

# THE MIRROR

The International Newspaper of the Dzog-chen Community

Volume 1

10 AGOSTO  
Issue 9, June 1991

## USA

### California

Largest display of Tibetan Art ever exhibited at the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco and a photo exhibit of Fosco Maraini  
Page 6



### Conway

Sweat lodge  
Page 11

### New York

Children's class on Buddhism  
Page 14

## USSR

### Ulan Ude, Buryatia

The Dalai Lama performs a religious ceremony for 20,000 people for the 250th birthday of the recognition of Buddhism as a state religion.  
Page 7

### Lithuania

Yantra Yoga in Riga  
Page 5

### Russia

Fabio reads the Mirror in Moscow  
Page 5

In St. Petersburg, a Ganapuja in Buryatian style of the Dandaron tradition  
Page 7

## FRANCE

How to do a Yan tig retreat in Plouray Page 5

## SPAIN

Retreat with Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche in September Page 2

## GERMANY

New Gakyil in Germany Page 7  
Norbu Rinpoche's schedule Page 3

## AUSTRIA

New Austrian Gakyil Page 6

## ITALY

10th Anniversary of Merigar on the 16th of August and on the 17th a Children's Day Page 7

## SOUTH AMERICA

A letter from Venezuela: translation problems for Tibetologists  
Page 15

## NEW ZEALAND

A letter from Alice Presley about her school in Bodgaya Page 15

## AUTRALIA

Fire at the Wat page 6

## ENGLAND

Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts begins its second world tour  
Page 4

## The cause of wealth

"If you don't give something to make something grow, nothing will grow. If you don't create a cause an effect cannot exist. Remember what the cause, is of wealth and abundance - it is generosity."

Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche on generosity.  
Page 2



The Judlen practice of the Dakini Mandarava  
Page 7

## Questions and answers

I want a child. What should all the considerations involved be?  
Page 16

## TIBETAN ASTROLOGY

The astrology of the elements continues in this issue. Now the elements in one's personal astrological chart are based on one's year of birth; with a way of calculating the fortune and the universal energy.  
Page 13

## Ten Years of a Gar

The land for the first western gar, Merigar, was found ten years ago near Monte Amiata, a forest clad mountain, in the heart of Tuscany.

Norbu Rinpoche, Rosa Namkhai and their children, Yeshe and Yuchen, were visiting Tuscany and Laura Berle Albini was there, as well, to tell the story.

Page 7

## THE TIME OF BUILDING

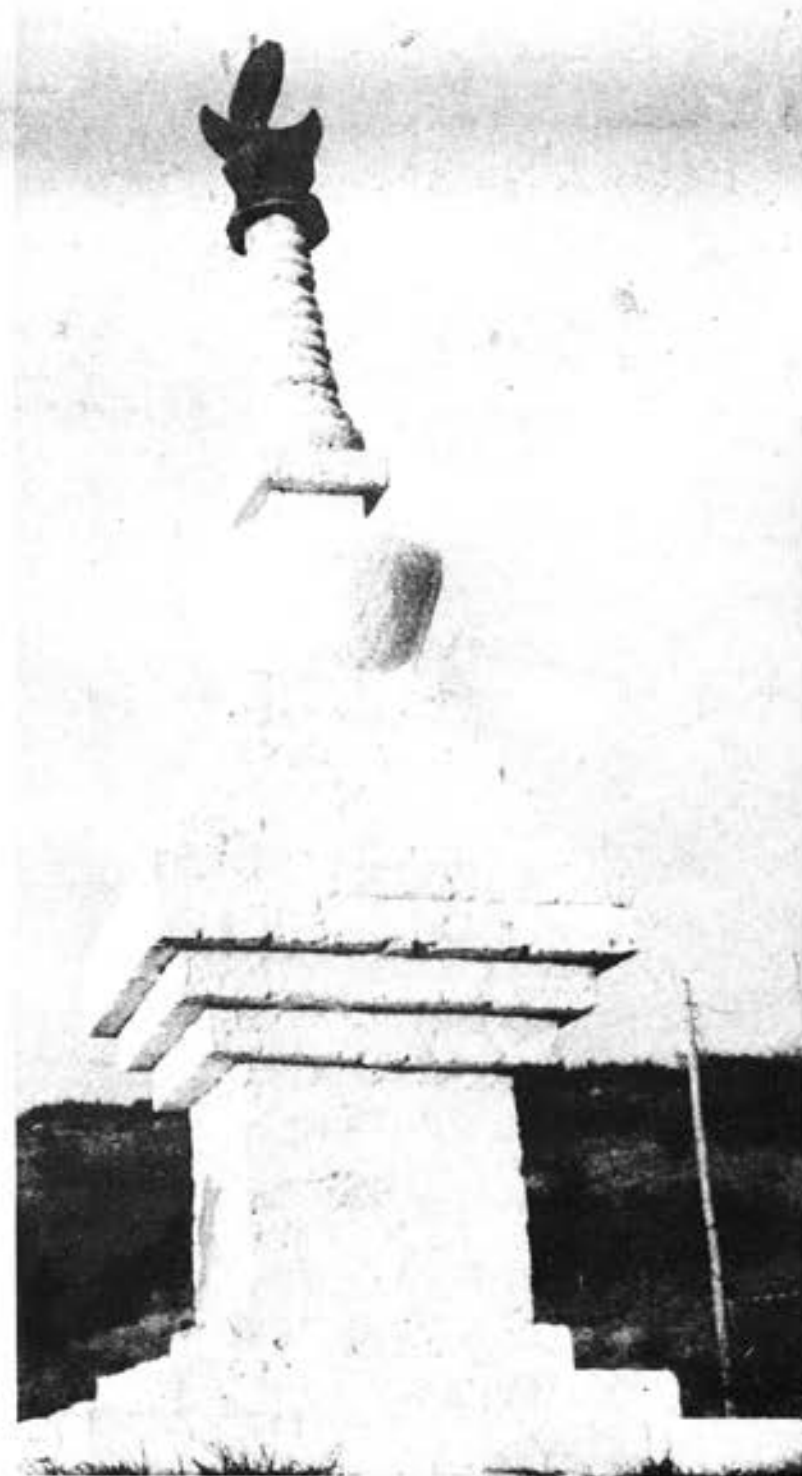
The pioneer years from the first retreat on the Community's land have been times of growth and of building.

