, that is not correct. It is very important, from the beginning, to open your eyes. To open your eyes means to see if the teacher giving teachings is really a teacher or not.

Sometimes it is difficult in the Western world. In general you don't have much time to be with that teacher, you don't have very much knowledge about this teacher, etc. Lamas are coming here and someone tells you, "This is an important lama". Particularly, there is so much Dharma business, which means people are most interested in making money. If someone is not stupid they can make some publicity; very nice publicity. When you receive this kind of publicity it is hard to really understand what kind of lama is being advertised. You follow that teaching and later discover after many months or years, "Oh this is not really a serious lama, they are doing Dharma business". Or this lama is not really a lama because they have no real knowledge. Everything is possible. For example, in the United States near our Dharma center I heard there was a Tibetan lama giving some courses and teachings, going here and there, and many people were interested immediately. They invited him here and there. Nearly one year later they discovered he was not a teacher.

Here in the Western world it is not so easy to distinguish. If you have followed that kind of teacher and later you discover you did wrong, when you discover it's wrong it's better to stop. It is not necessary that you argue with this teacher or criticize. You have already received a kind of teaching from that teacher even if it is not very perfect. It is better that you just don't follow or speak about this teacher. Particularly if you find a teacher who only teaches you limitations and tells you you must only do this practice and you can't follow other teachings, etc. That means the teacher's idea is that you are becoming a member of a political party; like supporting a tradition or school, only for that. That doesn't correspond to your real condition and your desire. If you want to be a member of a political struggle then you can choose a party. But if you are following the teaching for having realization, you must understand that the limitation you received in that teaching is the cause of samsara.

We don't need any teacher for receiving limitations. Everyone is very expert in having limitations. What we need is to discover that.

The function of the teaching is to serve ourselves and discover our limitations. We know very well that even if we discover our limitations, it is not so easy to be totally free

from them. The teaching is something like the address of someplace we are going. If you don't know where you are going then you can never reach it. So it's very important to follow the teaching in the correct way and know that a serious teacher is indispensable. Through the correct teacher and transmission you can wake up and get in your real knowledge and understanding.

When we speak of the teaching in the Western world, people consider that the teaching is only some kind of technique. Someone introduces you, gives you instructions on how to sit, chant, do this or that, very detailed, and then you become very interested and you think, "Oh I can do this and have some strange experience". Sometimes it is important to have this kind of experience and through the experience get into real knowledge, in our nature. But it doesn't depend only on technique. Technique is always secondary.

Why do Westerners have this idea that technique is primary? Because Westerners have developed technique very much in their society - for example they can fly. So they have very strong confidence in technique. They think Tibetans are a little stupid, to sacrifice like Milarepa for many years. Westerners discover the main point and put the technique into practice immediately and think they can have that realization. For that reason, most people follow the teacher like a thief of stolen objects. "I want to discover, I want to take this or that" or, "Oh yes, now I've understood something", and they put something aside. Then in the next days someone invents something using other objects and puts together some form of teaching and writes a book and does a workshop. They are very successful with this kind of workshop and become a very successful teacher. If we look at the teaching seriously and how it must be, then we see this has not much sense.

The principle is not only technique, but transmission. Even though we've learned technique we must work with the teacher; then there is the possibility to wake up and get in our real condition. Maybe you read the history of Tilopa and Naropa. The last possibility of realization for Naropa is that Tilopa hits his shoes on Naropa's head. At that moment, Naropa almost lost presence, but when he got his presence again, he woke up and got into the state of Mahamudra. So, many people think that is the technique of Tilopa. If we have many shoes, for example, we can hit everybody. But I don't think we could wake up even if we were hit by all these shoes. Technique alone doesn't work. It is related to transmission and transmission is something alive. That's the reason we do Guruyoga. How do we get into the state of Guruyoga? To really be in the state of Guruyoga means we are in our real nature, and that is our consideration of this famous illumination or realization.

What I want to say to you is that the most important thing for you to discover is the essence of the teaching, how to apply and get in that essence; how you bring that knowledge into your life and integrate it. If you work, are doing something, are occupied with many things, it doesn't matter - you can be in that state forever. For example, if someone is doing practice everyday for two hours, sitting there and chanting and doing meditation, that is fine, that's nice. But that is not sufficient for

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SUMMER 1998 MERIGAR RETREAT

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu will give two series of teachings at Merigar

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.

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. During the summer retreats there will be a free child care service. Places for children must be reserved at least two weeks before the beginning of the retreat.

In addition, Rinpoche will give examinations and training of the Santi Maha Sangha at Merigar according to the following schedule:

August 28th - 30th - 3rd level examination
August 31st - September 4th - 4th level course
The costs are 200,000 lire without discounts.
Merigar Comunità Dzogchen - 58031 Arcidosso (GR) Italy Tel. 0039/564/966837 - fax -564/968110 email merigar@duffie.it

CHÖGYAL NAMKHAÏ NORBU INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM 1998-1999

1998	June 11 - 13	SMS exam, Tsegylgar
EUROPE	June 14 - 18	SMS training, Tsegylgar
Oct. 30 - Nov. 1	Retreat, Hay on Wye, UK	
Nov. 7 - 8	Retreat, Marseilles, France	June 25 - July 3
Nov. 20 - 22	Retreat, Paris, France	Retreat, Tsegylgar
Nov. 27 - 29	Retreat, Karmaling, France	July 4 - 6
Dec. 4 - 6	Retreat, Portugal	SMS exam, Tsegylgar
SOUTH AMERICA		July 7 - 11
Dec. 12	Public talk, San Paolo, Brazil	SMS training, Tsegylgar
Dec. 18 - 20	Retreat, Sitio, Brazil	July 13 - 15
Dec. 26 - Jan. 3, 1999	Retreat, Argentina	SMS exam, Tsegylgar
1999	July 16 - 20	SMS training, Tsegylgar
Jan. 29 - 31	SMS Base exam, Tashigar, Argentina	Aug. 13 - 15
Feb. 1 - 5	SMS training, Tashigar	Retreat, Chicago
Feb. 26 - 28	SMS exam, Tashigar	Aug. 20 - 22
Mar. 1 - 7	SMS training, Tashigar	Retreat, Houston
Apr. 2 - 6	Retreat, Tashigar	Aug. 27 - 29
Apr. 16 - 18	Retreat, Peru	Retreat, Santa Fe
Apr. 30 - May 2	Retreat, Venezuela	Aug. 30
ITALY		Teaching for Tibetans Santa Fe
May 10	Merigar	Sep. 10 - 12
May 16 - 18	Vesak, Merigar	Teaching, Tara Mandala
USA		Sep. 17 - 19
June 4 - 6	Retreat, New York	Teaching, Mexico
		Sep. 24 - 28
		Teaching, San Francisco
		Oct. 8 - 10
		Teaching, Portland
		Oct. 15 - 17
		Teaching, Los Angeles
		Nov. 27 - 31
		Teaching, Hawaii
		PACIFIC
		Nov. 10 - 12
		Teaching, New Zealand
		Dec. 17 - 19
		Retreat, Sydney, Australia
		Dec. 26 - Jan. 2, 2000
		Retreat, Namgyalgar, Australia



TSEGYALGAR SUMMER COMMUNITY PRACTICE RETREAT WITH LOPON TENZIN NAMDAK July 31st - August 8th, 1998

There will be a nine-day practice retreat with teachings by Lopon Tenzin Namdak, the world-renowned master of the Bonpo lineage, at Tsegylgar.

The cost for the nine days is \$250.00US not including meals. Community members receive a discount. Daily participation is \$35US. Daily cost for breakfast and lunch is \$10. Childcare is \$10US per day.

Please contact Tsegylgar for information and registration:

PO Box 277, Conway, MA 01341 USA
Tel: 413 369 4153, Fax: 413 369 4165,
Email: 74404.1141@compuserve.com

His Holiness the Dalai Lama in America

by Paul Bail

His Holiness the Dalai Lama was on the East Coast for two weeks, giving teachings in New York City from May 1st-3rd, and then appearing at Brandeis University near Boston for a public talk and a series of private meetings on May 8th-9th. I was fortunate enough to be able to attend both of these events.

The teachings in New York were advertised as "In the Spirit of Manjushri: The Wisdom Teachings of Buddhism," and were co-sponsored by Tibet House and by a Chinese Ch'an (similar to Zen) sangha, the Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association. The hall was filled to capacity with close to three thousand people, approximately half of them Chinese. Most were Chinese residing in the United States, but a sizable contingent had traveled all the way from Taiwan especially for these teachings. His Holiness had given teachings and empowerment the year before in Taiwan, as well as to the Chinese community on the West Coast.

Robert Thurman of Tibet House and Venerable Master Sheng-yen, the spiritual leader of Dharma Drum, hosted the event. His Holiness and Venerable Sheng-yen had a humorous exchange in which the Dalai Lama stated the Tibetans would have to respect the Chinese Buddhists as their elder brothers, since the Dharma went to China first before coming to Tibet. The Ch'an master replied that in this case it seemed that the younger brother had surpassed the elder brother.

The Dalai Lama taught for two days on the Prajnaparamita sutras and Madhyamika philosophy. Although some of these teachings can seem highly intellectual, His Holiness spoke directly from the heart throughout. At one point he began openly weeping after describing the confusion of sentient beings searching fruitlessly for happiness in samsara "as though groping around in the dark" and invoking the profound accomplishments and compassion of "the Indian masters." This was extremely moving, and some of the monks seated near him also began visibly weeping before covering their faces behind the folds of their monastic robes.

On the third day His Holiness performed the transmission of Manjushri and Master Sheng-yen gave a brief explanation of the Chan tradition. After this the two Masters had a lively exchange in which they questioned each other and took questions from the floor. His Holiness was quite interested in points of similarity between the two traditions, and at one point suggested a similarity between an element of Chan and an analogous aspect of Dzogchen.

Thorough security checks were conducted before each session, all the participants having to pass through metal detec-



His Holiness the Dalai Lama

R. HANSON

tors. According to one of the security guards this was in reaction to a recent threat against His Holiness. An ominous sign was the presence of approximately fifty demonstrators, followers of Geshe Kelsang Gyatso's "New Kadampa" group, and calling themselves the "Dorje Shugden Coalition." This was a group made up almost entirely of Westerners, many of them wearing monastic robes, who stood outside the main entrance for two days carrying placards that said "Dalai Lama, Please Give Religious Freedom," and, "Dalai Lama, Stop Lying." They also passed out expensively produced brochures that made outrageous, unsubstantiated claims, such as that His Holiness is actively encouraging his followers to kill ten prominent Shugden supporters who are on an alleged Tibetan government "hit list." (This accusation may be an example of "the best defense is a good offense," since the only killings to date have been the unsolved 1997 murders of an outspoken anti-Shugden lama and his associates.)

On the morning that the Shugden demonstrators first appeared outside the auditorium, His Holiness taught on the passage from Shantideva's A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life in which it is stated that our enemy is our greatest benefactor. He quoted Shantideva's statement that our enemies are precious because they reveal our faults to us, and give us the opportunity to perfect the practice of patience. Many took this as an indirect reference as to how to conduct oneself with regard to the demonstrators. Later someone asked from the floor about the Dorje Shugden controversy and the Dalai Lama replied that the practice of Dorje Shugden was not part of the

original Gelugpa traditions as established by Tsongkapa, and since its inception it has been associated with sectarianism and had led to incidents of bad relations among the schools of Tibetan Buddhism, particularly in East Tibet.

The following weekend the Dalai Lama was in Waltham where he met privately with members of the local Tibetan community and with scholars specializing in Indo-Chinese studies. A group of seven nuns from Keydong Thuk-Che Cho Ling Nunnery in Kathmandu were also visiting Brandeis and had constructed a sand mandala of Avalokiteshvara, the first ever created in the United States by nuns. The weekend was an especially auspicious occasion for the nuns, as His Holiness himself ritually disassembled the mandala and led the procession to pour the sand into a nearby body of water. The following day there was a public talk which was attended by over seven thousand people. Many more had wanted to attend but were unable to since the huge hall was filled to capacity.

I wondered what the experience would be like hearing His Holiness addressing such a large and mixed gathering. It was surprisingly intimate. His Holiness, who was only a tiny figure from where I was seated, radiated tremendous calm and enormous energy simultaneously. Although he spoke in heavily accented English that was sometimes difficult to follow, the words were only an incidental vehicle for the essence of his message, which came through very clearly. For a few moments a profound silence and tranquillity enveloped the crowd, and it felt as though there was a very deep wordless communion. My children, ages nine and ten, apparently had a similar experience, as they were able to stay in their seats through the lengthy introductory speeches, and sat in rapt attention when His Holiness spoke. They summed up the experience in two words: "He's nice."

I was very happy that the Dorje Shugden demonstrators had not journeyed from New York to Massachusetts to mar the occasion. Alas, I spoke too soon. Stepping out of the hall into the sunlight and rain-washed air, we were confronted once again with the familiar placards attacking His Holiness. I recognized the dour faces of the demonstrators as belonging to the exact same group of people that had been present in New York. My inner reaction to seeing them showed me how precarious my equanimity still is. I felt I had to say something, so I asked one of the maroon robed demonstrators, who was handing out leaflets, whether she and her friends ever joined in protests in support of worldwide religious and political freedom. "Oh no," she said, "I don't get involved in political demonstrations."

His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Madison, Wisconsin

by Jacqueline Gens

It is said of the great Tibetan yogin Milarepa, that when he approached the end of his life he called together his main disciples, principle among them, Gampopa, for further teachings before his imminent death. Together they all practiced to purify their samayas. After some time Gampopa approached the great master and requested the teachings promised, which Milarepa had yet to impart. As tradition has it, Milarepa then turned around and pointing to his naked callused backside said something like—there's my special instruction.

During the recent teachings I attended by H.H. the Dalai Lama in Madison, Wisconsin, I remembered this story in light of just how much effort is required as a practitioner then as well as now. This became especially apparent in a contemporary story H.H. told about a Tibetan gentleman who, after spending over a decade in a Chinese prison, remarked to H.H. in India that even more difficult than being in prison was the effort of maintaining a vigilant mindfulness.

So, it was precisely with the aspiration to overcome some of the defects of my practice I repeatedly have struggled with in recent years that I went to hear H.H. teach on Kamalashila's, The Stages of Meditation/Middle Volume (bsGom pa'i rim pa). For two days, His Holiness taught from text which he had received from a Sakyapa lama, Sangye Tenzin, who received it in turn from a Dzogchen master in Kham. Unfortunately, this Sakyapa did not remember the Dzogchen master's name but His Holiness noted that the throne used at that time was said to have been used by Kamalashila himself. On the third day, he conferred an Avalokitesvara empowerment, followed by the traditional long life ceremony.

This was the first time I received teachings from His Holiness with an emphasis on the applied methods of meditation rather than a lengthy exposition of the philosophical view of emptiness he is so renowned for. While most of the material was familiar to me covering traditional aspects of tranquillity and insight meditation according to the Sutric tradition, H.H.

offered many refreshing instances of clarification. In particular, I found his emphasis on the suffering of conditionality a really convincing incentive towards insight. "The only true enemy is not outer conditions but ignorance." In order to further the aspiration of awakening into compassion, H.H. gave Bodhisattva vows along with the Buddhist precepts. But, in reality, the point His Holiness clearly repeated was the necessity to move beyond merely wishing for others happiness to actually bringing it about. It is simply not within my capacity to communicate the true flavor of these teachings except to say, that as always when taking teachings from H.H. many issues in my life somehow become resolved.

Arriving in Madison, Wisconsin on May 11th, H.H. spent the next three days while giving the daily teachings in an additional whirlwind of activity including many civic appearances, meetings with Tibetans from around the country, and a free public talk to 12,000 people at the University where he also received a distinguished honorary law degree.

On the first day of the Kamalashila teachings, I ran into another Dzogchen Community member, Jack Silverman, who had traveled from Chicago. Hearing during the morning teachings that His Holiness would address the state legislature later in the day, together we went on to the Wisconsin State Capital Building where I have been working for the past six months. Oddly enough, I had heard from my old friend, Yannie Ting that H.H. had also come to her place of work too during his visit to New York City when he attended a breakfast press conference at Newsweek where she works in the executive dining room. It's not everyday such a great teacher unexpectedly shows up not only on one's own doorstep and but one's friend too. But then it isn't an exaggeration to note the extraordinary capacity H.H. has to relate to hundreds of thou-

sands of people in an intimate manner. Each person feeling he is there for them personally.

When Jack and I arrived at the state capitol, a small band of

Western monastics representing the Dorje Shugden international committee were assembled outside the building bearing a large banner. While singing mantras to the accompaniment of turning prayer wheels, they handed out leaflets to pedestrians with "Dalai Lama, please give religious freedom" boldly printed on the cover. The only use in this communication, I found, was an extensive list of the main teachers who continue to practice this rite against the wishes His Holiness, as among many other great teachers. Walking near them, I noticed a young man driving his car past the protesters who called out as he was turning the corner, "We're honored to have the Dalai Lama in Madison." Indeed, the city of Madison not only flew the Tibetan flag over city hall but this year designated March 10th, an official State holiday in honor of the Tibetan people.

Although I had been apprehensive concerning several negative articles appearing in the local student and arts papers prior to H.H.'s visit, there was very little interference on the part of the Shugden group, who in reality numbered only a few maroon clad and shaven headed Westerners, not the promised rallies with hundreds of Tibetans suggested by the inflammatory newspaper articles. Some of the "facts" quoted in these articles were, to the least, quite ridiculous, such as that there were 200 million followers of Dorje Shugden. Fortunately, the Wisconsin Tibetan Association released its own article and intelligent statement reviewing the history of the Shugden controversy which was quoted prominently in the main cover page stories about his His Holiness's visit in the two leading city papers. Fortunately, these articles served to dispel a number of misunderstandings brought on by the human rights rhetoric

used by the proponents of Dorje Shugden. I was sorry to see how the national press played into this misguided controversy

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Lopon Tenzin Namdak

L. GRANGER

An Interview with Lopon Tenzin Namdak

Interview by Jakob Winkler and Eva Hofinger
Edited by Andy Lukianowicz

Lopon Tenzin Namdak is the main Bonpo teacher of our times. Since his departure from Tibet he has worked continuously for the survival and the preservation of the Bon tradition. He has visited Merigar many times and is even depicted in the Temple of Great Liberation, the Merigar Gonpa. ASIA supports his activities and sponsors young monks and orphans receiving education at his monastery.

Last October my partner Eva and myself visited the Triten Norbu Tso Monastery of Lopon in the valley of Kathmandu near the Great Stupa of Swayambhu. The days before the interview together with other people we received teachings on tregchöd and thödgäl from the Shang Shung Oral Transmission (Shang Shung Nyen Gyu).

Jakob: I am amazed about the way you teach Dzogchen so directly and so simply, explaining about fixation, then investigation to recognize the natural state, followed by tregchöd and thödgäl. I never heard Tibetan masters teach in this direct manner. Why are you doing it so directly?

Lopon Tenzin Namdak: In our tradition of Dzogchen teaching, in the natural state there is clarity and emptiness, these two sides.

Without thinking or [sense] perceiving, remaining in *hedewa*, [a state free of mental activity] is the general base for Tantra, like in Mahamudra. Also in ancient times some traditions recognized this as the Madyamaka view. But in the Dzogchen view there is more than *hedewa* — in the natural state clarity spontaneously exists, too. You need to realize these two.

And if you practice only *hedewa*, what to do about our living conditions? We hear, see, taste, touch, everything exists. We have to do something with this. In Dzogchen, through tregchöd you become familiar with the natural state. Reflections appear from the empty nature, and the evidence for this comes from thödgäl practice.

So once you are familiar with *togal* visions and experiences you can easily integrate with normal life: it comes from the empty nature, stays in the empty nature and liberates into empty nature. Otherwise if you split [emptiness and clarity] you can not find the real Dzogchen view.

Practicing on [developing] your motivation [to benefit all beings] is not wasted time, but this is not complete practice according to the Dzogchen-texts.

So therefore I always try to teach Dzogchen directly as much as possible explaining either in a shorter or more detailed way depending on the time available.

We may not know who is suitable to receive Dzogchen teaching. Quite a lot of people try to keep them for the Tibetans, saying that Westerners don't practice, so you mustn't teach them.

But I myself have advised many other teachers, that it is quite suitable to teach people who have real devotion to Dzogchen and that they need to have the proper teachings.