The very small number of people who settled around Merigar has grown to be over a hundred.

In the beginning the group of children consisted of Tai, Viola,

Nicola and Marius; now it has more than 30 energetic members. There have been more than 50 teaching and practice retreats on the land. Since the visit of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 1989, they have been held in the spacious Gonpa.

Pages 8-9



Part of a teaching given by Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche during the initiation of the Long Life practice of Dakini Mandarava at Merigar.

When you receive an initiation, the first thing you do is the offering of the mandala. This is done as a demonstration of your participation and your desire to receive the initiation as well as your recognition of the value of the teachings, because as you know, they are of great value. I give the transmission because I consider that you are interested; it is not that I am doing it as a duty or in order to gain anything. You should understand that you have the intention to receive the teaching and that your participation is extremely important. That is why you make this symbolic offering which is called "The Offering of the Mandala". "Mandala" means the universe for each individual: first our body, voice and mind and then all of our circumstances and possessions. What does it mean when a person offers all of these? It means that person knows the value of the teaching and how to value it, and knows the value of realisation. Therefore one must have this principle.

You should not think that receiving the teachings is like going to a shop to buy something. I have now been living in the West for longer than I lived in Tibet but I still have not really understood western people's attitude to this. I know very well the character of Tibetans and their ideas and attitudes in relation to the teachings. I know that Tibetans are a bit ignorant. I don't mean Tibetan masters, but the people who are ignorant because they lack education and possibilities. The western world is the opposite, everyone receives an education and is intelligent. But their intelligence towards the teachings seems a bit strange to me, because they don't understand the value of the teachings and they don't give value to the teachings. It is just

## The cause of wealth is generosity



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as if they were buying something. I'll give a very simple example. If someone is giving a teaching and says you should pay 300 dollars for it, everyone rushes to get it and feels happy to pay the 300 dollars, because they then understand it is valuable. But if someone kindly and generously tries to make them understand how to reawaken, they don't value it at all. People don't understand that even making a small offering is also a benefit. Maybe people think we do this because the community doesn't want to spend money. Take the example of the Ganapuja. They seem to think a Ganapuja is like being invited to have a good dinner with plenty to eat and drink and then going home contented. But it doesn't work like that. The Ganapuja and offerings for the community and the offering of the mandala all have the same principle.

If you don't give something to make something grow, nothing will grow. If you don't create a cause an effect cannot exist. Remember what the cause is of wealth and abundance - it is generosity. Generosity is itself the cause of wealth. Those who are miserly create the cause of poverty. People who are avaricious all their lives will never be able to enjoy what they have accumulated. There's a saying in Tibet about some little animals called "avra" which are as small as mice. This little animal works hard all summer to pile up a heap of grass and hide it behind a rock. He is so worried about piling up this grass that even though there's plenty to eat in the summer he eats very little and gets very thin. By the autumn he has a good heap of grass and thinks that one day he'll enjoy eating it. But then suddenly a cow or a yak comes along and takes two

mouthfuls and it's all gone. That is the same as the conclusion of the life of a miser. He never creates wealth. Instead, if someone knows how to construct the field of the cause of wealth there is also the possibility of the result. That is why the Sutra teachings first of all talk a lot about generosity. They consider that those who have nothing to eat or drink are in need, and that understanding this, one manifests one's generosity and thereby creates a positive cause which has its consequences. That is why when we do a Ganapuja, we say you should try to make an offering, not just to make a meal for yourself, but offering to others. This is an opportunity to create a cause of merit. Also everyone in the community is a practitioner. If you cannot create a cause of merit by furthering the practice and the teachings, how can you create a cause for merit? That is

why I, with my awareness, try to contribute as much as possible both with my energy and also economically. I do all I can. You shouldn't just think of it as doing a duty or as something you are obliged to do. It is important to understand it with your awareness. Tibetans understand it very well. Many Tibetans who have nothing to eat and not enough money to live on get work breaking rocks to earn a little money and part of what they earn they give to the monks to make prayers and build monasteries and so on. You might think they are stupid, but the truth is they are not stupid, they see more than we see in front of our eyes. Life isn't only for eating and sleeping and having a nice house. There is much more to it than that. We can't live for more than sixty or seventy years. No-one lives for hundreds of years, and we all end up in the cemetery. Look at the history of everyone in the past. We know very well that nothing remains even of the extremely important and famous people of the past except their history. So we shouldn't just think a lot about providing for our life, we should also think about our continuation. That's why a transmission or initiation always begins with the "Offering of the Mandala". You might think it is just a symbol, but you should understand and remember what this symbol means. If a master teaches just to earn money, both the master and his followers are wrong. But if someone who is following a teaching doesn't understand what is meant by the "Offering of the Mandala", why the Mandala exists, and what the value of the teaching is, that is even worse. It is very important to be aware of these things.

Transcribed by Nina Robinson

## Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche in Spain

27th September to 6th October 1991

Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche will give Dzog-chen teachings in the south of Spain in the autumn. There will also be sessions of Yantra Yoga, the Vajra Dance and video projections. Barry Simmons will give a talk on Dzog-chen and therapy. There will also be a short course of shiatsu given by Rochelle Hood. The location, Babia, is situated in the mountains, close to the town of Turre only 10 km from the sea. It is about one hour drive from Almeria which is in the north and about three hours from Alicante which is in the south. This secluded and well-cared for complex offers 40 - 50 rooms with 3 - 5 beds each. Every room has a bathroom and shower. There is also a dormitory and the possibility to camp in tents or caravans (bring your own). There is an Olympic

swimming pool on the property. The Babia kitchen provides excellent menus for both vegetarians and non-vegetarians. Prices per day are per person: 3,000 Spanish pesetas for a room sleeping 3 - 5 people, inc. full board. 2,000 pesetas for a place in the dormitory, inc. full board (bring own sheets). 2,000 pesetas for a tent, inc. full board. To cover organizational costs of the retreat a participation fee of 2,000 pesetas a day is requested. Members of the Community can pay a participation fee of 1,500 pesetas a day. In order to facilitate the organization of the retreat, it is essential to book in advance, sending a deposit of 50 US dollars (or equivalent) by international money order or by

cheque to the Comunità Dzog-chen, Merigar, Arcidosso 58031 GR, Italy. A note should be sent specifying that the amount is for the retreat in Spain. All inquiries can be sent to Anna Eid at Merigar.

If you want to be able to drive during the course you can take advantage of the "Fly and drive" discount fare offered by Iberia Airlines or fly to Almeria, the nearest airport, then hire a car. This would be a convenient way for a group of 4 or 5 people to arrive at the retreat. How to get to Babia: from Almeria airport, take a taxi to the railway station. From there take a bus to Mojacar and Turre. From Turre take a taxi to Babia (4 km). If you arrive by car at Murcia, Mojacar, Turre, there is a bar called



Adelina in Turre. From the bar, there is an up-hill road which at a later point becomes a dirt road. After 4 km there is a sign post for Babia.

Babia, in the photo, where Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche has been invited by the Instituto SAT (Escuela Psicoespiritual Integrativa).

# THE MIRROR



## A GAR

Ten years ago the first "gar" was established on the hills of Tuscany, Merigar, the first land of the Dzogchen Community. Its name and its principle came from Nyagla Gar, Khamdogar as it is now known, the site of Changchub Dorje, Norbu Rinpoche's most important master. "What is a gar? A nomads' camp, a temporary place to stay," Norbu Rinpoche explained the name of Merigar at that time.

Thus a gar stands for flexible life style, for living based on circumstances and ready awareness to respond to changes. It is also a temporary place of teaching; temporary in terms of human beings being temporary although teaching is timeless.

Changchub Dorje was known as a doctor with extraordinary capacities. Khamdogar where he lived with his family and his disciples was a community based on collaboration of all its members. "From early morning on people from the villages started to come to get medicine," Norbu Rinpoche has told.

The gar was not a closed hermitage but open for all to come and it had a very well defined function in the local life.

In order for this to be possible the gar must necessarily have had strong ties with the surrounding culture, a free and very normal interaction with the society in general.

Life in this gar was based on well organised, healthy principles of traditional Tibetan society. This sanity and flexibility of the gar became imminent during the years of extreme rigidity of revolutionary idealism in China, when Nyagla Gar during an inspection was found to be a model of socialist infrastructure. Transferred to the western world which is very different from traditional Tibetan society and probably more complicated in its demands than even the new China, a gar shows the strength and sanity of a system based on collaboration and awareness of circumstances.

The complicated set of rules that western people adhere to from day to day must necessarily be followed. In order for the gar to exist and function well, external relations must be respected with awareness.

For the internal collaboration to be effective the structure of activities in a gar need to be in harmony with general expectation in the surrounding culture.

At this moment of expansion of the Community the gar is extended beyond local limits; the idea has a global response, which is us.

It seems that there are now particular challenges for this ideal of the gar. Most obvious are two demands: flexibility in the movement of change created by the growth of the Community; and a professional attitude in regard to projects that have already been started.

There is nothing new in these demands to westerners.

The tools are also readily at hand: open mind, awareness of circumstances, resourcefulness from which professional attitude grows, and willingness to collaborate generously.

When the external form is in good shape, and the internal energy flows without cramps, only then can knowledge be valued in its full capacity.

These are the three functions of the Gakyil and the principles of a gar: the three dimensions of body, voice and mind.