Jakob: The impression I got from Shang Shung Nyen Gyu by listening to your teachings is, that it is a very condensed and to the point.

LTN: Yes

Jakob: The teachings seem to me not so elaborated as other Dzogchen teachings of the Buddhist tradition. But nevertheless everything is included.

LTN: Yes, surely everything is included. If we had more time we could teach everything also much more elaborately.

Jakob: So we need to create the conditions so that you could do that. How many weeks would it take?

LTN: (Laughs) Years, years! You can teach extensively, explaining each detail with commentaries.

Jakob: Some western people find the whole idea of dharma protectors quite strange. They think this is some kind of Tibetan mysticism or superstition.

LTN: Yes! Now we are talking about something different. It doesn't make any difference if you are engaged in dharma protectors practice or not, the activity of the protectors does exist. I used to teach that if you are interested in the dharma protectors, that's fine. If you are not interested, that's fine, too. You can't do everything. The Bonpos have so many practices, dharma protectors, divinities, mantras etc.

Jakob: What is the most necessary practice, if you want to practice Dzogchen? What kind of related practices do you really need to do?

LTN: Guruyoga! Guruyoga will protect you from everything. If your devotion is very strong, then it is good protection, it gives blessings, everything can come from Guruyoga. You don't need anything else.

Jakob: In one of your teachings you said it is important to do protector practice regularly.

LTN: That's if you have the wish to do something like that, but the main thing is Guruyoga. It is the only important thing. It can do everything.

Jakob: On one hand, if one is new to the Bonpo teachings as a Buddhist it is easy, since you speak of many ideas which are very familiar through the Buddhist teachings like karma, bodhicitta, liberation, Buddhas, etc.

On the other hand there are all the new names of Bonpo deities and protectors plus different technical terms. So sometimes I feel I am very interested in practicing the Bonpo Dzogchen teachings but without getting too much into the other Bonpo teachings. Would that be complete?

LTN: Surely. If you have already received initiations from another tradition you should not lose faith in it. This wouldn't be so good at all. But Dzogchen is enough. It is not necessary to become familiar with all the different deities, etc. But if you are interested that is good.

The main thing is to practice Dzogchen as much as possible. It doesn't matter which Dzogchen. There is no difference between Bonpo and Nyingma Dzogchen.

Nature is nature. Empty is empty, everywhere. But you should not mix up the different concepts of emptiness, like Madhyamika emptiness or Cittamatra emptiness. They all speak about emptiness. But their emptinesses have different qualities.

Jakob: Different definitions?

LTN: Yes, their definitions are very different. They are not the same.

Jakob: Traditionally in Tibet the students would go through the process of preliminary practices (*ngondro*).

LTN: Yes, they do. They must.

Jakob: But the way you teach I understood it is okay for people to start out with fixation practice (*shamatha*) and then do ...

LTN: No. First Guruyoga then fixation then recognize the natural state. Because if you wait until you finish the whole process, each of the nine sets of one hundred thousand, how long will it take?

Jakob: Many years

LTN: Maybe you can't find a suitable teacher. Or perhaps, meanwhile you change your mind and you lose interest. Then it is better, when the opportunity comes and you get the connection to make use of that opportunity, instead of waiting too long.

In Tibet it is completely different. They don't have all the engagements of Western people. If they are interested in the teachings they are able to dedicate themselves to the teachings so they have time to do the *ngondro*. Traditionally if you practice nobody disturbs you. Then they don't need to work. That is not the case in the modern world. If you don't work, your living conditions are finished. Nobody will help you (laughs).

Nobody says: Let's help him he is practicing *ngondro*. Everybody thinks he is doing something very strange (laughs).

I experienced it for my self. When I lived in England nobody ever talked about religion or dharma. Everybody goes to church on Sunday, that is all.

Jakob: So the purification the Tibetans do while

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His Holiness Sakya Trizin

L. GRANGER

True Peace Within Our Own Minds

An Interview with His Holiness Sakya Trizin, Merigar 28th June 1998

Born in Tibet in 1945, H. H. Sakya Trizin comes from the ancient Khon royal family. Following the passing of his father he was designated as the head of the Sakya tradition by H. H. the Dalai Lama at the age of seven. He is currently the 41st Master of an unbroken lineage of Lamas dating back to 1073 A.D.

Maintaining the tradition of the Khon family lineage H. H. Sakya Trizin married in 1974 and has two sons. He has travelled and taught extensively in Asia, Europe and America since 1974.

He lives in exile in Rajpur, India where he has founded the Sakya College, a school of advanced studies in logic, philosophy and psychology.

The Mirror: Our Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu has always said that all the different Buddhist lineages should be unified for one's own realization. Could you comment on this?

H. H. Sakya Trizin: Yes, that's true. All the Buddha's teaching in general and particularly the different schools in Tibet are actually all one. Firstly the motivation, then the view and finally accomplishment, I think there's no difference at all. The only difference is the lineage or how the teaching came down from India through translators and masters.

There's a slight difference in emphasis like some schools emphasize more studies, some schools emphasize more meditation and so forth but basically I think it is all one. So therefore if you combine them all it will be very useful, very beneficial.

The Mirror: Your Holiness, what do you think about Western practitioners' understanding of Buddhism for realization.

H. H. Sakya Trizin: I think it is a very good beginning. Of course when Buddhism first came to the West many people were interested but now I think it is more subtle. Maybe the quantity [of people] is not so much but I think the quality is improving. Definitely. So I think therefore it is a good sign.

The Mirror: Do you have any advice to give?

H. H. Sakya Trizin: You see the most important thing is to go deep into the teachings. Although the rituals and prayer recitation and all these kind of things are important, they are not the most important thing. The most important thing is to try to understand the actual meaning of the teachings, the basic teachings, such as the 'Bodhisattvacaryavata'. I think this is very very important.

The Mirror: Your Holiness, how can we work in order to have some benefits for world peace?

H. H. Sakya Trizin: Oh, I think you can do many things because throughout the whole world it is the people who make the disturbances and it is also the people who make the peace. So if we as individuals make peace, true peace, within our own minds, within our own families, slowly slowly it will expand. So therefore the best thing you can do is to set an example of how the family should live together in complete peace and harmony. And from this example other people can learn.

In the 'Bodhisattvacaryavata' that I just mentioned there are many practices that are lucidly explained. For example there's a whole chapter on patience. A lot of problems arise because people are impatient, when somebody else has different ideas even within your own family. "That is my idea," "That is your idea," and this is why we have conflicts. But if you practice these type of techniques then I think you can have true peace first of all within yourself and your own family and then from that one can expand.

The Mirror: Could you tell us a little about your tsawe lama, Your Holiness?

H. H. Sakya Trizin: My most important guru was Ngawang Lodu Zhenpen Nyingpo who was the great abbot of Ngor monastery. Ngor monastery actually has four 'palaces' and he was from Khangsar. He was very great during that time and in the Sakya tradition almost everybody became his disciple including my own grandfather. He was not only learned but also highly advanced spiritually and had many signs of his high realization.

The Mirror: Many people in the West don't understand the difference between one's lama and the tsawe lama.

H. H. Sakya Trizin: Tsawe lama means 'root guru' and is the person you receive Vajrayana Tantric teachings from, especially the major empowerments. That is the tsawe lama. One can actually have many tsawe lamas or root gurus but among these the one who introduces you, who shows you directly the nature of mind is the most important root guru.

For example I myself have about eleven root gurus within the Sakya tradition and also some gurus within other traditions. But among these my most important root guru is Ngawang Lodu Zhenpen Nyingpo.

The Mirror: Thank you.

Guruyoga

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their emotions and creating negative karmas. Balancing what is negative and positive is difficult in a practice of two hours. So if we want to dedicate twenty-four hours to sitting in a temple and doing practice it is impossible and is not the main point, because doing practice is not only sitting in a position or chanting or praying. Doing practice means we are doing something to get in our real nature. If we know what the real sense of the teaching is, there are infinite possibilities. If we are ignorant of the real sense of the teachings, then we must be conditioned by a technique or method.

There is a saying of Milarepa: "If we are in the knowledge of Mahamudra then all movements are yantra." Then it is not necessary to do specific positions of yantra, sitting, breathing, something strange. Even getting up, walking, sleeping -

having realization, because still for twenty-two hours they are still distracted; following

everything is yantra. There are many, many practices dealing with our physical level, our body, our energy level, our mental level, particularly the main point of a practice like Guruyoga. Also if someone has followed different traditions or schools, when we say Guruyoga they can have the idea, "Oh yes, we chant these kinds of words, do these kinds of visualizations, etc.": it seems complicated. With Guruyoga one must not go after the title of the Guruyoga, but to the sense. The sense of Guruyoga means the state of Guru, our teacher, and our real nature. There is no difference. Somehow we discover our real nature through the transmission of the teacher. In that moment we discover the state of the teacher also and through transmission our real nature and the teacher are inseparable. Being in that state, that is the real sense of Guruyoga. So even if there are many words of Guruyoga, doing visualization, invocation, etc., it's a secondary thing.

When I was very young in college, in a Sakya college, each year we had a big anniversary of Sakya Pandita, and very

early in the morning we would get up and go to the temple and for the whole day we did the Guruyoga of Sakya Pandita. In this Guruyoga there is a visualization of Sakya Pandita, we invited his wisdom and made offerings to Sakya Pandita. Particularly to Sakya Pandita there are very long invocations. We repeated that invocation for hours and hours. At the end of the invocation there were the mantras of Sakya Pandita. For the whole day we did the practice two times. For the whole night, first we had public philosophical discussions or debates and then later we explained the different parts of philosophy publicly. I participated in this anniversary for many years, so I know about Guruyoga and how important it is. Many years later I met my Dzogchen Master Changchub Dorje. Finally I discovered the main practice, that the most important essence is Guruyoga. Guruyoga really means being in that state of unification. It doesn't matter if we are in that state for one minute, five minutes or ten minutes, it is Guruyoga.

Transcribed by Naomi Zeitz,
Edited by Naomi Zeitz and Liz Granger

ASIA

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them out financially. We are asking the Dzogchen Community to help raise money for the completion of the following projects.

The construction of a water main to bring running water to the hospital and the village. Medecins sans Frontieres, one of the best Non Government Organizations who work in Lhasa, has said offered the aid of one of their engineering experts. Unfortunately, he has to leave Tibet by August and A.S.I.A. has not yet found the funds to begin work on the water main. For this project we need \$16,000.00.

Renovation of another three houses for doctors and teachers for Gamthog school. We need at least \$60,000.00 to complete this project.

The completion of the school bathrooms for Gamthog and the lodgings for the nomad children of the area. To begin this project we need at least \$65,000.00.

The completion of the Gamthog hospital, the construction of a Medicine Buddha statue for the internal courtyard of the hospital, the painting of a number of thangkas for the traditional medical arts, the acquisition of books, and the completion of a hospital library. \$12,000.00.

The acquisition of x-ray machines, sonograms, electrocardiograms, and surgical equipment for the hospital. This year we will need at least \$50,000.00.

The acquisition of essential pharmaceuticals for the hospital. In our project there are no funds budgeted for the acquisition of medicines. The furnishing of medical supplies is part of the responsibility of the Provincial Government but at this time, all the outlying Chinese Provinces lack funds. The doctors are afraid that they will have to begin emergency clinical and surgical procedures without essential pharmaceutical back-up thus endangering patients' lives. The Provincial Medical Fund has to be newly approved every year until A.S.I.A. succeeds in setting up economic activities which can finance the hospital such as the construction of a factory for the production of traditional medicines. The minimum amount required per year is \$25,000.00.

GALENTENG PROJECT

Galenteng, as many people know, was the residence of one of the most famous masters of the lineage of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu: Galen Khyentse Rinpoche, Rinpoche's uncle and a great Dzogchen master.

Galenteng is a nomad village, situated in the county of Derge in the Ganze Province, in Szechuan Province. Galenteng is about two hours from Gamthog by car.

In the winter of 1988, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu founded A.S.I.A. with the stated intention of improving education, health, and culture in the region of Galenteng and to restore Galenteng's temple. Unfortunately, for political and bureaucratic reasons this proved to be impossible. Year after year, A.S.I.A. sent representatives to the area in order to obtain the necessary permission from the local authorities in order to initiate the projects but despite all their efforts, they continually received a negative response.

Finally in the summer of 1997, during Rinpoche's last trip to Tibet, the County Council of Derge and A.S.I.A. signed an agreement with regard to the Galenteng Project. The agreement had to be approved by the government of Szechuan Province and by the Provinces of Ganze and Kanding. A few days ago, we heard that the agreement had been ratified and that the authorities would sign the necessary executive document for work on the project to begin. It may have taken ten years but now it seems that even this dream is about to come true. Obviously, once the agreement has been signed, we have to begin work. In order to do this, we have urgent need of funds. The project has been subdivided into different phases so that we have time to raise the money necessary.

The projects that need to be completed before winter are as follows:

The acquisition of a truck for the monks of Galenteng, the use of which will enable them to raise money for the maintenance of the monastery. The cost of the truck will be around \$14,000.00.

The construction of the first six classrooms for the Galenteng school. Projected cost \$50,000.00 with work beginning in August of this year.

Once the project has begun, A.S.I.A. will prepare a clear proposal to present to the Italian Government or the European Union for the completion of this initiative.

TARZIG

Not far from the Gamthog Project, in Jomda County, is a valley that stretches as far as Yushu in Amdo. This valley harbors many monasteries and sacred places including the monastery of Ayu Kadro. In this region which is mainly populated by nomads, there are no elementary schools. The nomads of the region, in order to make their dream of educating their children come true, have built a road for others to reach the place where they live and have asked A.S.I.A. to help them build a school. To begin with, we can build six classrooms and then develop the project in the future. In order to do this we need about \$30,000. The project has to begin this year.

DANG-CHE

In June of 1997, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu inaugurated the Tibetan School in Dangche in front of a crowd of two thousand people who came from all over the Province. The project has become very famous and today almost four hundred children go to the school.

During the inauguration, the local people asked A.S.I.A. to help them restore a disused building for a Traditional Medical Clinic. The Qabcha Province offered to fund three Tibetan doctors and to provide traditional medicines while A.S.I.A. would renovate the building, provide the clinic equipment and would bring in Western doctors to spearhead a campaign to eradicate tuberculosis particularly among school-children. The building donated to A.S.I.A. is about six hundred square meters and will require about \$45,000.00 for its renovation. A further \$15,000.00 will be needed for furnishings (beds, cabinets, etc.) In August, an A.S.I.A. mission will be on site to initiate work and therefore every effort possible needs to be made in order to find the resources for this project in the shortest possible time.

IFAD

This year, A.S.I.A. signed an agreement for a two year project with the Institute For Agricultural Development of the United Nations. With money disbursed by IFAD but with technical consultation provided by A.S.I.A., four new Tibetan schools are planned in the Qabcha Province of Amdo. Furthermore, the academic structure of the Dang-che school will be strengthened so that it becomes a scientific and cultural center both for children's education and the development of Tibetan teachers. We plan to furnish a major library with texts in Tibetan, Chinese and English; to acquire computers, photocopiers, VCRs, and equipment for all academic activities. Also planned are specialized foundation courses for both teachers and children in English and Computer Science. In August, two members of A.S.I.A. will go to Dang-che: Des Barry will stay for four months to teach the first English course for the Province's Tibetan teachers and school children. Daniele Colajacomo, a computer expert, will be there at the same time and he will equip the school with computers and teach students how to use them. A course of written and spoken Tibetan language and culture will also be taught by a Tibetan teacher who will come to live at Dang-che.

Tony Laurent will also come from Australia to oversee the renovation of the Dang-che Clinic and building of four new schools. The team will be helped in their work by Tseringthar, by an English-Tibetan-

Chinese translator and by Andrea Dell'Angelo.

This project will last for two years. The cost will be \$101,000.00. \$75,000.00 will be provided by IFAD and \$26,000.00 by A.S.I.A.

EMERGENCY RELIEF WORK

A.S.I.A. in the last few months launched an appeal to help the nomads of Ngari and Nachuka Province in Central and Western Tibet that were hit by unprecedented snowfalls this year. By a campaign that included concerts and exhibitions we succeeded in raising \$10,000.00 which was unfortunately insufficient to begin a really effective relief project. At this point we appealed to the Italian Government and thanks to a contribution from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs we received \$100,000.00. At this time we are setting up the final agreements and in the next few weeks with the help of Enrico Dell'Angelo and Farouk who are working for another Non Government Organization we will begin to distribute yaks, sheep and barley flour to the nomads of Ruthog County in Ngari Province. A.S.I.A. will send a representative to the area in order to help Enrico and Farouk to expedite the work and to try to finish the project before October.

ADOPTION AT A DISTANCE

Thanks to a series of television programs and a number of articles in one of the most widely-circulated Italian daily newspapers, the Adoption at a Distance project has grown enormously. This year we have almost four hundred adopted children. Now we are developing two important projects, both of which are based in Lhasa: the first is for orphaned and handicapped children and the second - begun by a young blind western woman - for blind Tibetan children. We are also considering the possibility of extending the adoption at a distance program to the schools at Dang-che and Gamthog.

These are some of the principal projects that A.S.I.A. is bringing to fruition. Many more are at the planning stage or are in the process of fund-raising, including an environmental project for the protection of the forests and fauna of Riwoque; the construction of a junior high school

A.S.I.A. Officially Incorporates in America

As of May 22, 1998 the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has granted incorporation status to A.S.I.A. in America. We will continue to work directly with A.S.I.A. in Italy to raise money for the ever increasing number of important projects in Tibet and China with the aim of helping Tibetans directly in their milieu.

We have set up a bank account, so individual donations can now be made directly to A.S.I.A. If you have any expertise in the area grant writing and want to help these essential projects, we look forward to hearing from you.

A.S.I.A.-Association for International Solidarity in Asia
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in Amdo; the restoration of the historical center of Lhasa in collaboration with the Lhasa Archive; the organization of a major exhibition on Tibetan Medicine; and a number of concerts etc. In order to bring these projects to fruition we have ever more need of the support of all people interested in Tibet and its culture.

Thanks to the A.S.I.A. work group. A.S.I.A., Associazione per la Solidarietà in A.S.I.A.
Via S. Erasmo 12, 01184 Roma, Italy Tel: 011-39-6-77200880; Fax: 011-39-6-77205944; e-mail: mc8125@mcink.it
Banca Monti dei Paschi di Siena, Arcidosso, Grosseto
Routing number for donations: 3893.50
Routing number for adoption project: 5622.72
For donations in dollars: Banca Monte dei Paschi di Siena, Agenzia 12, Via San Giovanni in Laterano 9, Roma. Routing number 25789.



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The Easter Retreat at Merigar

by Elisa Copello

Wind, downpours of rain, cold, hail and snow marked this strange springtime which welcomed Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's return to Merigar on the occasion of the Easter retreat. The retreat was attended by a record number of about a thousand people, both new and old students. Rinpoche had already anticipated dividing participants into two groups and in fact there was no other way to manage since the Gonpa has a maximum capacity of about 450/500 people and the newcomers alone already filled up all the available space.

Untiringly Chögyal Namkhai Norbu gave teachings twice a day and then remained in the Gonpa after each session to speak to people personally. Even on the last day of teachings which is traditionally reserved for a single teaching session followed by a final Ganapuja Rinpoche held two sessions of teachings rather than doing a Ganapuja since it was impossible to organize one in the Gonpa which would not have been able to contain both the groups.

Always good-humored, smiling and in perfect form in spite of the pace of the retreat, Rinpoche dedicated the morning teaching sessions to newcomers, introducing them to the Dzogchen teaching with detailed explanations. These included an explanation on the characteristics which distinguish the path of renunciation which is typical of the Sutra, the path of transformation of the Tantra and the path of self-liberation of Dzogchen. He continued with teachings about different types of transmission and the importance of Guruyoga and gave an explanation of the practice with the white A of Garab Dorje and the *lung* of many practices as well as advice on how to maintain presence and integrate the practice into daily life. During the afternoon sessions

some of the older practitioners explained the practices of the Short and Medium Tun to the new people. In the late afternoon Laura Evangelisti gave a short course on Yantra Yoga.

In the afternoon sessions dedicated to the "old" students, Rinpoche opened up the "casket" of his dreams and offered a precious gift: a teaching which he received through three dreams he had in 1961, 1964 and 1965. During these dreams he received instructions on particular practices used for harmonizing one's own elements and increasing the experience of the practice. Rinpoche transmitted these methods and also gave the *lung* of the root tantra of Yantra Yoga. During the morning sessions for the older students held in the 'capannone', Fabio Andrico and Laura Evangelisti gave explanations on the three practices related to the Seventh Lojong, in particular on *tummo* and *parlung*.

Throughout the retreat the stands for A.S.I.A., the Istituto Shang Shung, Edizioni Shang Shung and the Merigar shop were open and visited by large crowds of practitioners buying books and practice items and requesting information about courses and different activities. This all took place in an atmosphere of exchange and collaboration which was not too compromised by the severe weather conditions although, at times, it was really difficult to be outside under the lash of the icy wind and the pounding rain. It seemed almost as if the external elements wished to emphasize the wonderful explanations on the inner elements that the Master was giving in those days.

All best wishes to those who are returned to the city and we hope to see you soon because this year there are really plenty of opportunities to meet again.

Mother Russia

Dzogchen Retreats in Moscow with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

April 21st - May 15th, 1998

by Naomi Zeitz



Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and students in Moscow

N. ZEITZ

The Dzogchen Community of Russia hosted three retreats and three courses of Vajra Dance and Yantra Yoga from April 21st to May 15th, 1998 at the Metallurg Pension located about 40 kilometers outside of Moscow. When we first arrived at the end of April there were still remnants of winter with patches of snow and ice and the heavy, grey skies now a familiar sensation associated with Russia. By the time of the final retreat of the second level training of Santi Maha Sangha, spring had fully blossomed and the daffodils swayed gently around the much photographed statue of Lenin that keeps watch over the front garden of the Metallurg.

The statue of Lenin along with other Soviet remains of structures and attitudes harkens back to the Communist era of Russia, the influence of which is still felt in the decaying of the Soviet architecture and mentality. It seems Russia is finally changing, at least apparently in Moscow, and since

the last trip here only two years ago, Moscow has transformed into a modern and cosmopolitan city with many shops,

colorful displays, neon lights, renovated buildings, supermarkets and the bustle of a new society emerging. Although Russia is not yet stable in many senses, it at least now presents indications of the possibilities for the future as a more open and free society engaged in the world.

The three retreats held in Moscow which hosted people from as far as California and New York City, USA, to Italy, Germany, Finland, France and England, were two Santi Maha Sangha exams and trainings of the base and first level and a very large general retreat of approximately 1500 participants reflective of the enormous body of Mother Russia.

There were 125 and 85 students respectively participating in the Santi Maha Sangha level 1 and 2 trainings. Even with the many limitations presented by

this newly forming nation, the Russian Community once again handled all the challenges with considerable skill and aplomb. They provided sightseeing tours for the many visitors to Red Square, the Kremlin and the world renowned Bolshoi Ballet. Just a journey in the Moscow subway is enough to rival any international city's museums or opera houses, with its marvelous chandeliers, murals, relief and brass work. The once foreboding symbol of the hammer and sickle is still seen everywhere, including the heavy brocade curtains at the Bolshoi theatre, and now takes on a kind of trendiness and style. Impermanence.

During the general retreat, the numbers proving a formidable challenge for any Community with all resources intact, the many activities and schedulings proceeded very smoothly and impressively. There was a full schedule and little time for distraction. The day began at 8am with a practice session a Short or Medium Tun. At 10am was the teaching with Rinpoche. Rinpoche taught a basic introduction to Dzogchen and what it means to follow the teachings and how to do so in a proper way. In the afternoons there was an introduction to the Om Ah Hung Dance taught by the valiant Adriana Dal Borgo to the largest group so far of 200 aspiring dancers with three full mandalas rotating three times; Yantra Yoga, with an awe inspiring 700 to 900 typically strong and flexible Russian participants taught by Fabio Andrico and assisted by Alexander Dubronravoff after, and at 5:30pm a prac-

HH Sakya Trizin

continued from page 1

easy to follow and to understand. The Italian translation was done by Andy Lukianowicz.

After the first full day of teaching, on the following afternoon His Holiness gave the preliminary initiation of Vajra Kilaya. The next afternoon he gave the main initiation to the three hundred people attending. He explained that this particular lineage of Vajra Kilaya was the 'sermon' or 'long' lineage coming from the Buddha through the translators and tantras and eventually to the succession of masters while the Khon lineage of sadhana came directly from Padmasambhava to the Khons, the ancient royal family through which the Sakyapa lineage descends. He said that this lineage was unique because all the lineage gurus had had a very elevated realization and as a sign of this each one of them had performed miracles. He went on to say that this very auspicious teaching has many different methods to practice but this sadhana was related to the upper action through which enlightenment is accomplished.

On the final day of his stay, H. H. Sakya Trizin and Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, assisted by the monks and assistants, made a short consecration ritual at the new stupa, resplendent with its gold spire on a hill flanking the

Gonpa. Many of those who had attended the initiation remained at Merigar to be present on this occasion and had the possibility to do a few 'cora' around the chorten in the company of Rinpoche. Just before the short ritual Rinpoche in high spirits playfully threw an orange 'khatag' up high in the direction of the golden Buddha statue which had been placed in the niche of the vase section. A little later Prof. Nida Chinagstang from Lhasa climbed up the stupa to wrap the scarf around the base of the statue.

A little later in the morning His Holiness's son, Dugse Rinpoche, concluded by giving teachings on bodhicitta.

After spending the morning giving interviews and advice to people personally, H. H. Sakya Trizin and his retinue left Merigar early in the afternoon in a cavalcade of cars on their way to Rome and then France. They paused a moment at the Yellow House to exchange a final greeting with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and a host of people who had remained there for a final glimpse.

On behalf of those who were fortunate to be present on this auspicious occasion we would like to sincerely thank His Holiness for his teachings and empowerment and Chögyal Namkhai Norbu for his great kindness in making this possible.

tice with Rinpoche of the Short or Medium Tun; at 8pm an introduction and explanation for newcomers; and then at 9pm a final dance with SIX mandalas filled to capacity by Vajra dancers, many with relatively precise timing which made it a first in the Dzogchen Community and a very wonderful one at that.

During the smaller Santi Maha Sangha exams and retreats there were also 9 day courses in Yantra Yoga led by Fabio Andrico hosting around 80 students, and the Vajra Dance with Adriana with the exact number for one full Mandala; both courses were held for advanced students.

And, of course, there were the generous efforts and participation of Adriano Clemente and Jim Valby as they once again tirelessly gave exams to hundreds of students of both levels of Santi Maha

Sangha, as well as providing answers to innumerable questions related to pre exam panic and post exam clarifications. They also gave explanation and training sessions in the afternoons of the training retreats.

In the evenings often heard from the various rooms in the Metallurg were the melancholic and haunting songs of the Russian spirit as groups of people met for international celebrations with singing, guitar and dancing.

Thanks to the unique and creative vision of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, we are able to experience these profound teachings within the context of a wonderfully rich international Community which brings us closer to the understanding of our commonality within our wide diversity; as well as our own primordial potentiality within the myriad relative manifestations.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Teachings in Poland and Visit to Paldenling Land

by Marek Macko



Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and students at Polish Land

N. ZIEITZ

After a series of three retreats in Moscow, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu arrived on Tuesday, May 19th, to Warsaw, Poland. This was his third visit to Poland since his 1992 visit to Lodz and 1994 in Krakow. With him were his wife Rosa, Adriana dal Borgo, the Vajra Dance teacher and Fabio Andrico, the instructor of Yantra Yoga. A few of his students were waiting for their arrival at the airport. Rinpoche and company stayed only three hours in Warsaw and after a short rest they soon went by train to Krakow.

On the third day in Krakow Rinpoche, Rosa, and others went to visit the old castle of the Polish kings on the Wawel hill where there is the famous seventh or navel chakra center of Europe according to Polish history, and the Dragon's Cavern, directly under the Castle, connected with a local legend.

In Krakow, Rinpoche and Rosa were living in a quiet part of town called Wola Justowska at the house of a friend to the Community. Sometimes they enjoyed walking in the Ducyus's Park and upon returning to the house Rinpoche tried to learn a little Polish by reading a sign at the entrance that said: "Uwaga zly pies", ("Beware of dog").

On Friday afternoon, May 22nd, the Polish retreat began. The place (Wietora Street) is not far from the place of the Dragon and the Wawel Castle. Here the Vistula River snakes itself around to the left side wrapping itself around the old Jewish quarter of the city. The building in which the retreat took place functions as a kind of cultural house and is the place where we practice the Dance of the Liberation of the Six Locas every week.

At first the hall seemed quite big, but after all the people entered there was little space left. Among them were smaller groups from neighboring countries like Lithuania, Ukraine, Germany, and for the first time the Czech Republic (later in Paldenling the Czechs invited Rinpoche to their country).

In the beginning of the teachings, Rinpoche once again touched upon the experience of suffering as the first topic in Four Noble Truths, etc. He also explained about the uselessness of judgment with respect to different paths like Hinayana, Mahayana, etc., because the reality is that one can apply what one needs and to do this is the highest path.

At the end of the first day Rinpoche gave transmission (lung) of the Vajra Song so that the next day we could start the teachings with this song.

It was Saturday morning, after a detailed explanation, Rinpoche gave an empowerment of a Guruyoga practice. Rinpoche also told us that there is nothing to change, particularly in our every day life. The point is first of all to discover one's real condition. It is useless to run after anything and say for example "Yesterday I was Muslim and now I'm Buddhist". The same goes if one would think "One day I'll practice". But the main practice doesn't depend on any complicated outer ritual and we can practice in any moment without changing anything in our everyday lives. Continuing this topic the next day Rinpoche gave a very detailed explanation of the Vajra recitation, a practice that can be applied in many situations of everyday life.

At the end of the retreat Rinpoche transmitted quite a big body of practices, ending up with the twenty-five spaces of Samantabhadra, and reading the mantras very slowly. The translator had nothing much to do, and seemed to become an emanation of the Wawel Dragon. After a short break we started the Ganapuja which couldn't be performed very easily in so crowded a space.

That afternoon there was a meeting of Polish Community and the new Gakyil was chosen (see Community News). After the meeting a small course of Yantra Yoga began with Fabio. There were two courses during the days up to Friday (except Tuesday, the day of a trip by rented bus to Paldenling). Mornings were busy with teaching of the Dance of the Three Vajras by Adriana. In the afternoons Fabio taught in a very detailed manner the eight movements explaining how every kind of breathing, especially of the holding breath in each movement, is to train one of the phases of kumbhaka**. This last kind of holding begins the first group of yantras and is very important means to control and harmonize the current of prana and also the experience of dewa.

On the evening of Sunday, May 24th, some people had already gone to our land, Paldenling, to continue preparation for Rinpoche's visit and other fundamental work. Paldenling is the land purchased about year ago (April 18th, 1997), and is about three hours Southeast of Krakow by car. It is the land of very soft hills that rarely become mountainous peaks. Rinpoche and Rosa arrived there the next day.

The history of Paldenling is that there were unfortunate family events

that lead to the owners deciding to sell it, and also earlier, previous to these events two girls (sisters) died there after being struck by lightning. Sometimes in this place very strong winds blow from the Northwest side as a sign of the struggle of elements, which deeply want to harmonize.

On Monday afternoon (a little cold and windy, but not without sun) Rinpoche went on his first walking tour to see the two smaller separate pieces of the land. It was important that he see the hill which is near the house on the West side with the soft peak with two hectares belonging to Community. From this hill the view embraces the 360 gradients of horizon. Rinpoche has an idea to build a a chörten like structure there, a space-house with two levels; the upper level octagonal and all around in glass. This would be useful for practices like *namkha arted* (integration with space) and Longde practice. Later we did a Short Tun and Chöd with Rinpoche, and by supper we drank a little Polish vodka for health (na zdrowie), talking and looking through the windows.

The next morning, there was no wind and a warmer sun was piercing through higher, light clouds and lower fogs. We did a smoke offering (*sangchöd*) with *serkyem* and anticipated the bus coming from Krakow with about thirty or forty people. After the practice, we went off with Rinpoche on the second walking tour to see the third piece of land (about six Hs.) on which is situated the main house. Slowly moving down the slope we found a passageway between herbs and flowers passing the dense orchard on our left. Sometimes Rinpoche stopped to pick up some herbs to explain their quality or just to eat them. Then going further down along the stream, inside the ravine on the right and the field of herbs on the left, facing Southeast, we reached a little wood and another stream going more toward the Northeast. Here is the point where the first stream (being also the actual border) joins the second stream. Crossing this stream, which is also like another natural border of the land, but in fact the border is little further, we stopped at a small wood. "This is a very quiet place," Rinpoche said and after a while, "it is a good place for building the retreat houses". Then we went a few steps up the slope and sat on the grass to sing the Song of the Vajra.

A crowd of people arrived with the bus, came to meet us and we had a concert of natural sounds. The sounds were produced blowing from mouths to leaves or grass put on joined thumbs. It was like modern jazz group. Then we returned to rest, talk and prepare a Ganapuja. This took place in the field on the left side to the house (facing East of course). This time there was no lack of space. The atmosphere became even more serene. Several big white clouds were sailing very slowly across the sky. They seemed to self-liberate into their own condition so as to take unmoving and comfortable positions for the Ganapuja. Particularly the biggest one towered itself above the horizon, above the Mountain Cergowa.

After the Ganapuja and some international singing, people slowly began to disperse, to go to back on the rented bus, etc. Before the departure from Paldenling Rinpoche freely talked with us. One person asked about Theurang (a class of beings connected to rocks and

Interview Lupon Tenzin Namdak

continued from page 5

practicing their *ngondro* - the way you teach - is done through resting in the natural state?

LTN: Sure. This is essential purification. Once you really recognize the nature, it is great! The more you practice the more you purify. Really purified.

Look, you can see this for yourself. If you do prostrations for your accumulation of a hundred thousand prostrations look at your emotions, what happens, how far are you in control? In the same amount of time that you do prostrations, if you concentrate in meditation on the natural state, you can check if your mind and emotions have changed or not. Everything you can check yourself. This is not just a story or tale. It is practical.

Eva Hofinger: So, do you think it is easy for the Western mind to realize the natural state?

LTN: Sure, sure, yeah sure, because from childhood you are trained in thinking.

But in Tibet, traditionally there was no school system for learning. Therefore it was necessary to engage in the preliminary practices. If you have the time and circumstances to do the preliminary practices that is very good. I don't mean one shouldn't do them. But you can check what practices are important for you to do.

Jakob: Can you tell us about the relationship a student needs to have with the teacher? Sometimes one is told to spend as much time as possible with one's teacher, other lamas say it is enough to see the master just from time to time to receive teachings and then put them into practice. What is your opinion on a good teacher-student relationship?

LTN: Well, that depends, if one needs more clarification or comments or has many questions, it is better to see the teacher regularly. If you are free of doubts and you don't need to develop your knowledge further then that is enough. The main thing is to keep faith in one's important teachings, this is the base of samaya.

Jakob: In Tibet the society was very hierarchical while today in democratic countries we consider people as equal. In some people's opinion the student-teacher relationship coming from Tibet

reflects an aristocratic society so some people have a hard time accepting such a relationship.

LTN: According to the texts, you do not respect the teacher as a person, whether he likes it or not, but you respect your own teacher as Buddha. Don't check if he is Buddha or not on his side.

If you look at Buddha, the only thing he can do for you is advise you, teach you. Otherwise, if he was able to share his knowledge with you or purify your defilements or emotions then he would have done that a long time ago, because he promised to lead all sentient beings to nirvana at once. But he couldn't; he left many beings behind. So he was only able to teach and people need to follow his teachings themselves. So this is the reason for having respect for the teacher.

For you it is not important whether the teacher, on his side likes to be respected or not. I know many teachers are not happy if you are not respectful. But that is wrong. For the teacher it shouldn't make any difference if you are respectful or not. Anyhow, the best thing is to obey the teacher after having checked if his teaching is valuable or useful or not. If it is not useful you shouldn't do anything against it, just carefully and nicely leave. Better not to say anything against it.

It is best to check before you have a deep connection to see if he is qualified or not. Better not to take too many teachings or initiations. Once you have taken them, you need to keep them strictly. Better not to take everything like in a supermarket. The Dharma supermarket is not really good. If you do theoretical studies like comparative religion, then it is okay. You can listen to his or her opinions, but if you are a serious practitioner then it is better not to do that. You need to make very clear which things you want to do according to real logical understanding. It is not good to receive things only for their names.

Jakob: Finally what would be your essential advice for somebody who wants to be a Dzogchen practitioner?

LTN: Look back [into your mind] without grasping!

mountains), which are similar to human beings but without physical bodies. Rinpoche told the story from Tibet about how to catch one of them and make him fulfill wishes.

We returned to Krakow to continue Yantra Yoga and the Dance. On Saturday, two days before their departure from Poland, Rinpoche, Rosa and a few persons went to visit Auschwitz. (see page 17 for report.)

After the visit, while having some refreshment, Rinpoche talked about the yeti (there are three kinds of yeti: mountain, forest, and similar to people) and how when he was in the college they found a little yeti stranded on the ice. Rinpoche brought him to his college and took care of him. This yeti grew very quickly and was friendlier than a dog. Rinpoche said a yeti is not like a monkey, he is very quiet. When Rinpoche had to move to another

college he left the yeti with someone and doesn't know what happened to him. Another time Rinpoche met a yeti in the forest and it was like a hedewa because they looked at one another and the yeti ran away. It was a surprise for us because we thought the yeti is as legendary as the Wawel Dragon.

The next day there was a farewell dinner that took place at the little restaurant called Guliwer on Bracka Street. At the end of the party the former president of the Gakyil, Przemek, stood up before Rinpoche in a nice red necktie and delivered a great talk about how we couldn't express our and gratitude, joy and increasing energy.

Rinpoche and Rosa left Poland on Monday, June 1st, (the day of the birth of Buddha), but some of us didn't manage to reach the airport in time, so we wait to see Rinpoche again in a dream.

An Intensive Weekend Teaching Retreat

with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in Germany

by Rolf Portack



Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in Germany

H.J. VOGEL

For some time the Dzogchen Community of Germany has been trying to convince our Master to return to Germany to give us teachings here. But as everyone knows his steadily increasing commitments do not make it easy for him to follow the many requests from all over the world, so it's up to the students of Rinpoche to adjust to his circumstances.

At last, we were happy to receive Rinpoche's consent to come some time ago and even happier to welcome Rinpoche, his wife Rosa and Fabio, the Yantra Yoga teacher,

together on their way back from Poland for this sunny and warm teaching-retreat weekend held from 5th to 7th of June in Bavaria, in the south of Germany, close to the Austrian border. Rinpoche and Rosa arrived on June 1st and were hosted at one of our member's holiday homes in Tyrol (Austria) close to the German border for a few days rest. The entire time from Rinpoche's arrival until his departure, the sun granted us her warm smile so that this was an additional pleasing circumstance for relaxing and socializing in the sun during the breaks in the retreat.

This time we organized the event in a comfortable rural seminar center where seminars and conferences on healing and consciousness development are usually held. We had good healthy food, comfortable accommodations, a pleasant landscape with lakes and mountains, all for a reasonable price. Also the thirty or so smaller children and their parents were happy because we also had also professional kindergarten service during the teachings, free of charge for the parents.

About 8p.m. on Friday the 5th, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu started the weekend teaching by directly stepping into a comprehensive and clear overview of the Buddhist teachings, first pointing out the view of the Sutra, Tantra and Dzogchen. Because there were about three hundred and twenty people present, the larger part being "new" people to the Dzogchen Community who had already had a variety of different experiences from other Buddhist streams of teachings, the Master pointed out the interrelationship between Sutra, Tantra and Dzogchen with special emphasis on the foundation of these three. Nowadays "new" people on the whole are not completely new to Buddhist teachings in general, but they have already had encounters with different masters and groups and are more in a process of orientation or focusing. Because of that, Rinpoche asked the "older" students not to treat the "new" ones as stupid, but to really be of service to them in this orientation process.

Rinpoche went on to clarify the meaning of outer "forms" or "rituals" and the understanding of the "essence" or "sense" of such rituals as, for example, refuge and bodhicitta in these three paths. Then he announced that for the next two days he would teach according to the *Khandro Nyinthig* lineage.