Norbu Rinpoche has expressed these ideals clearly and all Gakyils have received his detailed suggestion for "a constitution" for the Community. Nyagla Gar functioned without membership cards and stated rules but today's gars live in totally different circumstances and we as a Community are integrating into a very different society.

If we try to deny this fact we may be in danger of drifting to odd margins of life in general. And that would be against the healthy way of a gar in which awareness is the base of sanity and collaboration is wisdom.

Norbu Rinpoche has asked us all to collaborate also in forming the set of rules for the international Dzogchen Community: for the sake of avoiding chaos and anarchy but not to create static rigidity which would be directly opposite to the principle of the gar.

So don't forget that you have been asked to send your ideas to the secretary of Merigar by the end of August.

## Practices for special days

*It is important to try to try to communicate with all practitioners, linked to the same transmission, through entering together into the state of contemplation.*

*In this way we all develop the potentiality of the transmission we have received, and through that we also develop our understanding and ability to integrate practice into daily life.*

### NEW MOON

Tibetan date: 6th Month, 30th day  
Western date: Saturday August 10th  
This is a very important day to do purification practices, especially the "Purification of the Six Lokas".  
If you have the chance, you can also do a short, medium or long Tun.

Tibetan date: 7th Month, 10th day  
Western date: Monday August 19th  
This is the anniversary of Jomo Menmo (1248-1283), a very famous woman Terton, reincarnation of Yeshe Tsogyal. She was the consort of the great Terton Guru Chowang.  
It is also a very special day of Guru Padmasambhava. Therefore it is an ideal day to do a Ganapuja and Long-life practice associated with Padmasambhava, "Universal Wisdom Union".  
If you have the opportunity it is beneficial to do a Ganapuja.

### FULL MOON

Tibetan date: 7th Month, 15th day  
Western date: Sunday August 25th  
This is the anniversary of Tsarchen Losal Gyatso and Padma Karpo, a famous 17th century Drugpa Kargyupa Master. Therefore it is ideal to do the Long-life practice of the Dakini Mandarava, "Cycle of Life's Vajra". It is better to do it early in the morning if you can manage it, otherwise it is perfectly alright to do it later in the day.  
It is also an excellent day to practice "A Kar Lamai Nalgyor", the Guruyoga with the White A.

Tibetan date: 7th Month, 25th day  
Western date: Tuesday September 3rd  
This is a Dakini day and also the anniversary of Pagmo Drugpa (1110-1170), the chief disciple of Gampopa. Try to do a Ganapuja together with your Vajra sisters and brothers.  
If there are no other practitioners nearby, you can do a medium Tun on your own. In either case, when you transform yourself into the Dakini Simhamuka, recite her heart mantra as much as possible and then do an intensive practice of Ekajati.

### NEW MOON

Tibetan date: 7th Month, 30th day  
Western date: Sunday September 8th  
This day is ideal for purification practices. Try to do either the "Purification of the Six Lokas" or the "Namchos Shitro Nalgyor", the Yoga of the Peaceful and Wrathful Manifestations, either collectively or on your own.

Tibetan date: 8th Month, 10th day  
Western date: Wednesday September 18th  
This is a very special day of Guru Padmasambhava, therefore do a Ganapuja with the Guruyoga and the Long-life practice of Guru Padmasambhava "Universal Wisdom Union" collectively. Otherwise you can do a medium Tun on your own.

### FULL MOON

Tibetan date: 8th Month, 15th day  
Western date: Monday September 23rd  
This is an important day to do the Long-life practice of Amitayus, "Union of Primordial Essence". It is best to do a Long-life practice early in the morning, but if you cannot it is still good if you can do it later in the day or evening.

Tibetan date: 8th Month, 25th day  
Western date: Thursday October 3rd  
This is a Dakini day, and also the anniversary of two great Dzogchen masters, Rigzin Kumaraja, who transmitted the Dzogchen teachings to Longchenpa and to the third Karmapa, and of Rigzin Tsewang Norbu, a great Dzogchen master of the Nyangmapa school. It is therefore an excellent day to do "A Kar Lamai Nalgyor", the Guruyoga with the White A. If you can do it in the morning, that is best.  
Then, if you have the time, you can do a medium or long Tun later in the day, with an intense practice of Simhamuka.

### NEW MOON

Tibetan date: 8th Month, 30th day  
Western date: Monday October 7th  
This day is excellent for practising the "Purification of the Six Lokas". Otherwise you can do the medium or long Tun.

## Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche in Germany September 13th to 15th, 1991

**September 13**  
Public lecture on Tibetan Culture, Cologne.

**September 14**  
Morning: Dzogchen Teachings at Kamalashila Institute, Schloss Wachendorf, 5353 Mechernich, tel. 02256-850.  
3.30 pm: "Early History of Tibet", Gustav-Heinemann Haus, Waldenburger Ring 44, Bonn.

**September 15**  
10 am lecture "The Great

Perfection, Dzogchen in the Nyingma School and Bon religion". Bonn.  
Afternoon: Dzogchen Teachings, Kamalashila Institute.

**For further information contact:**  
Tsewang Norbu,  
Deutsch-Tibetische  
Kulturgesellschaft e.V.  
(Königswinter), Fritz-Pullig  
Str. 28, D5205 St. Augustin 2,  
Germany.  
Tel. 02241-203610.