The next day Rinpoche explained how to apply the view of the different streams, that is to say to put into practice Refuge, Bodhicitta, Vows and Samayas. He said that it may be difficult to put into practice all the many initiations or empowerments we have received, especially those connected with Sutra or some lower Tantras, as well as visualizations and mantra recitation in our day to day living and working conditions. But by not doing them problems and impediments could arise. Therefore, Guru Yoga would be of utmost importance. Rinpoche continued by pointing out that we follow the teachings for our own realization and not for following rituals or teachers. This then would make us capable of spreading this merit to all sentient beings.

In the breaks between sessions I heard many people saying that listening to Rinpoche's style of teaching and clarification about applying the teaching made them feel them relaxed and helped them to ease what they felt to be burdens.

Furthermore Rinpoche explained the relationship between Sutra, Tantra and Dzogchen by reflecting on time and circumstances. Buddha Shakyamuni, he said, taught mainly Sutra according to people's needs and capacities at that time. Tantra, for example, was not taught directly by Shakyamuni himself but through realized beings in Sambhogakaya appearance to those who had a superior capacity of understanding and that Dzogchen was a further level and also a result in the process of practicing certain higher Tantras and applying methods in the Dzogchen style. The Master made clear that the development of one's capacities through applying methods is very important but with the aim of increasing one's clarity and understanding and not to gain diplomas.

As for myself, who has followed Rinpoche for sometime, listening to these teachings, which I have already heard a number of times and going through my notes, comparing them with those I made before on the same topic, I am happy to find that there is always a kind of "new essence", a new aspect, and a widening horizon within his teachings.

Explaining more in-depth the approach of Tantra and Dzogchen, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu then used the well known symbols of the Vajra and the mirror, saying that both the essence of the mirror and that of the central ball in the middle of the Vajra represent our real nature or Dharmakaya; but in Tantra and Dzogchen the methods to get there are fundamentally different. Nevertheless through these methods, that is to say transformation of our visions or directly experiencing our natural state without elaboration, we should aim for being like the *thigle* of the Vajra or like the mirror itself. Then the Master asked, "If we have the nature of the mirror or Vajra, why are we in samsara?"

He replied to his own question, "Not only have we had strong emotions since beginningless time but even more are we heavily conditioned and deluded by them - that is our ignorance". And to work on it we have, among others, methods like purification and contemplation. But purification does not only mean mantra recitation. The most important purification is the state of contemplation itself.

Many people are certainly familiar with these kinds of pith instructions on how to apply different methods according to circumstances. Here at this retreat Rinpoche went into detailed, clear, but easy to apply explanations especially for new people, on how to distinguish the different paths, practices and experiences. Again he explained the meaning and central focus of Guru Yoga, the many possibilities of applying Guru Yoga in daily life and on top of that the practice of the clear light, or night practice. Here again also for me was Rinpoche's emphatic reminder that we should most of all become capable of using the 24 hours of day and night for practices, no matter what circumstances we find.

I almost forgot to say we had four Yantra teachers at the retreat (Fabio, Gerd, Elke, Oliver) so that every morning and afternoon before the teachings many people could learn that Yantra Yoga is not just movement practice, but a Dzogchen practice to enhance contemplation capacity and a complete method for realizing oneself.

On the last day, full of energy and compassion, Rinpoche poured out the "precious vase" of 25 lung empowerments and explanations of wonderful practices over all the participants so that they could use these methods according to their conditions.

Then the Master stressed the importance of regional practice groups in the towns and elsewhere where old and new students could work together. As usual, as the concluding part of the retreat, we performed the Ganapuja with the guidance of Rinpoche on how to strengthen this mandala, this empowerment, to offer it all and then to dissolve it all into space.

After so many years, at the end of retreats I still feel some sort of, "What a pity, we have to go!" but it reminds me of a quotation of Rinpoche's: "The moment we come together is also the moment of the beginning of our separation!" There is certainly nothing to add to this.

After the retreat the German Gakyil made an offering to Rinpoche and his many projects. In turn our Master gave us back what we need for projects in our sangha and for sharing with other Gars. We were also happy to receive Rinpoche's advice on cooperation, where he once again stressed the importance of forming local practice groups in towns and cities after he had seen so many new people at the retreat.

Rinpoche, Rosa, and Anna Eid left for their next stopover in Austria, luckily not too long a distance to travel. They waved their farewell from the train in the border town of Salzburg as they departed for Vienna where members of the Austrian Community were happy to await them.

Austrian Dreams

by Paula Barry

We were very excited when we read on Norbunet that for the retreat in Austria Rinpoche would be giving teachings (for the first time, as far as we knew) of the Great Mahasiddha and Terton Thangstong rGyal-po. We had always been curious fans of his as he is known as a great architect who designed iron suspension bridges that traversed the steep river gorges in Central Tibet. He was also the founder of a Tibetan Dramatic art form that uses dance, dialogue and song. Above all Thangstong rGyal-po was a great Terton who received many teaching from Padmasambhava through his own highly developed pure vision. There is, in fact, the Thangtong Nyenyud consisting of twelve or thirteen volumes of his teachings related to Chöd, Dzogchen and Mahamudra. An added treat to this already delicious sounding Viennese pastry was that Rinpoche would be participating in an International conference on "Dreaming and Consciousness" in Vienna prior to the retreat.

As we were in Europe at this time anyway, we easily made the decision to attend the retreat and looked forward to seeing our Austrian and German Dharma friends as well as immersing ourselves

unrestrained into the rich Austrian cuisine with its ornaments of pastry, chocolate and the ever present schlag.

Our first night in Vienna was a Viennese sampler. Listening to strangely familiar German words (we could list at least one hundred words we already knew garnered from music, movies and menus), resting in the hotel listening to the football fans in the park below as they drunkenly cheered and chanted Austria to a draw with Cameroon, walking the wet cobbled streets lined with beautiful buildings each one with sculpted figures of myth and lore cavorting between the garrets, consulting again and again our map and finally finding Gaststätte Pfudl where we guiltlessly enjoyed tender pork bathed in cream and assorted wild mushrooms, red wine and one of too many heartstopping pastries.

The dream conference, held at the French Cultural Institute, had a very learned group of speakers all of whom spoke about the aspect of dreams that they had spent many years researching. Some had studied brain waves, some CAT scans, the meaning of dreams in psychology and art, some were well versed in lucid dreaming. Chögyal Namkhai

Norbu spoke about some of his experience in his dreams as a practitioner, and how one if one is a practitioner one can have experiences of clarity in ones dreams that can be trusted and useful in one's life and, indeed, can guide one along the path. There was a lively period of discussion where it seemed that all were discovering different parts of this elephant called dreaming and trying to get a clear picture of the whole animal.

Rime Dharma Dzong (meaning non-sectarian Dharma fortress) is a lovely center situated an hour and a half southwest of Vienna. It was created as a place where Dharma teachers and their disciples can retreat to in order to receive and develop the teachings of their particular paths. Sylvester and Li have, through their creativity and caring, created a beautiful and comfortable place in which to hold retreats. As the weather was rather cold and rainy we made good use of the fancifully shaped and decorated clay stoves that are made there. Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, although physically tired from his constant traveling, was so amazingly precise and powerful in his presence and in his transmission of the teachings that we all felt and experienced in those days the direct transmission of the state of Dzogchen. The initial teaching (which is transcribed in this issue) was a beautiful explanation and introduction to the essential practice of Guru Yoga, uniting one's state with that of the Maestro, in order to begin and continue to understand one's real nature.

The second day Rinpoche, shared with us some of the details of his enthronement as a reincarnation of Adzom Drupa and his years as a young student at the Sakyapa Monastery where he then began his education. This was a prelude to the main teaching of Thangstong rGyal-po, explaining that although Thangstong rGyal-po was a student of a Sakyapa Lama, he is not considered to be Sakyapa. In fact, he received many teachings from various traditions as well as through his own pure vision, clarity and spiritual awakening that had the capacity to integrate with many teachings. Chögyal Namkhai Norbu then related to us a wondrous dream of clarity, where through the help of many guides and the power of the Song of the Vajra, he was able to arrive in the dimension of Thangstong rGyal-po, and receive a Terma teaching directly from him. He transmitted this quintessential Dzogchen teaching to us which contained the pith of the Semde, Longde, and Upadesha teachings. It was as if we had all entered the experience of the dream together, led by our Maestro and guided by our unification with him and our connection with each other. This Terma teaching, the essence of the Thangtong Nyenyid, was verified by Rinpoche to be contained within the Thangtong Nyenyid virtually word for word. We were so fortunate to have received this so directly.

We ended with the transmission of the essential practices of the Dzogchen Community and Ganapuja thanking the guardians and renewing our Samaya to continue, with purity of intention, to develop the teachings for the development of all beings. Of course, this Austrian dream would not be complete without a final trip to the pastry shop for warm crepes, coffee and schlag, and a Sacher Torte to share with Dharma friends in England while telling of the Austrian retreat.

Lives of the Great Masters



Thang-stong rGyal-po Father of the Tibetan Drama Tradition: The Bodhisattva as Artist 1361 - 1485

by Janet Gyatso

Written for 25th Anniversary Commemorative Volume, Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts

Thang-stong rGyal-po, regarded as the father of the Tibetan drama tradition, is revered in a diverse variety of other fields as well. From the religious point of view, he is seen as an emanation of Avalokitesvara and of Padmasambhava: of the former for his lifelong visionary tie to the bodhisattva and propagation of the six-syllabled mantra; and of the latter for his discovery of Treasure (gter-ma) texts, and his religio-political involvement in the "taming" of the remote areas of Tibet. Thang-stong rGyal-po was also a brilliantly innovative civil engineer who built numerous bridges, ferries, and religious structures throughout Greater Tibet. He may most aptly be characterized as the "crazy" tantric yogi, deeply reverent of the contemplative Buddhist tradition and its philosophical teachings, but simultaneously an iconoclast, disdainful of convention and distrustful of institutions, with the type of teaching style that often shocked people out of complacency. In this he was not unlike other such unorthodox saints widely venerated in Tibet. The remarkable feature of Thang-stong's approach is the extent to which he carried out the bodhisattva vow to help all beings within the worldly sphere. Whereas Buddhist teachers usually feel that to aid others truly one must lead them out of mundane concerns altogether so that they can clearly see the ultimate nature of reality, Thang-stong found it equally relevant to make great effort helping beings achieve hap-

piness on the relatively secular plane. In this, Thang-stong as a Tibetan Buddhist teacher is virtually unique.

It is not surprising to find that one of the accomplishments attributed to this ubiquitous culture hero is the founding of the Tibetan dramatic tradition. It has been disappointing to scholars, however, to discover that the extant literature of the Thang-stong tradition, including his lengthy biography, provides us with no evidence of this role. In particular, R.A. Stein has described the instances in which Thang-stong is represented in the A-lce lha-mo and other traditions, but these appearances are dateable only to a later generation after Thang-stong's own period. Yet the lack of literary documentation for his founding of the theater does not cancel out the possibility that the ascription may be true. That possibility becomes especially credible when we consider the generally laconic and ad hoc nature of Thang-stong's legacy as a whole, which is not given to extensive written records, but rather consists largely of oral esoterica. And certainly it is often the case that the historical significance of what seems to be a natural and routine method of teaching is not realized until much later. Nevertheless, unless more specific evidence becomes available, we can reflect only upon the general nature of Thang-stong's career, which nonetheless is quite compatible with and suggestive of involvement with the performing arts.

Thang-stong rGyal-po grew up during the height of the Phag-mo Gru-pa hegemony, a time of great cultural, political and religious

development for Tibet. The period saw a broad resurgence of nationalist spirit during which a spate of serious historical surveys appeared, alongside a spate of discovered Treasure texts presenting a new mythologized version of the royal dynasty. There were extensive improvements in the legal code, taxation, and relevant to the course of Thang-stong's own career, a new interest in improving roads and transportation. Thang-stong was born in 'o-ba lHa-rtsé, a village in gTsang, in 1361, four years after the birth of Tsong-kha-pa and four years before the death of Byang-chug rGyal-mtshan. Though unruly as a child, Thang-stong was ordained as a monk at an early age. He studied virtually all of the current Buddhist schools, under what is traditionally counted as 500 masters, most notably the Byang-gter master Kun-spangs Don-yod rGyal-mtshan rab. His youth was spent mostly in meditative retreat, when he experienced major visions of bodhisattvas, dakinis, and teachers of the past, as well as of the Jo-bo-rge image at Lhasa that seems to have held a special fascination for him. He was inspired by the creative upswing in the rNying-ma tradition that was going on during his lifetime, and he discovered several Treasure texts of his own. Much of the latter part of his life was spent in travel, from Svayambhu in Nepal, to Mt. Wu-t'ai-shan in China, and virtually all over Tibet, during which he met many of the political and spiritual luminaries of the time. He also gained a considerable following. His main monastic centers were at Ri-bo-che in La-stod Byang, and at Chu-bo-ri near Lhasa, and he is also remembered for building the original temple of the great monastery at sDe-dge. Thang-stong died in 1485 at the age of 124.

Of the five achievements that are traditionally counted as Thang-stong rGyal-po's major acts, he is most celebrated for his building of iron-chain suspension bridges at 58 sites throughout Greater Tibet. This massive and unprecedented engineering feat is all the more remarkable for the fact that Thang-stong only entered this occupation at the age of 69. Thang-stong himself regarded civil engineering as a practical application of the bodhisattva ideal. It was the harrowing experience of being thrown off a ferry boat only because of his eccentric yogi's appearance that had first given him a glimpse of the serious unreliability in Tibet's primitive modes of transit.

Later, through what is portrayed as revelatory inspiration, Thang-stong discovered major caches of iron ore at Tsa-gong, Pagro and sKyid-grong. With the cooperation of local people and the patronage of various lords, he had links forged and carried to his construction sites throughout the country. A recent study of Thang-stong's chains shows them to be an iron alloy particularly resistant to rust, and we know of a number of his bridges that are still standing, some still in use.

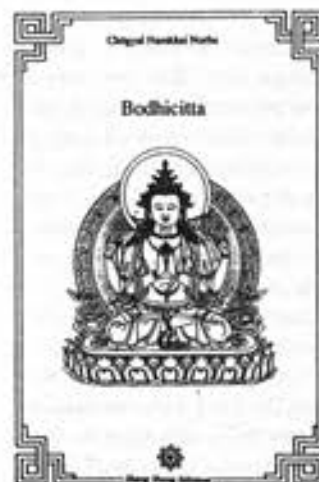
Three other of Thang-stong's major acts reflect his far-reaching political and social concerns, albeit carried out in the inimitable style of the crazy yogi: his meeting with a Chinese emperor and exhortation to rule according to Buddhist principles; his conversion of a king of Kamata (Kamarupa) who was practicing human sacrifice; and his civilizing of the savages of Kio in

continued on page 18

BOOK REVIEWS

BODHICITTA
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu
Shang Shung Edizioni
1996. (excerpted)

Available from the Tsegialgar bookstore
and from Shang Shung Edizioni



Sometimes we can forget how many wonderful teachings of the Master are contained in the small publications put out by Shang Shung Edizioni. We've excerpted a few paragraphs from the booklet *Bodhicitta* for its relevance and as a reminder of the wealth of teachings by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu found on our bookshelves and from the community's bookstores.

Until we are in our true condition we do not even have any peace. Why so? Because we live in dualism, and there is no peace in dualism. John has his idea, I have another and together we try to make our ideas agree. For a while this can work all right, but then our agreement breaks down and a battle breaks out again. So peace does not really exist in samsara. However each individual can find inner peace by discovering the true condition and abiding in it. To this end instead of watching and judging others we should observe ourselves and discover our limits.

The root of all problems is our ego, the so-called capital "I". I consider myself big and important, in the first position. Maybe I don't say it because other people might think I'm rude, but I always think it. When we want to shrink the I a

bit then we talk in the plural, we say "We", which refers to those on our side. We are the most important, the others are separate. So, usually we never give up the boundary of I and We, and in this way everything gets gigantic: attitudes, thoughts, everything.

I have an idea and I want to do something in a certain way, but if someone else doesn't agree I insist and don't give an inch. What is this attitude? It is precisely a manifestation of the ego. If I relax instead, then I also find the way to respect others because I know that others have egos too. As Buddha said, taking yourself and your experiences as your example you learn what the condition of others is. So, thanks to Bodhicitta I unquestionably understand the condition of others. I have less tension and I can work together with everyone, becoming flexible and relaxed instead of being like a stone in water.

If we observe well we can see that most of us are not like this. Maybe we talk about Bodhicitta, about acting for the good of others and many other nice things and live in a rosy atmosphere, but then we remain like a stone. Usually things that are left in water get soft, but not a stone, it never relaxes and even after centuries it does not have the least idea of integrating with the water. Even if it stays in the water for thousands of years, if we break it open it is still dry inside. In this way our ego never integrates with the teaching, all it is capable of doing is uttering a lot of nice words, like a scholarly professor who gives a talk and everyone says: "Ah, how erudite you are, what a good talk." But really he has not integrated anything in himself and his condition has not changed one jot.

So the teaching must not become like this, we must integrate it in ourselves, but in order to integrate it we must open a bit, that is, we must observe ourselves and understand our condition. If we have understood the true sense of Bodhicitta then reciting the Bodhicitta verses is very valuable, otherwise we do it just like a parrot that can say many things without knowing what they mean.

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Jharungkhasor Chorten

The arithmetical, geometrical, harmonical and astronomical data 'hidden' in the ratha-terraces of the Great Stupa of Boudhanath in Nepal

by Bernhard Ioan Siegel

Castel del Piano, Italy, 10th lunar day of May 1998.

Obeisance to the masters of all lineages! "Glorious indeed is the sight of the Great Chaitya...". We often come across similar enthusiastic statements in the Buddhist scriptures. From Java to Sri Lanka, from Nepal and Tibet we hear inspired songs in praise of manifold stupas, sung by countless devotees, thankful for the protection and affirmation every sacred site provides. Since Buddha Sakyamuni urged his followers to build stupas at crossroads to "bring joy to the hearts of people", many stupas have been built to commemorate events in the life of the Tathagata and to contain relics of the Insurpassable One or of his great disciples. Since then, many cultures have gained stability and prosperity through Buddhism and many architectonic styles have evolved. The symbolism and the meaning of building votive shrines has widened with the development of Buddhism. Since the beginning, builders have incorporated the totality of the teachings - in numeric form - in the principle of the stupa.

Many commentaries regarding the history and the symbolism of the shrines of all periods have also been composed by Western devotees such as Anagarika Govinda and Adrian Snodgrass to mention only the most outstanding. Countless architects have drawn plans and thus most sacred Buddhist sites are well documented.

But visiting Buddhist sites and redrawing the plans, we find that besides the simplicity of the basic design, many stupas dating from the Theravada or the Tantric period prove to be mathematically very intricate. At first glance one might get the impression that the delightful diversity of styles is responsible for the great number of puzzles and outright geometrical riddles that confront the researcher. The principles 'inherent' in stupas are certainly not meant to boggle intellectuals but we come across many a concept that only very skilled astronomers can 'think up'. Especially in chortens dating from the early Vajrayana period one might be tempted to comment that this period, in India and elsewhere, witnessed an intellectualism that is only matched in our times. But we are also confronted with a tremendous devotion and subsequent meditative insight prevalent in the 7th or 8th century. This period brought mankind an enormous step ahead both spiritually and scientifically: the development of the shunyata philosophy and the subsequent mathematical application of the number 'zero', without which scientific achievements would not have been possible.

But the geniuses of Vajrayana were not only the most refined spiritual, artistic and scientific avant-garde, unexcelled to this day. No research so far has given them the deserved credit for also being excellent caretakers and preservers of proto-scientific data of much earlier and long extinct civilizations. To prove this point we not only have to analyze Buddhist architecture, we also have to have a thorough knowledge of the principle underlying Babylonian and Egyptian sacred art. Why? We have evidence that - besides the arithmetical adaptation of Buddhist principles in most sacred shrines - Buddhist architects also brought cosmogonical and astronomical intricacies, developed by the above-mentioned and long extinct cultures, 'under one roof'.

Analyzing the prototypes of Tibetan and Nepalese shrine forms, we come across at least five or maybe six branches of proto-mathematics already in use during prehistoric times: arithmy, geometry, geodesy, astronomy and (the oldest stratum of Greek mathematics) musical proportions. It is the latter, the harmonical aspect, that unites all other branches. To study Harmonics is especially useful to understand Tantric teachings on sounds, this subtle energy, the bridge with which we integrate our meditative state in the world.

All ancient civilizations, it seems, developed what we call 'Harmonics', in accordance with 'our' roots, the ancient Greek Pythagorean philosophy. Applied knowledge of harmonical principles are evident in the architecture from ancient Greece to China. Tibet left us a ritual tone scale that is of paramount importance. India seems to have adopted Harmonics twice: as in ancient Greece, Harmonics belong to the oldest stratum. The second time this science came with the Greek philosophers in the wake of Alexander the Great's conquest. These men brought architectural mind-treasures from Egypt and Babylon to north India, the Oxus and Swat Valleys and surrounding areas. Immediately, it appears, an intense cultural love affair sprouted and a reciprocal admiration between the Macedonian and Ionic Greeks and the inhabitants of Baktria developed. Soon the 'gandhara' style of sculpture came into existence, with images of Sakyamuni Buddha clad in Greek style. The 'give and take' was well-balanced: the rather scientific and philosophy-oriented Greeks adopted Buddhism and the Baktrians the principles of Greek art. There was also a great development in Buddhist literature, crowned by the wonderful 'The Questions of King Milinda' in which a Greek king asks a

Buddhist lama for instructions.

What made the genial artisans of India so enthusiastic about Greek art? The new style, the realism? The skill in stonemasonry? If we look at the evidence maybe we have the answer: there is so much musical mathematics 'behind' Greek art and music-mathematical concepts correspond with a great wealth of cos-

mogonical and astronomical data. Harmonics is often called the science of correspondences.

We can be certain that the most valuable import into India was of an astronomical nature. Why? We discover a chain of astronomical keys in the Chortens of the early Vajrayana period.

Some of them even surpass the findings of modern science! Take, for instance, the geometrical marvels of the three ratha tiers, the terraces representing the earth element in most chortens of Indian origin, most distinctly elaborated in the Great Stupa of Boudhanath in Nepal. Although this stupa was probably never used as an astrolabe, the Great Stupa holds all the mathematical angles necessary to provide us with the precise periods of revolution of what was known in antiquity as the heavenly bodies around the earth. The terraces indicate the time span it takes for the sun and the moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn to revolve around the earth. In other words the earth element of the shrine make calendar computations easy.

Since the time of Copernicus, the best astronomical minds have been looking for a meaningful morphology in our solar system which they could never find. Science has given up on that. Astronomical textbooks only quote miles or kilometers in the context of the mean distances of the planets from the sun. No clear picture, no harmony 'of the spheres', no beauty in the scientific view. Let's look for the unthinkable: we take a modern handbook on astronomy and draw the exact mean distances of the planets from the sun in reduced proportion. We arrive at six concentric circles. If we make a mandala-like geometrical design out of these six circles, we obtain all the coordinates we need to design the earth element of the holy Stupa of Boudhanath! The mean distances from the sun of the six planets known to antiquity fit in perfect proportions into the three tiered terraces of the Great Stupa. Geocentricity and heliocentricity side by side in the same building!

Science claims that the heliocentric view has only been known since its discovery by Copernicus. To historians, the fact that the Siddhas of the early Vajrayana period had access to a heliocentric view must certainly seem impossible. But after having drawn hundreds of relevant diagrams and analyzing many sacred sites we hold enough implacable evidence to show that we are not speculating.

Let us stay for a moment longer with the inheritance the builders of holy Boudhanath preserved: we take the terraces with their protrusions apart and rearrange them. Soon we arrive at a design, identical in proportions with the Ziggurat of Babylon, the famous Babylonian tower whose dimensions have fortunately survived and which is certainly a key building of astronomical-mathematical import. Many are the geometrical marvels of this structure and it seems likely that the builders of gothic cathedrals got their inspiration from the Ziggurat. Evidence holds that the architectural design of the Ziggurat includes coordinates that define the Gothic arch.

But the angles of the Ziggurat also provide perfect coordinates that are identical with the angles of the Great Pyramid of Gizeh in Egypt. This pyramid was 'designed' by harmonizing many mathematical concepts but the basic principle underlying its proportions is a figure most famous literally and verbally - the 'squaring of the circle'. Researchers are still guessing why it was applied. What is the practical use of transforming the square of the baseline of the pyramid into a circle and to apply the radius to its height? The astronomical importance of this 'figure' would probably have never been discovered were it not that the 'squaring of the circle' is also evident in the basic terrace of the Great Stupa. Since we already have two systems, the geocentric calendar and the astronomical-heliocentric, side by side in the earth element of the Great Stupa, it is only one more step we have to do to arrive at a law that has escaped modern astronomy.

The possibility to compute - traverse the geometrical figure of the 'squaring of the circle' - from the geocentric view as we see the planets wandering in the sky to the heliocentric view as seen from the sun. How come these factors have not been investigated? Science has long ago abandoned the Pythagorean view of a literally harmoniously ordered universe, of a musical harmony that penetrates all.

Plato urged his disciples to search for a musical order that unites the heavenly bodies with the hearts of men, the famous but undiscovered 'Harmony of the Spheres'. Here in holy Jharungkhasor we discover it!

Now we know that the Great Stupa also holds worldly knowledge that was not mentioned in the scriptures. To some of us these astronomical findings may be a boon, a source of strength and joy. And spiritual pride. What giants, our masters! What joy to be in the transmission!

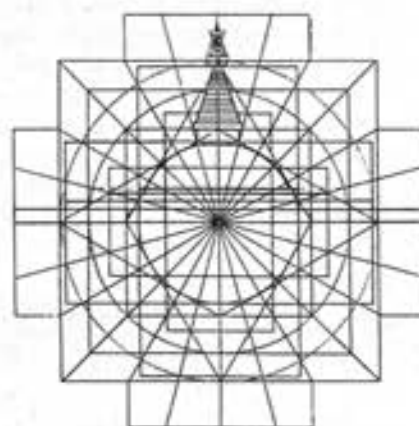


DIAGRAM 1

Vajrayana yogis meditate on the many outer, inner, secret and most secret 'contents' of the Great Stupa of Boudhanath in Nepal symbolized by the Tantric architects of the 7th century in numeric form. It has now come to light that worldly knowledge of an astronomical nature is also 'hidden' in the sacred site. Most probably the 'design' behind holy Jharungkhasor is as shown in diagram 1.

The 24 spoked wheel as we find it in the Ashoka pillar at Sarnath is fused with the square and the triangle. The intersections provide us with all the necessary coordinates to draw an elevation and ground plan of the Great Stupa. The three wheels provide all the necessary angles ancient astronomers needed to keep track of the time the sun and the planets take in their apparent revolution around the earth.

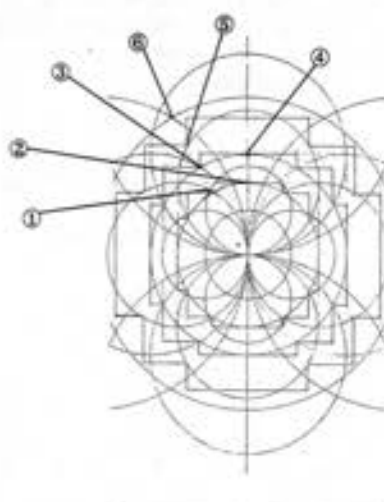


DIAGRAM 2

It seems that some 800 years before Copernicus, the Buddhist fathers also knew with precision where the planets move around the sun. If we arrange the orbits of four of the six planets known in antiquity in 'mandala form', then they perfectly fit into the wheel system of the earth element of the Great Stupa. We only need to idealize (draw the ellipses as circles and disregard their eccentricities) and apply the AU reckoning (one 'Astronomical Unit' is the distance between the earth and the sun). The orb of Mercury has AU 0.44, Venus AU 0.71, the Earth AU 1.0, and Mars AU 0.53. The innermost circle represents the orb of Mercury, the next belongs to Venus, followed by the orb of the Earth and of Mars.

- (1) The crossing of the 2 circles of Venus give us the sides of the central square of the uppermost Ratha.
- (2) The central circle of the orb of Venus gives the extension of that Ratha.
- (3) The crossing of the 2 circles of the orb of the Earth give us the side of the square or the second Ratha.
- (4) The circle of the orb of the Earth give us the extension of the 2nd Ratha.
- (5) The intersection of the orb of Venus circles gives us the dimension of the lowest square.
- (6) The intersection of two orb of Mars circles gives us the extension of the lowest Ratha.

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

by John Bellezza

Part VII and the last of a series about the lost city of Zhang Zhung

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.

South of Dang ra g.yu mtsho, on the opposite side of the rTa sgo gtsang po from the rTa sgo rin po che range, are two megalithic sites including one of the most magnificent in Tibet. One megalithic site discovered near Dang ra g.yu mtsho by George Roerich is described as consisting of standing stones surrounded by slabs arranged in a square. Nearby are tombs flanked by stones in a square configuration aligned from east to west with a large stone in the east (Tucci 1973: 52; Tarthang Tulku: 97). This description does not accurately reflect the findings of the field survey and may well refer to yet another site. In addition to the two sites enumerated below is at least one other known to the 'brog pa of the region.

There are four monoliths at a narrow constriction in the trail running along the east bank of the rTa sgo gtsang po at a place called Lug gtug brang. These standing stones are planted in a row adjacent to the edge of a steep river bank. Made of pink porphyry, a volcanic stone, three of them stand about one meter tall and the fourth stands 1.7 meters above the ground. These stones are called rdo ring (pronounced do land or do rang in the local dialect) and are said to be shrines to rTa sgo dge rgan, the principal peak of the rTa sgo rin po che group. Native 'brog pa believe that these stones protect the expansive Sangs rgyas plain which opens up before them. The sacred status of the monoliths is underlined by the votive offerings of small stones and strips of cloth placed on top of them. Informants allege that they were erected at a distant time in the past and may date back to the Zhang Zhung era. Mined from a nearby mountain, the stelae have been hewn into a rectangular shape. Originally they might have been put up as boundary markers since they are found in a natural bottleneck at the southern frontier of the Nag tshang province.

GSUM 'BUG RDO RING

Downstream from the confluence of the rTa sgo gtsang po and Ngang ma gtsang po is an extraordinary megalithic site. It is situated on a shelf about 50 meters above the east bank of the rTa sgo gtsang po. The site boasts hundreds of pink and red monoliths of locally occurring porphyry, organized into two separate quadrangles. The larger of the two quadrilateral arrays is located to the west and consists of roughly 800 menhirs accurately oriented to the cardinal directions. The stones are placed in rows with their two broadsides facing north and south.

The western quadrangle measures about 20 meters on its north side, 19 meters on its east and south sides and 17.5 meters on its west side. These measurements are provisional, however, because the original dimensions of the alignment of stones could not be accurately gauged due to a slight disturbance of the site on its north and west sides. Despite some minor disturbance, the original character of the monument is remarkable well preserved. The rdo ring in the western quadrangle protrudes an average of 25 to 50 centimeters out of the surface of the ground, but there are more than 50 menhirs that exceed 60 centimeters in length. The longest monoliths tend to be in the south-eastern corner of the quadrangle. The tallest stone in the group sticks 95 centimeters out of the ground and an uprooted one measures 115 centimeters in length. The shortest stones are less than 125 millimeters tall. The longer monoliths are tabular in shape like the lug gtug brang specimens but more crudely hewn. The shorter stones are pointed on top and have a pyramidal appearance. The smaller stones appear to be naturally occurring hunks of rock while the longer ones were quarried. The arrangement of the stones in rows loses some of its coherence in the sections of the quadrangle containing the shorter stones.

East of the eastern extremity of the western quadrangle is an isolated row of eight of the largest monoliths at gSum 'bug. This row is parallel to the western quadrangle and situated 4.5 meters away. Six of them are in situ and two have been uprooted. The tallest in situ stone rises 116 centimeters out of the ground and the longest downed stone measures 145 centimeters and is the longest specimen of the gSum 'bug rdo ring.

Approximately 55 meters east of the western quadrangle is another quadrilateral arrangement of upright stones. This eastern group is roughly 12 by 16 meters in size. Its dimensions could not be accurately determined because the stones are heavily disturbed. The eastern quadrangle is much sparser with only about 150 menhirs. A good percentage of them are no longer anchored into the ground. Some of these dislodged stones have

been piled up in the center of the array. Like the western sequence, the stones in the eastern quadrangle are oriented to the compass points. Between the two quadrilateral arrangements of stones is a ruined rectangular-shaped structure measuring 10 meters from north to south and 5.5 meters from east to west. A similarly shaped structure is found on the west side of the western quadrangle two meters beyond the nearest rdo ring. It measures about 17.5 meters north to south and 8.5 meters east to west. Their original height could not be determined but only surmised from the existing pile of stones. They might have stood at least two meters tall. These two structures are also oriented to the cardinal directions and thus correspond to the alignment of the rdo ring.

A variety of megalithic sites have been discovered in Tibet (cf. Chayet: 57, 58; Tarthang Tulku: 97; Tucci 1973: 50-58), dating from the pre-Buddhist period. It has been suggested that they arose out of a Megalithic culture that had its roots in the Neolithic (Tucci 1973: 57, 58). The megaliths do not possess uniform characteristics; on the contrary, they seem to represent a wide range of typologies. Perhaps the megalithic site most resembling the gSum 'bug rdo ring in terms of location and configuration is the site discovered circa 1927 by the Roerichs in gNam ru (cf. Roerich 1931; Bellezza: 29-32). Like gSum 'bug, the gNam ru rdo ring site was composed of rows of standing stones. There are critical differences, however: the gSum 'bug rdo ring does not have cromlechs nor circular arrays of stones, nor does the gNam ru rdo ring have adjoining structures. Yet another major difference is that unlike gNam ru, gSum 'bug is not a site of worship or veneration, at least in the contemporary period.

Evidently, the gSum 'bug rdo ring was funerary in function, representing a kind of necropolis. The oral history of the site supports this assertion. Below the megaliths until some 50 years ago there used to be a permanent settlement (gZhi ma) known by the same name. The 'brog pa who had right of tenure here finally abandoned it and moved across the rTa sgo gtsang po

to the small village of kya rgan, where the local sgar dpon resided until the Communist takeover. gSum 'bug was vacated on account of it being considered an inauspicious location. Reportedly, inhabitants at gSum 'bug used to experience bad dreams and other negativities, culminating in a retreat from the settlement. Furthermore, the oldest woman interviewed, an octogenarian who actually spent her youth at gSum 'bug, related that many years ago a human skull and other bones were washed out of a gully below the megalithic monument. There is no living tradition associated with gSum 'bug beyond its reputation as an insalubrious spot. The pall hanging over gSum 'bug hints at it being a long

forgotten funerary monument. Standing stones associated with graves are found in a number of locations in Tibet (cf. Chayet: 57; Tucci 1973: 51-58), so this hypothesis is well within the realm of possibilities.

In lower Kinnaur in Himachal Pradesh, India, Kinnauris erect mortuary stones in memory of their ancestors called katang which are the focus of rites of ancestor worship. Likewise, the gSum 'bug rdo ring might also have been the object of necrolatry. Individual monoliths in series, or the whole group of them en masse, could feasibly have been planted as the cultic funerary monument of a clan or tribe. Each of the stelae may have been raised to commemorate the death of a single individual whose remains were disposed of in a cremation or "sky burial" (bya gtor). Furthermore, the structures accompanying the monoliths might have been used as burial vaults or to conceal cists. These structures were presumably where the leadership or aristocracy of the culture that built gSum 'bug were interred. Conjecture here can only yield to facts when an exhaustive archaeological survey of gSum 'bug rdo ring is undertaken.

The archaeological sites enumerated above, as well as at least one dozen others the author was apprised of by local informants but did not visit, point to Dang ra g.yu mtsho as being a vital cradle of Tibetan civilization in ancient times. It is also fundamental to note that oral histories corroborate modern climatological and paleontological studies, which posit that a much more conducive climate existed thousands of years ago on the Byang thang.²⁶ The warmer and moister climate, which reached its peak in the Holocene, could have proved a potent impetus in the founding of an ancient civilization on the Byang thang. Categorically, in most quarters, the natives of Dang ra g.yu mtsho recognize that their civilization has been declining for many centuries and that these changes have been associated with climatic and ecological modifications which have increasingly tested their resilience and will to survive. The archaeological documentation provided above may be among the most important material evidence adducing the reality of a Byang thang-based civilization in ancient times. At the very least, it keeps alive the flame of speculation about the pre-Buddhist cultural status of the Northern Plains of Tibet.

Notes:

²⁶ It is now well accepted that from the post-Pleistocene period onwards the climate of much of the northern hemisphere, including Tibet, gradually warmed, eventually becoming even warmer and moister than it is today. For an overview of climatic change in Central Asia and China refer to Dolukhanov:359; Lamb:251,415. These studies provide a perspective on the state of the earth's climate in ancient times. For more specific treatment of the Tibet Plateau see, for example, Tarthang Tulku: 47-50; Zheng Benxing: 93-101; Huang Cixuan 1983. The former mentioned contains two articles found in the Beijing Science Press on spore-pollen analysis in southern Tibet and on the Byang thang. Unfortunately, the author did not get an opportunity to examine them but had to be satisfied with an oral appraisal of their contents.

HH Dalai Lama

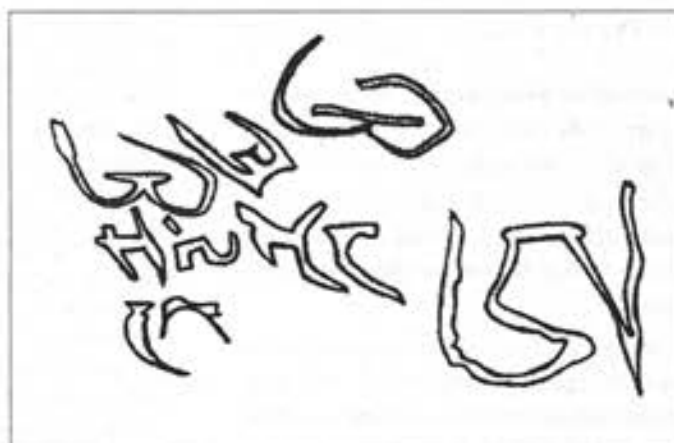
continued from page 4

by highlighting the alleged human rights and religious freedom act, a strategy orchestrated by these Western followers throughout H.H.'s American tour. But in the end, at least in Madison, they simply faded in the background for lack of interest and on the day of the empowerment and long life ceremony were entirely absent.

The atmosphere surrounding His Holiness's teaching seemed easy going in spite of the extensive security measures as people's purses, knapsacks and bags were individually searched and each person electronically scanned every time one entered the teaching hall quite a few times each day considering teaching breaks, lunch and toilet necessities. Sponsored by Deer Park Monastery, under the direction of Geshe Sopa, one thing I noticed was the total absence of any sales or information tables. Yearning momentarily for the usual distraction of festive shopping, I quickly adjusted to the plain empty space of the exposition hall isolated from other venues on the outskirts of the city. Instead, there was a gentle undistracted energy enveloping everyone—from uniformed policemen with guns to rambunctious young Tibetan children dressed in assorted regional attire after the fashion of their parents running through out the hall and on the periphery of the teaching where a large cordoned off space seemed to be appropriated for their use. It occurred to me that attending teachings by H. H. was one of the few opportunities to come together in a practice environment with many Tibetans.

Seeing His Holiness again after several years, he appeared to me to be in excellent spirits conveying the teachings with great vigor and energy. For the first time, while being in his presence, I connected with the sense of the Bodhisattva path as a state of profound joy unmarred by any secondary causes or external conditions. When asked during a question and answer period what he counted among his greatest accomplishments, H.H. responded with the simple answer, "Helping people." Seated comfortably in an arm chair placed in front of the main throne, he leaned forward and then intimately told of the last days of the Tibetan who had recently set fire to himself as an example of where he might have helped someone. While I have yet to fully understand the intricacies of the Madyamika Prasangika philosophical view of emptiness, it's clear that H.H. embodies a depth of loving kindness and affection for others rarely attained. Spontaneously, I began to weep as H.H. spoke of the last moments of this tortured man's life where something of the cooling balm of compassion had at last quenched a burning hatred as the man died in peace.

It's been many years since I first attended teachings by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The first time was in New Jersey. That day remains among my most memorable experiences but a moment in his mindstream, but still vividly transparent in mine—the perfect teacher, the perfect place, the perfect time...the closest thing to heaven on earth.