# The International Calendar for the Year of Tibet: August and September

## August 1991

### August 1st

Chaksam-Pa, The Tibetan Dance and Opera Company: Performance, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, CA., USA.



### August 1st - 25th

The Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts: From Dharamsala, India, beginning their Second World Tour. Performances and workshops at the Tibet Foundation, London, UK.

### August 2nd, 3rd, 4th

The Value of Friends: A Jakata Tale, sponsored and presented by the Whole Art Company's Theater, Blue Door, Kalamazoo, MI., USA.

August 3rd, 7th, 10th, 14th, 17th Series of Films on Tibet: Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, CA., USA.

### August 4th

Public Lecture: Ven. Kagyurwa Geshe Khensur Rinpoche, Buddha House FPMT, Fullarton, Adelaide, South Australia.

### August 6th

Video Presentation on Tibetan Culture: In Commemoration of Hiroshima Day, Brisbane, Australia.

### August 7th - 17th

Tibetan Culture Week Berlin: Organized by the Support Group Berlin, Berlin, Germany.

### August 8th - 11th

Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts: Performances as part of the Tibetan Culture Week Berlin, at UFA Factory, Victoria St., Berlin, Germany.

### August 8th

Lecture: Jeff Greenwald reading from "Shopping for Buddhas", Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, CA., USA.

### August 10th - 17th

An Overview of the Tibetan Civilization: Series by Prof. Jose Cabezon, sponsored by El Colegio de Mexico, Universidad Iberoamericana and Casa Tibet Mexico, Mexico City, Mexico.

### August 11th

Nagarjuna's "Entering the Middle Way": Ven. Kagyurwa Geshe Khensur Rinpoche, Buddha House, Fullarton, Adelaide, South Australia.

### August 12th - 18th

Display of Tibetan Culture: The Tibetan Cultural Society will have a Tibetan "picnic" tent, demonstrate

carpet weaving, comparative writing, wood block prints etc., The Atrium, Hong Kong Bank of Canada, Vancouver, B.C., Canada.

### August 17th

Tibetan Children's Meeting: Organized by the Office of Tibet-

Exhibition of ink drawings by Philip Sugden and photography by Carole Eichert, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH, USA.

### September 8th

The Kalachakra Initiation Explained: Lecture by Lama Pema Wangdak, Director of Sakya Center, Jacques Marchais Tibetan Museum, Staten Island, NY, USA.

### September 8th

Healing, Death and Dying: Lecture by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, Karuna Center/Karuna Hospice, Brisbane, Australia.

### September 14th - 15th

Celebration of Tibetan Culture: Including exhibits of Tibetan performing and visual arts, videos and films on Tibetan history and culture, sponsored by Chagdud Gonpa Foundation and Trinity County Arts, Weaverville, CA, USA.

### September 15th - 22nd

Tibet Week: Lectures and Exhibits, Clark University, Worcester, MA, USA.

### September 17th - October 13th

In Tibet: Photo exhibit by Kevin Bubriski, University Gallery, Clark University, Worcester, MA, USA.

### September 16th - February 1992

Demonic and Divine, Tantric Buddhist Art: Six month exhibition, St. Louis Museum of Art, St. Louis, MO, USA.

### September 16th - 30th

Sand Mandala by Monks from Namgyal Monastery: St. Louis Museum of Art, St. Louis, MO, USA.

### September 16th - October 11th

Thangka Painting Course: Classes by Andy Weber, Maitreya Institute, Emst, Holland.



### September 19th

Living in Tibet Before the Invasion: Lecture by Mr. Robert Ford, organized as part of the Tibet Forum, organized by the Office of Tibet, the Tibetan Community in Britain, the Tibet Society and Tibet Relief Fund in the UK, Ball Hall, Westminster Cathedral Conference Centre, London, UK.

### September 21st

Presentation on Yaks: An American Yak breeder will discuss his work, other Tibetan activities will also take place, including Tibetan Folk Dancers from Calgary, Osel Shen Phen Ling, Missoula, MT, USA.

### September 21st

Monks from Drepung Loseling Monastery: Beginning of North and South American Tour, Vancouver Canada.

### September 21st - 22nd

Tibetan Carpet Weaving: Workshop, Brookfield Craft Center, Brookfield, CT, USA.

### September 24th

Language Policy of Tibetan Schools in Exile: Lecture by Tsering Dhundup, The Tibet Foundation, London, UK.

### September 25th - December 31st

Where the World Meets the Sky: Photo exhibition by Ellen Kaplowitz, University Museum of Archeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia, PA, USA.

### September 26th

Tibetan Institute for Performing Arts: Dutch Tour begins.

Lecture by Geshe Thubten Ngawang (Oct.1).

- Slide Show on Tibetan Art: Presented by Helmut Uhlig (Oct.1).  
- Slide Show on Tibet and Its people: A political report presented by Klemens Ludwig (Oct.3).

- Non-Violence The Path to Freedom: the Fourteenth Dalai Lama: 1989 Film presented by Michael von Bruck (Oct.4).

- Panel Discussion: Tibet - a Peace Zone, the Responsibility of Democratic States for Tibet: Discussion chaired by Helmut Steckel.

- Visit and Astrological Consultations by Astrology Prof. Jampa Drakton invited by Finn Wandhal. He will also participate in the Danish Astrology Congress (Sep.30 - Oct.10).