Cave painting: bkra shis do, gNamtsho

J. BELLEZZA



Chorten of the Enlightened State of the Mind

by Franco Branca

Sunday June 28th, a truly beautiful day. It is still early when I go down to the Stupa and Merigar is immersed in the luminous peace of the morning. Today the intense heat of the past days is gently mitigated by a soft wind from the Southeast. From the palpitating green of the surrounding vegetation the exuberant songs of many little birds almost seems to rise in gratitude for this pleasant atmosphere.

I'd better light the fire at once if glowing embers are needed to make abundant smoke when the time comes for the sang offering: first some dry sticks and then some good pieces of oak....

Luciano and I prepare the seats for the Masters and the monks, doing our best to follow Rinpoche's indications: something plain and simple and well-done. Meanwhile the Stupa stands there, beautiful and immaculate, with its colored decorations standing out against the white plaster and the gilding above gleaming in the sun. Ornamental pots of flowers in festive colors surround the base.

"It's really beautiful," says the Master when he arrives and smiles radiantly as he circumambulates before stopping in the shade on the West side to wait for the practitioners who at first arrive a few at a time and then more and more pour down across the field. His Holiness Sakya Trizin will not be late to arrive.

It is said that, since Merigar began, Rinpoche has always had in mind the idea of building a large Chorten here. When Giovanni Boni went to visit Rinpoche during the painful period of his stay in hospital in New York at the end of 1994 and beginning of 1995, he found Rinpoche, as if by chance, intently examining plans for a Stupa which was about to be built. "Certainly, it would be good if we made one at Merigar too," our Master said to him on that occasion.

So as soon as our engineer returned to Italy he got to work. A first set of plans was sent to the authorities in the spring of 1995, the year in which, on his longed for return to Merigar, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu indicated the exact point where the Chorten should stand.

Having obtained the approval and related permits, work on the foundation could begin in the spring of 1996.

The first time I went to see it, the top of that hillock was a bit different from how it looks now. Anyway it was quite delightful, sloping ground, covered in dense, dark green weeds, broom and brambles and a great heap of mossy rocks removed from the fields by farmers in the past. A chestnut stake, beaten into place by a sledge-hammer, marked the center of the future construction.

The first thing that was necessary was to open up a road for the delivery of building materials and then the site had to be leveled for the foundations. The farmers' mossy boulders were inserted into the base of the foundations of the walls together with those obtained from the old medicine room, which Paolo Pagni was restructuring at that time to make an apartment for the Gekos. At the center of the foundations several stones were laid in such a way as to form a kind of cylindrical well, eighty centimeters in diameter which was to contain the objects for the first authentication. At that point we had construct-



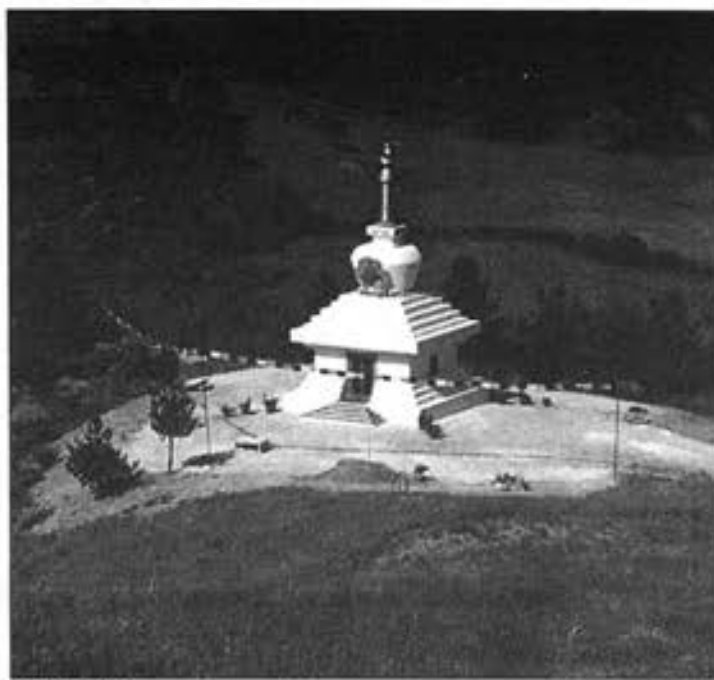
Tsa tsa

R. BIZZOTTO

ed a platform of reinforced cement, seventy centimeters high and with a top surface of three by three meters. Around the beginning of June Rinpoche was to return from his winter journeys in Asia and Australia and a ceremony was programmed towards the middle of the month for the placing of the foundation stone, in the presence of the Mayor and other local authorities.

The ceremony took place on a Saturday morning. The platform, which wasn't anything special to look at in itself, had been adorned with pots of flowers. The foundation stone was a block of peperino - a gray colored volcanic stone - on one side of which the Tibetan syllables OM A HUM had been carved. Rinpoche placed it, amid applause, on some cement which I had spread in the place where the door-post was to be. It turned out later that, for several reasons, this stone could not remain there; in the end it was walled into the base of the niche which houses the statue of Buddha.

In the following days Rinpoche arranged for the surface area of the platform to be increased to four by four meters and some of the proportions of the drawings of the plans were altered to harmonize. Mingyur Yeshe, an excellent Tibetan painter and sculptor who had studied at Tashi Jong and was at that time staying at Merigar as guest of the Shang Shung Institute, completely redrew the plans which met with the



The Great Stupa

L. GRANGER

enthusiastic approval of Rinpoche. Before leaving Merigar again Rinpoche authenticated the base in a ritual offering of sang and sergyem. The central well was filled with jars and sacks which Rinpoche had carefully prepared for days and days. A large stone cover was cemented in position as a seal over the well and a layer of concrete brought the level of the platform to its present floor height. Meanwhile autumn and then winter arrived and work proceeded very slowly.

The room and the wide platform, called the "Great Lotus" which serves as its roof, with the structure on which the upper steps rest was built in the spring of 1997.

In February Mingyur Yeshe and Piero had already found, in Santa Fiora, a suitable tree for the central pole, called the Sog Shing. It was a cypress which, when squared up, would serve as the spinal column of the Stupa, placed at the center of the roof of the room and going up to the top of the concentric gilded structure called the "Thirteen Dharmas". The base of the Sog Shing was carved in the form of a half Vajra and mantras were carved on its four sides. The surfaces were painted red and the mantras and Vajra were painted yellow and gold. When Mingyur Yeshe left Merigar, he consigned the work to Piero Bonacina. He was to finish of the Sog Shing and to do all the wood and stone carving which we can now admire on the Chorten.

The Sog Shing was raised at the beginning of the summer after a Thun on a special day of Guru Rinpoche, like that on which, months later, we proceeded to cover it with sacred texts. Copies of all the books by Rinpoche that have been published in different languages were used for this, but mostly we used the study texts for the first level of Santi Maha Sangha. At a certain moment, the fluttering of hundreds of golden Tibetan A's glittering in the first glow of the sunset, offered us an indescribable vision. Straight afterwards the Sog Shing, covered with books, was wrapped in strips of five-colored cloth and then waterproofed.

At the end of autumn the rough structure of the Stupa was finished. In Piero's workshop the carved frames of the fixtures had only to be painted and in his garden the lotus petals handsomely

sculpted in peperino waiting to be mounted in place.

As soon as Rinpoche returned at Easter in 1998 he said that the

Chorten must be finished in time for the appointment with His Holiness Sakya Trizin so that he could consecrate it. All of the plastering had to be done, the fixtures walled in, the entrance stairway constructed, the large space in the upper steps filled, the tsa tsa placed in the vase and the top parts mounted.

On Guru Rinpoche day in May we filled the level under the vase.

Around the base of the Sog Shing were placed many jars which Rinpoche had prepared and left for the occasion and the rest was filled with cereals and wood of conifers. It was fortunate that many practitioners came to help in the work because, although it may not seem like it, the amount needed to fill the space was remarkable and several people had to go to get new provisions quite a few times.

On Guru Rinpoche day in June we began to place the tsa tsa in the vase. Mingyur Yeshe and Phuntsog Wangmo had showed us how to mould them and Rita Bizzotto guided and co-ordinated practitioners in this patient work for three years. The quantity of tsa tsa needed to fill the vase had always been an amusing puzzle during the whole course of the work. At a certain point I can remember honestly thinking that there would be enough left over to fill another Stupa. The "sauna" was overflowing with boxes stuffed full of tsa tsa. But when we came to

place them in the vase we soon noticed that there would maybe be only just enough. The work went on for three days. As the tsa tsa were placed the wall of the niche for the statue of Buddha was gradually constructed until we reached the point where it was necessary to fill in right to the top, at least in the parts that would be hard to reach at arms length when the vault of the niche began to slope towards the key closing point. Two holes had been left open in the roof of the vase to allow the finishing of the filling once the niche was complete.

At last the moment had arrived to wall up the fixtures and to place the top parts. Augustinas, Paola, Caterina and Daniela had for some time been intently painting and gilding the fixtures, while Adriano Grimaldi di Canelli who had taken care of the execution of the work in copper for the summit, sent the "Thirteen Dharmas" to a craftsman in Florence to coat them with gold leaf like the other copper parts which had already been sent to him from Amiata.

On June 18th, with the help of a crane lorry the "Thirteen Dharmas" were placed to perfectly cover the cone above the vase, which consists of the top part of the Sog Shing surrounded by a conical construction made of small bricks.

The Umbrella, the Sun, the Moon and the Spherical Pinnacle were inserted onto a copper rod, the base of which was fixed inside the "Thirteen Dharmas."

There is only a week to go to the beginning of the retreat and only now can we take down the scaffolding and set to work on the plastering. Since it would not be possible to completely finish all the details in time we proceeded to give a first coat of white plaster over the roughest parts so as to at least give an idea of how the Stupa will look once it is finished.

His Holiness Shakyas Trizin arrives punctually at nine.

Rinpoche goes to meet him and greets him with an embrace typical of Masters of equal stature. The ceremony begins immediately.

The ringing of the bells and the gentle chanting of the liturgy spread out into space. A soft breeze blows the dense smoke of the sang right in the direction of the Stupa in front of which a monk is making the ritual gestures of the consecration. In one

continued on page 17

Raffle Tickets for the Great Stupa

On August 22nd (soon after the end of the August retreat with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu), we will organize a big party at Merigar with the local authorities and other interested people.

Rinpoche will officially inaugurate the Great Stupa of Merigar and eventually we will draw the winning ticket of the international lottery organized two years ago to raise funds for the Stupa.

The prizes will include:

First prize: a retreat with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in any place in the world including travel, accommodation and the cost of the retreat.

Second prize: a vajra in solid silver.

Third prize: a thangka of Chenrezig

Fourth prize: a pair of gold/turquoise earrings

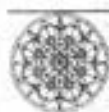
Fifth prize: a crystal pendant with the image of Tara

That means that all the Gars and Gakyils around the world that still have unsold tickets, should please send what is left to Merigar as soon as possible.

Elisa Copello, Merigar Gakyil

Email: "ecop" <ecop@dueffe.it>

Merigar, 58031 Arcidosso (GR), Italy.



A Letter from the Land of Snows

by Giorgio Minuzzo

Will someone let me know what's going on at Merigar? I'm trying to imagine—all sorts of activities for the organization of the summer retreats with His Holiness Sakya Trizin and our dear Master, frenzied meetings of those in charge, the telephones ringing exasperatedly, almost as exasperated as the Gekos, trying to finish the Stupa as soon as possible and Franco exasperated too, the problems of parking and traffic, the stands and whether to put up the tent or not.

Or maybe it's too soon for these types of worries and Merigar is calm and hosts a few practitioners, the Gekos, the people working in the publishing house, the secretaries, the Vajra dancers, the gardeners and Nicola?

I even asked the secretary about the most recent secrets, the small talk, gossip and local and world news but she sent me a couple of lines saying that nothing new is happening. How can it be? Maybe Merigar isn't there any more. Maybe the practitioners of Tuscany and the community have disappeared, but can it be possible that Clara [one of the secretaries] has disappeared, too?

Can 'Casa dei Ciliegi' [residence of the Maglietti family] have disappeared too or did it all start from there? Even Bagnore [the village where Giorgio usually lives with his family] seems to be part of this phenomenon - even there everything is silent.

Here absolutely nothing has disappeared, as a matter of fact everything is and will be very much in evidence: the visit of the technician from the Ministry who is in charge of the Gamthog project, the arrival of the Italian doctors for the hospital, the arrival of the rain from June to August, the opening of the Gamthog hospital to receive

patients, the opening of ASIA's new school at the beginning of the next scholastic year, Andrea's visit in September (provided that in the meantime he doesn't disappear, too, something he might like to do even though I think he hasn't had authorization for this yet!), a heavy cold before the winter starts, the usual sudden change of scene that even Hitchcock couldn't have imagined.

In spite of all of this we'll try to survive and I'll tell you a bit about what's going on here: the hospital is almost finished, they are putting the final touches that were left unfinished last year when the cold arrived and the building should be ready in June. When the equipment has been bought, part of it for this year and part for next year, the hospital will be operative.

Phuntsog and myself are looking for sponsors for three small projects which we consider to be particularly important and which are related to the hospital (we don't think it is opportune to involve ASIA which already has too many things to do). The first regards making a large good-quality medicine thangka for the hospital library; the second the construction of a supporting pillar in the center of the inner courtyard of the building which will hold a statue of the Medicine Buddha; the third covering the expenses of inviting some tulku (not including yours truly!), practitioners of chulen and monks particularly linked to the transmission of the teachings of traditional Tibetan medicine, in order to do a practice of "Empowering the Medicine Buddha" on the occasion of the inauguration of the hospital.

In all we will have to invite five or six people, each one accompanied by one or more assistants. The entire ritual will take about a week and we will have to cover the

expenses of travel, food and accommodation as well as giving an offering to the lamas who are invited. We calculated that about two million Italian lire [approximately 1,140 US dollars] are needed for each of these three projects.

There's still lots of work to be done at Gamthog and new financial resources have to be found. To this end we are moving outside the Community, contacting embassies, governments and various organizations. Sooner or later we will see the outcome.

By now the structures of the school and hospital are complete but a greater part of the accommodation for the local doctors, teachers and children who will come to the school from other villages is still lacking. We have started to restructure the crumbling Chinese buildings which we are transforming into elegant Tibetan buildings with delightful rooms in wood which would be the envy of the retreat huts at Merigar.

We are organizing a project to supply the school, hospital and village with water. We are preparing another project to transform some of the Chinese constructions which the village is full of (and which we would like to eliminate completely) into a pharmaceutical factory which will produce traditional Tibetan medicine. Following this a guest house could be opened for Thubten Phuntsog's patients.

Regarding the wider and more ambitious project of the economic development of the territory, we are evaluating the possibility of creating a carpet factory to give work to some of the local women. It is useless to say that in order to accomplish all of this and find the finances that are needed requires an enormous amount of work, but when it's like this there's nothing else to do.

Then in the meantime there are other projects in other zones to prepare above all at Galenting because the moment we get authorization to work we must be ready to start immediately.

Since I left Italy I haven't yet found free time to permit myself a walk or any other type of diversion except for the frequent halts forced on us by our glorious Beijing jeep.

Sometimes we have been outside all night like the time when we came to Lhasa from Chamdo. We spent the entire night on a snowy pass with the temperature at I don't know how many degrees below zero to free the jeep from the snow and break the ice on the places where it couldn't pass.

Life is varied in these parts and something always happens when it shouldn't and when it should, however, it doesn't. Then one day even here, just like on Mount Amiata, everything will disappear - ASIA will disappear (and reappear in some other part of this vast territory), all the problems and confusion that have been created will disappear, even 'that Westerner, the tall one!' will disappear. Perhaps a school, a hospital and something else will remain. Even then the local people may ask if it was all a dream.

They asked me to write something for the 'Merigar Letter' and I've kept my promise and done it taking the opportunity to present the three projects that are important to me.



Shang Shung Institute Medical Program Tsegyalgar 1998

The Tibetan medicine course with Dr. Thupten Phuntsok in Tsegyalgar, announced in the last issue of the Mirror, has been re-scheduled for the fall, 1998. Dr. Phuntsok will be in Conway from August to December, teaching not only on the subject of Tibetan Medicine, but also on Tibetan astrology and history. Various talks and weekends will be offered, as well as the two-week intensive on medicine as previously described. Please call for details.

To contact Shang Shung Institute:
Tel: 413-369-4928, fax: 413-369-4165
Address: PO Box 277, Conway, MA 01341 USA
E-mail: ssiusa@compuserve.com

DZOGCHEN COMMUNITY OF ITALY

MERIGAR 1998

Summer and Autumn

RETREAT WITH CHÖGYAL NAMKHAÏ NORBU RINPOCHE

SECOND SUMMER RETREAT August 14th - 21st

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. During the summer retreats there will be a free child-minding service. Places for children must be reserved at least two weeks before the beginning of the retreat.

SANTI MAHA SANGHA

THIRD LEVEL EXAMINATION August 28th - 30th

FOURTH LEVEL COURSE August 31st - September 4th The costs are 200,000 lire without discounts. Please note the following: In the gar where a fourth level course 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 direct themselves to another gar. For instance, the Base and First Level exams and the related courses of the First and Second Level will take place in Russia in 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 Level will take place at Tsegyalgar in the summer of 1999.

MERIGAR PROGRAM

JULY 31ST-AUGUST 6TH TRAINING COURSE FOR YANTRA YOGA TEACHERS OF THE FIRST LEVEL Held by Fabio Andrico and Laura Evangelisti. The course starts at 10am on July 31st. The cost is Lit. 420,000 without discounts. The course is reserved for advanced practitioners who already teach or intend to teach Yantra Yoga. 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.

JULY 31ST-AUGUST 1ST PRACTICE RETREAT OF THE COMPLETE DANCE OF THE VAJRA

AUGUST 2ND PRACTICE RETREAT OF THE DANCE OF THE THREE VAJRAS

AUGUST 7TH - 13TH DANCE OF THE VAJRA COURSE - FIRST 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 members. Please book before June 30th with a deposit of Lit. 50,000. If there are not a minimum of 15 participants the course will be canceled.

AUGUST 14TH-21ST TEACHING RETREAT WITH CHÖGYAL NAMKHAÏ NORBU (see announcement)

SEPTEMBER 2ND-6TH PRACTICE RETREAT OF THE COMPLETE DANCE OF THE VAJRA

SEPTEMBER 7TH-13TH DANCE OF THE VAJRA COURSE - SECOND 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 members. Please book before July 30th with a deposit of Lit. 50,000. If there are not a minimum of 15 participants the course will be canceled.

SEPTEMBER 20TH PRACTICE RETREAT OF THE DANCE OF THE THREE VAJRAS The practice retreats of the Vajra Dance are free but an offering is requested to contribute to organizational costs. Since there are only 12 places on the Mandala it is indispensable to book a place well in advance. If you are unable to come please cancel your booking as soon as possible. Merigar, 58031 Arcidosso GR, Italy/Tel. 0564 966837, fax 0564 968110 email merigar@dueffe.it



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To Develop Compassion
To Cultivate Wisdom
To Promote Joy



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A Victory for Namgyalgar

by Vicki Forscutt (Namgyalgar Secretary)

Presently as I sit at the computer in my flat, (20km from the Gar); it is raining and very cold. It is now winter and very chilly with snow falling on the mountain ranges inland, from where icy winds blow.

It is a quiet time at Namgyalgar where a small group of practitioners are congregated on and near the land. Our Gekos Federica is away in Italy and will return soon. In her absence Tony Mugg is living on the land, undertaking small projects to improve the surrounds and facilities. At last there is a small water tank connected to the kitchen which relieves us of our dependency upon one of our neighbors for drinkable water, and shelving in the recently constructed tool shed where all sorts of oddities can now be stored. Also the large fallen trees and logs, which were a serious fire hazard, have been removed. Bob de Grandi, Jean, and Antonia, who all live close to the land, are at present doing practice of the Dance in the early mornings in the Gonpa. Alan and Angie, and their three children, are busy settling into the house they have just purchased up the highway from the Gar. Kerrie, our Bookshop Manager, is away for a few weeks.

Though we are few living near the Gar, sometimes Vajra kin visit and stay a few days to help with work and/or do a retreat. And each month nine dedicated Gakyil members gather at the land for weekend meetings which conclude with a communal Ganapuja. As well there are regular practice retreats at the land which this year are mainly focused upon the foundation practices of the Base. Slowly, slowly more people are making a connection with the Gar and contributing their energies in various ways. And this year several people have undertaken personal retreats in Rinpoche's house, now named Gawaling, meaning the place where there is joy.

A most memorable occasion was the Easter weekend in April when some thirty practitioners gathered at the Gar to participate in a very enjoyable and lively practice retreat, which some traveled over 600kms to attend. Tuns of Semdzin practice were alternated with sessions of Karma Yoga, encouraging a sense of integration of practice into daily life and providing everyone with an opportunity to share in the creation and care of Namgyalgar, as well as strengthen Vajra friendships. The collaborative efforts and joyfulness seemed to reiterate the spirit of the summer retreat with Rinpoche earlier in the year.

By the end of the weekend the land looked immaculate and ready for an impending inspection by the local shire council. After 2 years or so of preparation the Development Application of Namgyalgar was about to be lodged and it was important to create a good impression. Imagine the excitement and joy when a few weeks later a letter from the council arrived with official approval of the D.A.! At last proposals for Stage One of developments has been accepted and this means that building permits for projects, such as completion of the Gonpa and construction of showers and toilets, can now be applied for. Furthermore, it is hoped that the current submission for tax deductible donations for building projects will also be approved which will enable funds to be raised so that work can proceed.

The D.A.'s approval is indeed a significant victory for Namgyalgar, and thanks goes to all those people who were involved in its preparation, in particular to Jean Mackintosh and Tony Laurent for their dedication and tireless work. It is a sign that conditions for the Gars manifestation are ripening, most important of which is collaboration and harmony within the community of practitioners, which is the essential ingredient that will ensure Namgyalgar's future.

SMS UPDATE

Information Update on
Santi Maha Sangha

Merigar, 1st June 1998

The list of the practices for the Base of Santi Maha Sangha ends with the phrase: "The best thing would be to complete these practices during the Base Level (i.e. before the Base exam). If this is not possible, in any case it is necessary to have completed them before taking the Third Level exam".

This requirement has changed and is now as follows: "All Base Level practices, if not already completed before the Base exam, must be completed before the First Level examination, except for the Base Level mantra recitation which must be completed before the Third Level exam."

The new Base Level text will not be published before the autumn of 1998 therefore all those wishing to take the next Base Level examination in Tashigar are allowed to study the old texts.

Merigar SMS Coordinator:
Igor Legati

New Gakyils

Argentina

President: Sergio Oliva

Secretary: Alicia Caballero

Te: 54-51- 254020 /253678

Treasurer: Ricardo Sued.

Red Gakyil: Horacio Toledo,
Adriana Battisti, Soledad Suarez

Yellow Gakyil: Luisa Duri.

Griselda Galmez, Ricky Sued

Blue Gakyil: Marisa Alonso, Maria
Amelia Torralba, Nelida Saporiti.

Poland

Daniel Bukowski

Ziemomyslaw Gosciewski
(Director)

Ewa Dolinska

Rafal Borkiewicz

Pawel Poniewski

Dominika Kowalina

Wladyslaw Wielechowski

Wojciech Rewiński

Aleksander Skwara (Vice-Director)

Passages

Married

Tsultrim Allione and David Petit were married after a ten year "engagement" on the 10th of May, 1998 at 4pm at Tara Mandala retreat center, outside of Pagosa Springs in Colorado.

Died

Artur Bialogorski from Reszow, Poland died on June 9th, 1998. He was a student of Buddhism from many years. Artur spent some time with Buddhist practice in a Theravadin monastery in Thailand. He was a student of Rinpoche for many years and followed SMS training. Some time ago Artur had a severe accident and from this moment his health was not very good. Many liked him for his unconventional aura.

Sonja Kogler, the daughter of Ursula Kogler, died in Vienna on Monday, June 29th 1998, after an accident. Sonja was 21 years old. She was one of the children in our Community who grew up with the teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. Her mother Ursula would like to ask everybody who feels connected to the family to do some practice for Sonja.

IN MEMORY OF DAVID RIDER

A musician, composer and member of the Dzogchen Community for many years, David Rider was born and brought up in England, but he later moved to Italy, where he lived in Rome, then near Merigar, and later in Milan.

While living in Italy he played keyboards for a while in a rock band, known as 'The Street' together with other Community members —including Marc and Richard Eagleton and Kevin De Los Casas.

But David was more than just a rock musician: his classical interests and his experimental pieces, and his many collaborations—notably with Roberto Cacciapaglia—were evidence of the breadth of a musical imagination that was not limited to just one form.

His good humor and warm personality, as well as his musician-ship, will be much missed by the many Vajra brothers and sisters who were fortunate enough to count themselves among his friends.

The Community shares with his partner Laura and with David's family in their loss, and joins them in their prayers.

THE TRUE NATURE OF SAMSARA

by John Shane

Not until the wind
had dropped,
not until the sun
had set over the mountain,
not until the phone began to ring,
not until I heard your voice
come in a whisper
over the wires, Jenny - saying
"David died today in London" -
not until those words sank in -
- did I know how much
I loved the way
he held his cigarette -
on the gravel path
in front of the Merigar Gonpa,
that Spring morning
the year before he died
- so tall and still so young, but
stooping in his dark coat
to sip his morning coffee
with his usual mischievous grin,
shoulders hunched,
hair blowing in his face,
waiting for the teachings to begin.
And Rinpoche said
the day that David
passed away:
"You remember
David? David Rider?
We often enjoyed
the music he played
at Merigar for us...
- Now we are all happy
celebrating my safe return -
But David's death
should remind us
When Samsara
is showing us a smiling face,
we should not forget
its real nature."



Issue 8 includes:

The Path is
under your Feet
David Schneider,
Director of Shambhala
Europe

Emotional Intelligence
Daniel Goleman


Tea-time reflections
Dzongsar Khyentse
Rinpoche

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VIEW



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Tsegyalgar Plans Capital Improvements \$25,000 Matching Grant Gives Big Boost to Fundraising



Shang Shung Institute in Conway

G. BALICEK

During the coming year of practice and preparation for the return of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in the summer of 1999, Tsegyalgar plans to make major capital improvements to its main center, the old Conway Grammar School. The school houses offices of the Dzogchen Community in America, the Shang Shung Institute, the editorial offices of *The Mirror*, a bookstore, an extensive library of Dzogchen texts and Rinpoche's teachings, the Vairocana translation project, and the Vajra guild thangka painting studio. Attached to the school is the Gonpa where the Community's practice retreats are held.

The state of physical deterioration of the external structure, if not addressed immediately, will result in much bigger problems and more costly repairs later on. Internal improvements to enhance living spaces for the gekos, other residents and visiting teachers also need to be addressed this year.

The cost of these capital improvements is estimated at \$60,000. The money is over and above what needs to be raised each year to support our ongoing operating expenses. We still need to raise an additional \$30,000 to cover operating expenses until next summer's retreat with Rinpoche, resulting in a total fundraising goal of \$90,000.

In order to raise the \$60,000 needed for the capital improvements, Tsegyalgar has begun a fundraising campaign that will be kicked off at our August practice retreat with Lopon Tenzin Namdak. This fundraising campaign got a big boost when a member of the Community generously offered a \$25,000 matching grant specifically dedicated to the capital improvement initiative. Each dol-

lar we raise up to \$25,000 will be matched by this capital improvement initiative. If we can generate \$25,000 in donations from the members of the Community, we will have a total of \$55,000 toward our goal of \$60,000. This matching grant requires that the funds be raised by the end of September of this year and that the improvements be made before Rinpoche's return in June 1999.

Please consider giving generously to this matching grant for capital improvements for the home of the Dzogchen Community in America. Anyone wishing to make a contribution can do so immediately by sending your contribution to: Dzogchen Community in America, PO Box 277, Conway, MA 01341. Please make checks payable to "Dzogchen Community in America" and note that this is for "Matching Fund". Remember, every dollar you donate will be matched one for one. If you would like to charge your contribution to your Master card or VISA, please call the Secretary's Office at 413-369-4153, or send in the necessary information including the name as it appears on the credit card, the card number, and the expiration date.

In addition, if you have already done so, please consider renewing your membership for 1998 and your annual pledges. We need at least another 100 members to renew at the basic level of \$300 to cover our operating expenses until next June. These memberships and donations are essential for Tsegyalgar to operate until next June.

Send to: Dzogchen Community of America, 18 Schoolhouse Rd., PO Box 277, Conway, MA 01341, USA Tel: 413 369 4153 Fax: 413 369 4165 Email: 74404.1141@compuserve.com

The Tsegyalgar Stupa

by Des Barry

As you ascend from the lake area on the Community land in Buckland, Massachusetts, you follow an avenue beneath the lush green leaves of the maples and birches and the spreading branches of pine and juniper, and you arrive at junction in the woodland path where stands a white sang khang, the holes in its upper dome streaked with soot from smoke offerings. Up hill and to the right, you can follow the way that leads to the Dance Mandala which is the site where Chögyal Namkhai Norbu first dreamt of the Vajra Dance. To your left, the path leads towards the juniper grove where the Community plans to build retreat cabins. Visible through the trees, is a red-roofed structure with carved beams that is built upon a deck, with solid piers fastened to the bedrock below. This is the Guardian cabin where future retreatants will practice offering rituals before beginning their specific practices.

Standing at the junction in the path, directly in front of you, you will see a great hole that has also been excavated down to the bedrock, where a form has been built for shaping a concrete base. Above this hole, four strings cross one another to form the precise square beneath which will be built the foundation for a Stupa at Tsegyalgar.

Since the early Spring, the Community land in Buckland has seen the initiation of these two significant projects that have been almost exclusively been the fruit of the labors of Jim Smith and Joe Zurylo and now in the hot and humid summer at Tsegyalgar the two projects are slowly taking form.

The Stupa Project is being organized chiefly by Jim Smith. He was inspired to take on this responsibility during a fire puja on the Buckland Land that was led some years ago by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. When Jim asked Rinpoche what style Stupa he would like to see built, Rinpoche replied, "Victorious Style".

In all, there are eight main styles of Stupa, and the Victorious Style was said to have originated when Buddha Shakyamuni agreed to extend his life in order to convey more teachings to his disciples for a further three months past the date of when his time had come to pass away. Jim Smith's enthusiasm for the project derives from wanting to coordinate a Community effort dedicating the Stupa to the Vajra Masters long life. Jim's line of thinking was that the greatest respect that one can show to the Teacher and the Teaching is to realize the teaching and to give other people the possibility of doing retreats. The idea is not build a gigantic and glamorous Stupa, but to

build a representation of the transmission of the primordial state in symbolic form as a support for retreatants practice on the land.

As for the actual building of the Stupa, Jim has run into a number of technical problems to surmount. Traditionally, Stupas were built by Tantric practitioners using many elaborate rituals over periods of days. Because this was not possible, Jim asked Rinpoche to do a ritual consecration of the site when Rinpoche was in Tsegyalgar and Jim has since kept in contact in order to follow the principle and unelaborate fulfillment of ritual necessities. Furthermore, Rinpoche sent to Jim packages of consecrated objects which have to be put in various chambers of the Stupa which are constructed as the Stupa rises from its base, to the throne and up to the vase. These symbolic objects include medicines, incense, relics and objects from sacred places from almost every continent.

When Jim was asked what kind of help and participation he would like to see from the Community, he replied that because of the unpredictability of the weather and Jim's many commitments, it is difficult to organize a regular work schedule in which people can participate in the actual building but naturally, if people were inspired to be part of the process they could help out in various ways. The easiest way, of course is financial help. This would enable Jim to hire workers at specific times when labor was necessary and as his time is available to supervise it. Also, one of the chambers of the Stupa has to be filled with tsa-tsa, and these will need to be made by traditional methods with clay and moulds and will need to be made by practitioners. Neil Murray of Tsegyalgar has offered to make a web-site for the Stupa Project where it will be possible to obtain progress information up-dates and requests for help. Until this web-site is available however, the best way to offer support or receive information would be to send donations directly to Tsegyalgar or write or telephone Tsegyalgar and leave a message for Jim Smith.

Jim hopes to have the project built as far as the top of the throne by the time Rinpoche comes in 1999, so that Rinpoche can empower the Vase or dome of the Stupa. If anyone is inspired to contribute to the project or to become involved in it in any way, please contact Jim Smith at Tsegyalgar or send donations. Then, when next we walk up from the lake, along that avenue toward the Mandala and the Guardian Cabin and on our way to doing a practice retreat, there will be, rising among the trees, directly ahead of us, the white dome, the sun, moon and flame of Tsegyalgar's own Victorious Stupa.

French Community is No More a Gypsy Tribe



New French land

L. MAURICE

The French Dzogchen Community will be owner of a land and a house in southern France before the end of June. The project was first encouraged by Rinpoche during the Easter retreat in Merigar, and received overwhelming support (only four "no" votes) from members who had to give individual opinions (no abstentions were allowed) and visit the land within a deadline of two weeks.

The property is isolated, on a small dead-end road, and extends over 9ha between 400m and 600m in altitude on the southern slope of a valley opened widely toward the west, in the wonderful Cevennes, a zone of low mountains, 60 kms north of Mediterranean sea, 1 hour from the Montpellier International Airport.

Beautiful trees adorn this gorgeous land: acacia, cherries, lime trees, figs, walnut, hazelnut, plums, apples, chestnut, olive, vine, green oaks and many others still to discover.

The buildings are in perfect shape with a big stone house for collective lodging with 8 rooms, plus terraces over the valley and two great cellars carved in the rock. There is also a small house, two stories of 25.2m each, appropriate for individual retreats.

The land provides interesting surfaces for building a structure for Dance and Yantra Yoga courses, as well as many hidden places for additional retreat huts. Water is provided through two sources which give birth to a stream with waterfalls.

The French Community is really happy to offer a new retreat center to the international Community.

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Chorten of the Elightened State

continued from page 13

hand he holds a bunch of peacock feathers which he moves with slow gestures that seem like a dance, the auspicious rice flies through the air, an orange *khadar* floats towards the statue of Buddha. A sudden flapping of prayer flags announces a stronger gust of wind which deposits it on the edge of the large upper step called the "Great Lotus"

His Holiness's elderly master of rituals approaches Nyida, the Tibetan doctor who is adding sang to the fire, and whispers something to him. I notice Nyida looking for me with his eyes and then he approaches me, he has to go up and put the Kadag in the Buddha niche. So we hurry off to get a ladder which has been left nearby just in case of need. It is a beautiful sight. Nyida picks up the Kadag, unravels it and holds it open, his hands at the

sides of his body at the level of his heart, he asks the master of rituals for clarifications. He is answered from below. He goes to the statue and encircles the base of it with the Kadag. This is how the ceremony ends.

Maybe I am over optimistic but I couldn't help gathering a very favorable omen from that image. On the new great Chorten of Merigar a young Tibetan, born and raised in Tibet is offering an orange Kadag at the feet of Buddha Sakyamuni. May the Sublime Teaching spread in every direction. Maybe, despite the atrocious adversities of this century, the Tibetan people with their precious culture will succeed in maintaining their identity.

Maybe, in this way, all beings will have more possibility to one day meet with a master able to indicate to them the way which liberates from suffering, thus they will be able to walk towards the Realization of the "Enlightened State of the Mind."

Translated by Nina Robinson

Dzogchen Retreat Place: 'Kunselling'

by Julia Lawless

Good news! Finally, after seven months of discussions and meetings, the planning application for our retreat place near Hay-on-wye in Wales has been accepted. Although there are several conditions attached to the planning consent to convert the barn and outbuilding at Llwydallt (meaning 'Grey Hill') into a meditation / workshop space and dormitories, the final terms are a long way from those which were being proposed at the time of the last AGM. It was decided at this meeting, about one month ago, that the types of limitations which were being suggested by the Highways and Planning Departments were unacceptable to the Community and that we should defer our application and seek specialized legal advice. To meet this need, a planning consultant was employed by the Community to deal with our application and provide advice on how to proceed. He was able to quickly access a great deal of information about the specific nature of the objections which were being raised and give legal backing to our case, which immediately put us in a much stronger negotiating position. After further discussions, the final planning meeting was held on 10th June, the day of Buddha's Parinirvana, when the application was finally passed.

The main conditions attached to our planning consent relate to the amount of public workshops which we are able to hold in the barn each year and the number of people who can attend. As it stands at the moment, we are allowed to run 12 public workshops a year (of up to one week in duration) with a maximum of 15 people, excluding the course leaders. These figures can however

be extended at a later date should the need arise. This is distinct from the activities of the Community itself and the use of the farmhouse as a Retreat Center in its own right. The other conditions attached to the planning consent relate to specific building regulations and highway improvements. With regard to the latter, we have agreed to tarmac over two existing passing places on the lane leading up to the property and to maintain the hedges at the junction at the end of the road to ensure visibility in both directions. These improvements need to be executed before any building work can take place. Hopefully most of the conversion will be done before Chögyal Namkhai Norbu arrives at the end of October.

As you will see from the title of this short report, Rinpoche has changed the name of the land from 'Kundrolling' to 'Kunselling'. He gave Judy the new name in Poland recently, saying that we do not want to lose this place as we did the last one. The new name, roughly translated, means 'the place of eternal clarity' or 'all clear'!

Finally, I would just like to say that we certainly would not have been successful with our planning application if it had not been for the support of the people who live near Kunselling, especially the Davies family who live in the farm leading up to our property. I think this is important to keep in mind as we start to use the place and make contact with members of the local community at large. In the long term, the type of image which we create for ourselves now, will largely determine what will be possible in the future.

CHÖGYAL NAMKHAÏ NORBU TO GIVE TEACHINGS IN THE UK Oct. 30 - Nov. 1, 1998

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu will give teachings from Friday October 30th until Sunday November 1st 1998 at Clyro Court, Clyro, Hay on Wye. This is a listed building with large accommodation resources and surrounding land. It is located several miles from the UK communities recently acquired land. Those wishing to come to this retreat should contact:

Peter White (0044) (0)171 251 3798 in order to book and reserve accommodation. Since retreat accommodation is expected to be over-subscribed, it is advised to make a reservation as soon as possible.

Auschwitz, Poland

A visit to a place of unfathomable suffering
with a being of infinite compassion

by Naomi Zeitz



The author in Auschwitz

M. FAIR

A remarkable part of the visit to Auschwitz with Rinpoche and Rosa was witnessing the immense span of human capacity exemplified by two vast ends of a spectrum: the tremendous calculated brutality and cruelty of the Nazis in their determined campaign to totally exterminate unwanted human elements of society contrasted by the clearly strong discomfort and profound compassion of one unassuming Tibetan master as he traveled from Block to Block, each filled with the enormity of the horror of the holocaust, and with an almost childlike awe and wonder, marveling at and moved by the potential for human despair and suffering.

There were glass cases filled with hair, prosthetic devices, eyeglasses, hairbrushes, shaving brushes, dolls, empty canisters of gas used to execute mass exterminations of thousands of people at one time, including children, and on and on. Everything removed from the "prisoners" was utilitarian, hair was woven into blankets, skin made into soap, gold teeth sold, and on and on. The walls were lined with photos of the inmates in their now so familiar striped uniforms and marked with the dates of their often very short life spans within the camps that generally amounted to no more than months. The faces were agonized and emaciated. Mothers, children, brothers, sisters, fathers, families separated and driven to the maximum of human despair and suffering.

There were photos and written documentation everywhere. It was amazing to me that the Nazis felt so sure of their success that they had no fear or shame of documenting in great detail all the insanity that transpired. It was yet another indication of a huge, all encompassing collective madness.

As a Jew, going to Auschwitz was a powerful experience and I was very grateful to have had the opportunity to go with Rinpoche and Rosa. Rosa very sweetly grabbed my hand and held tight as we wandered in the corridors of this living hell. Rosa also in her clarity and kindness had the foresight to bring flowers; wonderful smelling freesias that we placed in memory of the terrible atrocities we as humans committed against each other in the name of social progress and political ideology.

In some ways Auschwitz has a very strange quality. The blocks of barracks and grounds that were the site of such unimaginable activities have been cleaned up and manicured like a park. As you arrive you see busloads of tourists and school outings of children and concession stands. For me this was all a bit incongruous. You purchase entry tickets and begin the walk into the dimension of pain. There is a "welcome" gate in the front made of iron and inscribed with the phrase in German: "Work will set you free".

A small group of us walked with Rinpoche and Rosa from Block to Block, looking and reading and feeling the sensation of disbelief and incredulity at what we saw. How was this possible? What could have happened to the human spirit and mind that could produce this level of brutality?