### September 28th - 30th

Nordic Workshop on the Tibetan



### September 26th

Tibetan Culture in Today's World, Lessons from a Traditional Culture for Contemporary Problems: Academic symposium, sponsored by JFK University and UC - Berkeley, Berkeley, CA, USA.

### September 26th

Lecture on Tibetan Art: Prof. John Huntington of Ohio State University, St. Louis Museum of Art, St. Louis, MI, USA.

### September 29th

Women in Tibetan Buddhism: Lecture by Ani Jamyang Chozam, a nun of the Sakya tradition, Jacques Marchais Tibetan Museum, Staten Island, NY, USA.

### September 29th - October 10th

Hamburg Tibet Weeks: The Tibet Center in Hamburg has organized a series of introductory lectures on Tibet at Hamburg University, Edmund-Siemers-Allee 1, Germany.

- Tibet, Past and Present: First lecture and inauguration of the Tibet Weeks, presented by Dr. Medd. Jochen Bockemuhl (Sep.29).

- Theory and Practice of Tibetan Medicine: Dr. Egbert Asshauer (Sep.30).

- Traditions of Tibetan Buddhism:

Issue: Organized and sponsored by the Norwegian Tibet Committee, Oslo, Norway.

### September 29th

Life in Tibet: One year children's exhibit on Tibet; Monadnock Children's Museum, with an opening festival, Keene, NH, USA.

### September 29th - October 20th

Tibet - Realm of the Sacred: Photo exhibition by Dr. Edwin Bernbaum, Nicholas Roerich Museum, New York, NY, USA.

September (date to be announced)

Tibetan Exhibit: Artifacts and photographs, and a Gala opening with Congressional leaders and Tibetan supporters at the Rotunda of the Canon House Office Building, Washington DC, USA.

September (date to be announced) Buddhist Teachings: Zasep Tulku Rinpoche, Tashi Choling Society, Nelson, British Columbia, Canada.

September (date to be announced)

Gyuto Monks  
Butter Sculpture: Exhibition, California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco, CA, USA.

## Translators wanted

**Translators wanted for the Seminar on Tibetan Language in November 1992**

The Shang-Shung Institute in Arcidosso is looking for translators who can make simultaneous translations from Tibetan to English and English to Tibetan for the Seminar on Tibetan Language which will be held in Italy in November 1992.

All translators who would like to offer their collaboration should get in touch with:

"Seminar on Tibetan Language",

c/o Istituto Shang-Shung,

Via degli Olmi 1, 58031 Arcidosso GR, Italy

Telephone (564) 966 940.

## Pulling together

A different type of Gakyil meeting



Photo John Shase

by Joe Zurilo

During one of the monthly Gakyil meetings, Woody Paparazzo proposed a very interesting idea. He suggested a different type of meeting, one that is not based on the wide array of community business - but instead, a get-together where we could openly express our feelings and thoughts about the community. All present at the time felt this was a very good idea, so a date and place was set.

During the first meeting, two major things came out. One was that we were all in the same boat crossing the same river, although sometimes rowing in different directions. Secondly, that maybe it would be beneficial if there existed a specific topic for all of us to focus on. We decided to use the Stairway to Liberation as our study guide. During last summer's retreat, Rinpoche had said that it was necessary to understand and experience this text if one was to progress in the Teachings, so our choice seemed appropriate. Two weeks was to be the length of time between meetings and the first topic was the Seven Mind Trainings.

My personal intention regarding the Mind Trainings was to burn them into my common conscience, so to speak, so they would be as familiar to me as the words of my favorite coffee mug. The method that I used to attempt this was such: the 1st day, the 1st training; the 2nd day, the 1st and 2nd training; the 3rd day, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd training, and so on. During this 2 week period I studied, remembered, mentated, and observed the reality of these 7 points and how my life related to them.

Our next meeting took place at Woody and Barbara Paparazzo's living room and was well attended. But better than just well attended were the genuine heart-felt observations which were given. These observations are too many and too long to be discussed in such a short article as this, but they ranged from the simplicity of a child's wonderment to the insight of a philosopher's discourse. My personal impressions and feelings toward our small study group have been very positive. Also, the sharing of observations with my fellow practitioners has proven to be a warm and heart-felt experience.



Lucia from the Merigar Community is selling the licence and equipment for tea room in the centre of Arcidosso.

Large beautiful garden with fountain.

Lucia Sblendorio, 58031 Arcidosso GR, Italy. Tel. 564-966936.

## Yang-tig Retreats in France

In March of this year, Namkhai Norbu inaugurated the newly constructed yang-tig retreat house in Plouray, France. This retreat house is now open to anyone who has received transmission from Norbu Rinpoche and wants to do a yang-tig retreat.

In order to do a retreat, one must have received the transmission and precise instructions from Norbu Rinpoche. The length of time for a first retreat should be 24 hours. The next time one can do 2 or 3 days. If you plan to do a 24 hour retreat please inform us a minimum of 15 days in advance, for a longer retreat, a month in advance:

Martine Guillouche or Roger Omnes,

La fontaine Neuve, 56779 Plouray, telephone number 97 34 81 13, fax number 86 29 20 18.

For a 24 hour retreat, you should bring your own food. For longer retreats traditional or vegetarian food can be provided. Bring your own sleeping bag.