By the time we reached Block 11 - the death Block, as it was known, where you were sent for a guaranteed death, either quick by bullet or hanging or a slow, solitary death by starvation in a grim small cell below - we had some awareness of what it must have been like to be in Auschwitz. In the front entry rooms were judgment tables where a group of 6 or 7 Nazis would sit and determine the fate, at least the type of fate, that for many at this point would almost seem a welcome relief to the unending days and months of torture. In this Block one could smell death. In this Block there was a strong sensation of the reality of Auschwitz. It is here that there is the wall where prisoners were executed by guns or hung in the courtyard of death now filled with flowers and grief.

When we sat together at the end of our tour there was a kind of silence and introspection; people shared their experiences a bit although words felt very limiting. Rinpoche spoke a bit about the great danger of political identification and ideology and how this is an extreme example of fanaticism taken to its ultimate outcome. I asked him about the collective karma of the Jews, and if that was what created this situation and he replied, "We all have a collective karma, all people."

Traveling to Auschwitz with Rinpoche was a gift of healing. Every Jew carries these wounds, as does all humanity. I am thankful to have had this opportunity and do my best to share it with the Community.

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Life's Little Heartfelt Teachings

by Liz Granger

Sometimes it is the ordinary moments of daily life which touch the heart with the very essence of the teaching which we follow and wish to realize. We read many sacred texts with detailed analysis on such subjects as the four noble truths and we can understand and accept them in an intellectual way but basically a mental concept remains simply that which it is. It is difficult to experience the real meaning simply working with the mind. Life often has its own particular method to give a profound teaching beyond words and concepts and with a poignancy and depth that are hard to match in written form.

I, too, received another of life's little heartfelt teachings recently which became, I believe, a teaching for all those involved in this episode.

My story starts in the springtime of 1997 when I answered the telephone of the Istituto Shang Shung at Merigar. The caller was a lady from Milan who had seen a television program about Tibetan medicine and was urgently looking for an almost 'miraculous' cure for her teenage daughter in the later phase of leukemia. Somehow hunting through telephone directories and making a lot of inquiries she had finally discovered our phone number.

She told me that her daughter had been diagnosed with the illness a few years earlier, undergone chemotherapy and appeared to have been cured. Then the cruel return of the leukemia, the impossibility of a bone marrow transplant and the helplessness of Western medicine to cope with this advanced stage of the illness. Refusing to give up hope and searching for the strength and courage to carry both her daughter and herself along the desperate path in front of them, Mrs. C. turned to what was to her an unknown possibility, something in which she could put her trust and faith. I don't know if she really believed that Tibetan medicine would save her daughter but her determination to arrive at that goal was paramount.

I was very moved, even upset, as I spoke to her that first time. Moved by her situation because I am a mother too but also by her cheerful strength and dignity in the face of the situation. My knowledge of illness is scant but it seemed quite obvious that there was little that could be done to restore her child to health, even medical experts had told her there was now little that could be done. But if she wanted to continue her battle with the disease then I wished to give her another weapon with which to fight which was little more than a type of solidarity or support in the face of overwhelming odds.

Our telephone contact became more frequent as I hunted here and there for the possibility for her to take her daughter to visit a Tibetan doctor in Europe and each time we spoke she gradually told me the story of her daughter's illness. At the beginning of the summer I found out that a well-known Tibetan doctor would be visiting Switzerland in July which would not be too far for Mrs. C and her daughter to visit.

When I spoke to her this time I felt positive, even optimistic because the doctor would be within reach and finally she would be able to have her daughter treated by Tibetan medicine. It seemed that we were close to our goal of the last few weeks. However, this was a moment when she had entirely given up all hope and lost all her strength. In a quiet subdued voice she kindly thanked me for all my help but said the doctors had given her daughter little time to live and that her daughter herself was too weak to move. She seemed to have finally resigned herself to the illness and to its imminent outcome. Her defeat left me without words as I tried to reply to her over the phone. Her defeat was mine and I could feel her resignation and sadness like a weight with each breath and indeed my tears choked my reply. And I thought she had given up the struggle.

A couple of weeks later she called me once again, this time with renewed hope and optimism, and asked me for the information about the doctor. She felt that she could not give up hope because her hope was also her daughter's. Why is it that sometimes we do not pronounce a word? A word like defeat, hopelessness, death. It is almost as if by not saying it, by ignoring it, it will not become part of our reality. And so we kept this secret, not even whispering it or hinting at it.

At the end of our conversation I told her that I would soon be leaving for India for a few weeks and I hoped that she and her daughter would be able to meet the Tibetan doctor. She thanked me for my help and said that if she was ever in the area of Merigar she would like to meet me.

Our communication ceased when I left for the East and weeks of travel and pilgrimage. Months passed. It was now the following spring.

One Sunday morning the phone rang at home—a woman's voice asked me if I remembered her. It was Mrs. C. once again. Surprised almost beyond words I asked where she was calling from and she replied that she was just down the road. I rushed down in the spring rain to meet her—she was with her husband and younger daughter—and I brought them home. This was the first time we had seen each other after months of existing as nothing other than two voices of hope and fear over the phone. Over cups of coffee she gradually unfolded the story of her daughter's passing away, just a few days after meeting the doctor.

We sat and talked about her daughter, her studies at school, her smile, her courage, her life and death, almost as if we were two old friends. And I discovered that this thin line of communication we had shared had been more than simply an exchange of information. In some way I believe I had served as a means to give her a little hope and faith to face her situation while she unintentionally had passed on her sorrow and despair for me to work with which came to be a great teaching for me.

She was serene yet sad. She had finally accepted the inevitable, almost without bitterness.

The following day she and her family came to visit Merigar and in particular the Gonpa. I was happy that they were able to have contact with our sacred place and hope that it will be a positive cause for them in the future. Mrs. C. left me one of the last poems that her daughter Gaia wrote which I have translated.

Death, a leap into the truth,
into reason

Death, a deceptive word to
describe deliverance, freedom,
peace and tranquillity

Death, just a word with a
beneficent yet frightening
meaning

Death, deliverance from such an
unreal world, deceptive tyrant

Death Joy.

Great Masters

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southwestern Tibet. His fifth accomplishment is the construction of stupas and other auspicious structures on "key points" of Tibet's geography: this act is also primarily of political significance, in that the stupas so placed are believed to avert border wars with foreign invaders.

Thang-stong rGyal-po's five accomplishments were singled out by the tradition for their political and religious importance, but for our present purpose these acts also say much about Thang-stong as artist. In particular, his "auspicious structures" number, according to his biography, hundreds of large metal statues and small statues made of precious materials, approximately 5,000 terra-cotta images, innumerable cloth banners, 111 stupas, and 120 assembly halls and temples. Evidently Thang-stong was drawn to art construction at an early age, when he participated in the erecting of the rGyang 'Bum-mo-che stupa sponsored by Sa-skya bDag-chen bSod-nams bKra-shis. The death of his mother was the first occasion for his own construction of Buddhist images, when he made memorial stupas, paintings of the eight Tathagatas, and had scriptures written out in gold ink. The major inspiration for the extensive artistic endeavors that occupied his later years is traced to his meeting with three girls, i.e. three dakinis, who presented him with "luminous relics of the Buddha and seven cut turquoises in various shapes," and exhorted him to make statues from precious materials. It seems that such jeweled images were unknown at the time, and the craftsmen Thang-stong approached refused the commission. But Thang-stong was undaunted, and insisted that they had only to apply their techniques of jewelry making to a larger surface. After they had constructed the basic structure of a Vajradhara in silver, it was Thang-stong himself who cut and inlaid the first jewels. He later is said to have commissioned craftsmen to make a Medicine Buddha, an Amoghasiddhi and a Tara, all of turquoise, several Avalokitesvara images of conch; a coral Amitabha and Amitayus, a gold Manjusri and others. At least some of Thang-stong's jeweled statues were still to be seen at lCags-po-ri by mKhyen-brtse Rinpoche in the nineteenth century.

The inspiration for Thang-stong's stupa building is traced to a vision he had as a youth of the Indian siddhas Savari and Kukuri-pa at the island of Zangs-gling. They showed him a stupa of the bkra - shis sgo-mangs type and initiated him into the secrets of constructing others of that style. Thang-stong's erection of the large bkra - shis sgo-mangs Stupa at Ri-bo-che was begun years later, in 1449. The project took him over seven years, and entailed, among other things, a battle between his workers and monks from Ngam-ring, an uprising of his own monk laborers, and numerous physical engineering difficulties. His biography also mentions his construction of a stupa at Ba-ru rNam-tshal in Kong-po; the bZlam-rtse stupa at Pa-rgo, Bhutan, built to subdue the local earth-god and to eliminate leprosy; a stupa at Dar-rtse-mdo that would prevent earthquakes; and another at 'Jad-bo-

dong in gTsang.

Although Thang-stong's biography makes no explicit reference to his founding of a dramatic tradition, many of the incidents related therein reveal his natural affinities with the performing arts. On the most general level, there is a recurring theme of improvisation, a flexibility of approach that allowed participation in any situation in order to turn the people involved to the Dharma. Of course, the use of unconventional techniques to teach sentient beings is not unique to Thang-stong rGyal-po: the notion of 'skillful means' (*thabs*) is one of the basic principles of the enlightened actions of the bodhisattva according to Mahayana Buddhism. Even the deeds of Buddha Sakyamuni, as related in the Mahayana tradition, are couched in the phraseology of performance, e.g. "he demonstrated (*btsan*) taking birth in his mother's womb," "he demonstrated the act of excelling at school and in sports," "he demonstrated becoming enlightened," etc. In other words, the Buddhist sage does not function out of his own needs; rather, his acts are a show, especially tailored to produce a growth of wisdom and compassion in others. That the internal motivation for a sage's acts may not be apparent at face value is based on the fundamental Buddhist notion that worldly phenomena are mind-made and illusory. Thus all may not be what it seems.

Indeed, Thang-stong rGyal-po's life was filled with incidents epitomizing the insubstantiality and relativity of appearance and identity. A rather humorous thread running through his biography concerns the many changes, even as compared to most Tibetans, in his own personal name. At birth he was called Glorious Wrath (Khro-bo dPal-ldan), an innocent enough name in the Tibetan parlance. Upon entering the path of Dharma his name was changed, optimistically, to Lion of Discipline (br'Tson-'grus Seng-ge). But soon the young disciplined lion was dubbed Crazy Discipline (br'Tson-'grus sMyon-pa), because, as his biography states, "of the special realization that was born within him, causing...his behavior to become like that of an elephant crazed from drink." When it seemed he was ready for full ordination, his teacher again renamed him as Good Discipline (br'Tson-'grus bZang-po). Later, when he had entered the tantric path and was engaged in serious meditation on the sGyas-sde Plain, five dakinis playfully gave him five more names, this time reflecting his full transcendence of all naive dualism.

Another theme is the situation in which different individuals saw Thang-stong differently, recounted several times in his biography to illustrate agility with which he could change from one role to another. For example, three travelers arrived from Khams: one perceived him as being about 25 years old, one as being about 40, and one saw him as an old man. Again, Thang-stong was chanting *manis*, but the five students present each heard him chanting, rather, the mantra that they had been practicing. Near the end of his life, six artists were summoned to make a statue of Thang-stong, but their finished images looked radically different from one another.

For those who understood the nature of Thang-stong's teaching

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WHEN PUSH COMES TO SHOVE

(Practice In A Moment of Crisis)

by John Shane



Looking out the window of the plane I could see nothing but clouds.

There was no sign of the ocean, and none of the usual breathtaking views of the small patch of green amidst the turquoise waters that I knew from past flights to Bermuda should by now be gradually growing larger as we drew closer to it.

Where was the island that has been my family's home these last four years?

Roads, houses, hotels and beaches, palm and cedar trees, fields, cars and boats, even the immense ocean itself all seemed to have disappeared leaving only a swirling haze.

We were two hours out of New York City, and the Continental Airlines Boeing 737 was beginning its descent.

But where was the island? It seemed to have mysteriously disappeared.

The Captain's gravelly voice came over the speakers calmly telling us to fasten our seat belts and prepare for a bumpy landing.

But what was he going to land on? There seemed to be nothing but clouds all around, above and below us.

Rain began to hammer against the scratched plastic of the window pane beside my seat. I tried to make out where we were in relation to the island, but I couldn't see a thing. I strained my eyes to see the ocean, but there were only clouds.

Bermuda is the highest part of a coral atoll that sits atop the rim of the cone of an extinct volcano that rose out of the ocean floor many thousands of years ago. In shape, seen from the air, the island has the form of a giant fish hook, a sort of distorted half circle - the remnants of the volcano's crater - a sweeping curve of lush semi-tropical land that has no mountains, rivers or lakes, and this curving form emerges from the water as the peak of a vast plateau of underwater coral reefs.

So as we continued our descent I was expecting to see the familiar expanse of darker, shallower water over the reefs that signals that the plane is getting close to the island. But there was nothing to be seen in any direction. We were still entirely wrapped in a swirling white shroud that whipped around the silver wings of the aircraft and poured away behind us.

The plane suddenly bucked and veered, and seemed to stagger in the air.

The old black Bermudian lady in the seat next to me gripped my arm with a trembling hand. I turned towards her, and she stared at me wide-eyed and panic-stricken, her mouth hanging open, tears running down her cheeks.

"O Jesus!" she groaned, as a baby somewhere further back in the cabin began to howl.

I patted her hand reassuringly, and smiled as best as I could, leaving my hand on top of her tightly clenched fingers. She seemed calmed by my touch, and loosened her grip on my arm.

The plane gave another sickening lurch. Somewhere behind us an overhead locker opened and something fell out. Someone shouted for the flight attendant. I looked away from the old lady's face and out the window again: there was nothing to see except the same swirling white mist in every direction.

The plane shuddered violently

and shook in the air like a wet bird, and I thought: Is this it? Is this the way I'm going to die, strapped into a seat like a small child in a push chair, hand in hand with someone I don't even know?

I have to admit that the general stress associated with air travel gets to me in ways that it didn't used to. Is this part of what getting older is all about, as your body has more miles on the clock? That doesn't seem to be enough of an explanation.

It's easy to say that attachment is the cause of this tension: attachment to the family, to the wife and kids, attachment to all that I have going in my life. And it's true that I didn't used to have so much to lose. So maybe that's part of it. I don't know. But I think there's more to it than that. There are so many reasons that we are afraid of dying, even when we know all the theory about the process of death and the stages of bardo and rebirth.

When push comes to shove, when the chips are down, how much of the theory have you brought into your life?

As the plane rocked from side to side ominously creaking and groaning speeding downward into the swirling nothingness below us, I thought of my wife and children, waiting for me with the car down there somewhere beyond all that cloud, and I wondered if I would I ever see them again.

I could imagine the expectant faces of Jessie and Susannah, turned up to look for the plane, waiting to see it come down the runway, waiting for daddy to come home with a few small presents as usual. Would they be worried by the cloud covering the whole island? I was sure Jo would be concerned that the plane was so late.

I found myself wondering: have I been a good husband, a good father? How do you measure such things? I seemed only to be able to think of my failings, my imperfections, all the ways I wasn't good enough. I remembered that in the Buddhist Sutras it says that, when facing death, you should bring to mind all the positive things you have done in your life, but when I thought of Rinpoche and his teachings, there too, it was all the ways in which I haven't measured up that immediately came into my mind.

Then I thought how lucky I was to have a wife and family, especially a wonderful wife like Jo, and wonderful children like Susannah and Jessie. And to have actually met Rinpoche and the teachings at all - that was surely a great wonder.

With the old lady's hand still tight on my arm and the sound of the crying baby in my ears, I took a deep breath and then another, and settled back into my seat.

The stress of packing, the rush to get to the airport in New York that morning, the taxi ride through the traffic, the security checks, the passport control, the sickening jolting of the plane, all fell away, as I fixed my

gaze in space, and relaxed.

I tried to visualize the Refuge Tree, but Jo's face kept coming into my mind. I didn't care. I fixed my attention on her face smiling at me, and felt her love reach me. Guru Yoga with your wife's face? Well, why not? Surely it's bringing oneself into a state of pure presence, into the non-dual state, that matters, rather than which visualized form you use to bring yourself into that state...

Anyway, without making any excuses for myself, and without wanting to detract from the importance of the traditional forms of the practice, I have to say that my improvised visualization - using what came most easily to me in a difficult moment - worked.

As love filled me, replacing my fear, I let the loving feeling flow out to include everyone else on the plane, and from there to all the people of the island somewhere below, and beyond that to all the creatures of the ocean, reaching out towards New York City, out from there into the United States of America, spreading and spreading until it was going beyond countries, out to the whole world, out into endless space.

I realized recently that Jo has been with me for longer than she was with her mother and father - we've been an 'item' now for twenty two years. After all that time, after two kids, after so many projects and so many journeys together, there's such a deep bond, such a strong connection.

And yet relationships are so complex. That's obviously one reason why a more neutral form, such as a Buddha image, the form of a deity, or the letter 'A', is usually used as an object of meditative concentration, rather than something as intimate as the face of one's partner.

There's so much emotional baggage, so much 'stuff' bound up in relationships under the heading of the word 'love' that all the struggles and neurotic conflicts of a lifetime can sometimes seem to be crowding around your interactions with the person who cares most deeply for you in the world, and for whom you care the most.

But at times, from a practitioner's point of view, that seems to be precisely the point of the relationship.

When someone knows you deeply, knows all your faults and failings, all your little evasions and subterfuges, they are better equipped to be a compassionate mirror to you - revealing your distortions in a loving way. And then there's the healing, too, of being fully seen - and seen through - and yet still loved, despite, or even, perhaps, because of all your faults and failings. That's very powerful.

But, even having said all that - even having acknowledged the powerful mirroring that takes place in a long-term relationship - sometimes the partners have to get away from each other to re-discover who they are as individuals, rather than parts of a couple, or parts of a fami-

ly. It seems at such times that the bond between a couple can be strengthened, not weakened, as Rinpoche often says, by 'giving oneself and one's partner space'.

Dependency and the need for independence, insecurity and the need for space, projection and counter-projection, are all entwined in our relationships with our life-partners, and the word 'love' is so cheaply used nowadays in the media that the real thing is that much harder to define. What do we mean when we say we 'love' someone? It certainly must mean more than a mere possessive attachment, more than a relationship used just to confirm our sense of ourselves.

The truth is, even in relation to the Master, who has such compassion for us and such profound knowledge, things are not always as simple as we would like them to be.

Why are we so complicated? When we speak of 'my' Master, 'my' teacher, and so on, there too, just as when we speak of 'my wife' or 'my kids', it's so easy to remain stuck at the level of closing ourselves up through defining ourselves in terms of the 'other', rather than having the confidence to relax into the openness that is the basis of real relationship - and of our own true nature.

Do I actually understand the meaning of this 'real relationship' myself?

I don't know.

But, when push came to shove on a plane that seemed likely to crash, facing possible fiery extinction hand in hand with a total stranger old enough to be my mother - as I sailed blindly through the clouds, unable to see anything at all

our of my window, strapped into my baby chair of a plane seat, all I know is that, as I concentrated on the image of my wife's face - I was filled with a warm feeling that spread out towards the whole universe and removed my anxiety. And then it seemed there wasn't a separate 'me' there to die.

At that moment the plane landed with a thud and a scream of tires, and the cloud lifted so that, for a few seconds, we could see the runway hurtling past us before the mist closed around us again.

When the plane finally came to a standstill, we sat in the damp cloud in silence for at least a minute before anyone spoke.

Then the Captain's voice came over the loudspeaker with the usual 'Welcome to Bermuda' on behalf of the airline, to which he added a matter-of-fact apology for the stormy conditions, and everyone breathed a sigh of relief. The black lady let go of my arm and began to laugh, the tears still wet on her cheeks.

And we sat there waiting.

A pounding tropical storm of driving rain beat on the roof of the plane in an incessant torrent that came down so heavily that we had to wait for half an hour before we were allowed to disembark and walk the few meters into the arrival hall.

Then there was a magnificent rainbow, arcing above the ocean, and as we filed through Customs and Immigration the sun began to heat up the airport carparks and the wet roads, so that pretty soon steam was rising from the warming tarmac.

The humidity soared, and even just sitting on a bench outside the airport, the taxi drivers in their cotton shirts and Bermuda shorts began to sweat profusely, mopping their brows with handkerchiefs as they waited for passengers.

And there were Jo, Jessie and Susannah, waiting for me at the gate.

No more thought about relationships - just hugs and kisses, and that good, warm feeling of coming home.

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