The retreat price consists of 500 French francs, which is a participation fee for the construction of the cabin and which is paid only once however many times you do a retreat. For 24 hours, 100F for the day. For 2 to 10 days retreat, 150F per day and for retreats longer than

10 days, 120F per day. 10% of the price of the retreat should be sent when you make a reservation.

How to get to Plouray

By train Paris - Lorient.

By bus Lorient - Plouray (stop Kerguzul).

Bus times

Summer: Monday to Saturday

Departure Lorient: 17.30

Arrival Plouray: 19.10

Winter: Monday to Friday

Departure Lorient: 16.10

Arrival Plouray: 18.05

Saturday

Departure Lorient: 11.15

Arrival Plouray: 13.10

Bus information: 97 21 28 29.

## Two letters of Fabio Andrico from Russia

Charkov, June 3rd, 1991

At the moment I'm in the Ukraine in the antique capital of Charkov, west of the Russian Republic and below Bielorusia. After staying in Riga in Latvia I went to Vilnius in Lithuania. The trip wasn't very comfortable mostly because the heating wasn't going. They didn't think it was necessary because they considered it to be spring time. Of course, it was freezing cold and there was an icy draught blowing around my head. I arrived at Vilnius at about 7 in the morning. Just when it seemed that nobody was coming to meet me, Antonos appeared. He was to be my host for my two week stay there. Lithuania is a beautiful place. The capital extends into the forests which surround it and there are old villages with beautiful wooden houses.

The Yantra course was held in the gymnasium of the Conservatory and so we had music while we practised. A couple of times we heard the sound of bells and chants of the Hari Krishnas from the street as they passed by under our windows. The people who came for the course were young students and they were very interested and practised seriously. In general there was a good atmosphere.

During my stay in Vilnius there was the folklore festival. We went there two or three evenings to hear the popular songs and see the costumes and the traditional instruments and of course we danced until late under the starry sky.

Here, I've noticed that among those people interested in the Teaching, there is a constant presence of art. Many of them paint or play instruments. In general there is a tendency towards art as a pure expression. This is interesting because it has a purity. I left Vilnius one day accompanied by Vladimir and Jelena the translator. The Community very kindly came to wish me a good trip. The trip lasted for 23 hours and the sensation was like that of being in India. Going south it got warmer and the part of the train with the sleepers was open, the compartments had no doors. It was full of people and reminded me of similar trips I made in India years ago. We arrived at Charkov and after a day and a half



intensely. After a Ganapuja in the woods on the outskirts of the city, a group of people who came to greet us (Jelena, Maria and myself), and I received the traditional gift of flowers and we left for Moscow.

It was a typically old fashioned train and we arrived as usual in the morning of a clear day at about 9 o'clock. Vladimir Maikov was there to meet me at the station. I had already met him at Conway.

He was accompanied by some new people.

After we had travelled through the part of Moscow that some people say looks like New York, we arrived at Alona's house. She was also at the Conway retreat. At present I am at her home in a room with a view of an enormous colosseum with a green forest in the background. The Yantra Yoga course began yesterday and about 40 people attended. As usual all the people are very kind to me and interested in the Teaching. And I am trying to do my best.

June 16th, 1991

I'm now in Moscow, capital of this immense country, the Soviet Union (looking at a world map, I realize how big it really is).

I was in Charkov recently where everything went well. There was a group of about 30 people who came for the Yantra Yoga course and then about 15 people asked me for an explanation of the preliminary practices and we met for 4 or 5 afternoons.

We saw two videos on Dzog-chen teaching which really made everyone happy because besides being very interesting, they also let the people have their first look at Rinpoche whom they have never seen in person.

Many of the interested people here are young and have an experience with the martial arts. And so when I go sightseeing around the city, I always have 1 or 2 bodyguards who accompany me.

Here there are great expectations to see Rinpoche. They are all waiting

When I arrived in Moscow I was really pleased when Vladimir brought me the latest issue of "The Mirror" to read. Now I can understand what it means for people who live so far away to be in contact with the activities of the Community which are so many and so creative that it almost seems like a dream.

When the course finishes here, I will go to Leningrad on the 24th, which will probably be my last stop. If it's possible I will try and go to Bhuriatya where His Holiness the Dalai Lama will be on July 14th. I'd really like to be able to go and also some of the people who are interested in Yantra Yoga in order to have contact with someone of the Community. But I don't know if it's possible, I'll see.

If I go to Bhuriatya, perhaps I'll return to Vilnius and Riga for a few days to keep in touch with the people that I have met there. I'll be coming back to Italy on July 18th. See you then.

Fabio Andrico

## Mandarava Initiation in Merigar



### The essence of life

by Marit Cranmer

Many of us had long awaited this event and people came from near and far to receive the Mandarava initiation. The Gonpa was full with about three or four hundred people attending, happy to be there. Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche explained how this practice is a good protection and important in elimination of negativities. It is also helpful for good health, and all that we consider good life. The explanation and the actual initiation took place in the morning. Towards the end of the day, the children appeared, having been with the babysitters all day. Next day was full of activity. There was the morning and afternoon practice of Mandarava, Gakyil meetings, Vajra Dance practice in the library, publishing work of different kinds and Karma Yoga being done everywhere.

### California Dreams

by Kathy McGrane

It's the 4th of July, Independence Day in America, and all around me the world is celebrating with picnics, beer, music and firecrackers - a very festive atmosphere prevails.

And, tonight, as soon as it's dark, people will gather all around the edges of San Francisco Bay to watch huge fireworks burst rainbows in the black sky. Very wonderful. I look forward to that particular delight.

Since last you heard from us, much has transpired, the most notable of which is that the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco staged the largest display of Tibetan art ever assembled, with pieces from private collections around the world. Organizing the show and events around it, including a visit by His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, brought together dharma practitioners of every stripe in a remarkable collaborative effort under the auspices of the Himalayan Foundation. The response has been overwhelming and very heartening. His Holiness opened the exhibition with a private reception attended by San Francisco high society and a public talk attended by thousands. The attendant wave of popularity carried His Holiness to the White House for a meeting with President Bush, the first time the Tibetan ruler has been so politically received in this country.

As part of the preparation for the exhibit, a series of lectures were arranged to educate the public on the art and culture of Himalayan peoples.

Among the lecturers were our own master thangka painter Glen Eddy, describing styles and techniques of Tibetan art and our own professor of Tibetan Buddhism, Dr. Steve Goodman, both of whom were very well received. The exhibit continues through August and is crowded from 10 to 5 every day. Gelupa monks there have built a full

### Dakinis of immortality

by Jacobella Gaetani

On Friday, 21st of June, the summer solstice, Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche gave the initiation of the Long Life practice of the immortal dakinis, the essence of Vajra life.

During the initiation Norbu Rinpoche explained the ultimate meaning of immortality. Receiving this initiation is receiving a transmission of a means to realisation beyond birth and death and the concept of time, which is truly the realisation of immortality.

This Long Life practice of the immortal dakinis is a mind treasure rediscovered by Norbu Rinpoche in 1984, during a pilgrimage to Maratika in east Nepal, a place where there are several caves consecrated to Long Life and fertility. Here Mandarava and Guru Padmasambhava attained the realisation of Long Life.

The text "The Essence of Vajra Life", the practice of the dakinis of immortality, appeared to Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche during a dream in a five-coloured tiglio. It was Ekajati, the dark brown one-eyed queen and custodian of this teaching who opened the door of this mind treasure.

### Austrian Gakyil

The Austrian Dzog-chen Community has formed a new Gakyil consisting of three people. Since the Community is small, the three people will not be responsible for a different sphere of activity each, but each member of the Gakyil will work and collaborate as much as possible in every field. Isabella Ernst, Brunnengasse 34/12, 1160 Wien, Tel.: 0222-4083016, is the contact-person for Vienna, coordinator of the practice-meetings and responsible for the community finances in Vienna.

Gabriele Leick-Reinwald, Kaltenbrunn 8, 8200 Gleisdorf.

Tel.: 03112-5431 is responsible for mailing and sending out information and correcting texts. Oliver F. Leick, Kaltenbrunn 8, 8200 Gleisdorf, Tel.: 03112-5431 is responsible for international communications and information, responsible for Edition Tsaparang and translations.

The contact address of the Austrian Community is: Österreichische Dzog-chen Gemeinschaft, Postfach 60, 8200 Gleisdorf, Austria.



colored sand mandala of the Wheel of Life for the second time - the first one, almost completed, was destroyed by a wild woman who trashed it one day by jumping on it, shouting and cursing. The monks took it philosophically, viewed her as an incarnation of Dorje Phalmo, took apart the mandala and began again. It served to create far more publicity than the original and brought that many more to see it.

Our own community, as part of the Year of Tibet, is seeking to bring the photo exhibition of Posco Maraini here to display at the beginning of next year after it is shown at Amherst College in Massachusetts and Rice University in Texas.

Among ourselves, throughout the winter, we have held a few small weekend retreats in country places which have proven quite successful - attendance and practice have been strong, and response is greater than regular weekly and monthly practices. People seem to welcome the opportunity to gather away from home and refresh themselves in practice and in the warm companionship of practitioners spending a weekend together. We held one retreat at a hot springs and two others at a mountain Zen center. We've made a portable mandala for the Dance of the Vajra

which we bring and practice on - we've learned about half from Purusha who took detailed notes in Argentina.

With the beginning of summer, the community is full of plans. A mid-summer practice retreat, as outlined by Norbu Rinpoche last year, will be held at the home of John and Lorraine Bidleman in Healdsburg.

At the end of the summer, a Vajra Dance and Yantra retreat will be led by that wildman, Fabio Andrico, as soon as he comes in for a landing. September will bring Geshe Tenzin Wangyal, for what length of time we cannot say yet - however long, it will be just enough. He promises to visit us from Texas throughout the year where he will be teaching at Rice University (most prestigious).

In local news: the Cazadero land is still for sale; with renewed effort, we've been advertising steadily in local newspapers which has brought several interested buyers. With so much serious interest we feel confident that a sale is imminent. The Fish and Game authority has granted us an easement for the protection of the peregrine falcon who nest there (who have had three fledglings this year). This means they will pay us for terms of sale limiting the area and season for access and building.

Eugenio Amico continues teaching Yantra in San Francisco; in addition to a regular class, he has a class of HIV patients learning it.

Kennard Lipman is happily teaching Buddhist studies at the California Institute of Integral Studies, fulfilling his destiny at last.

And Steve Goodman is teaching Tibetan Buddhism at the University of California Graduate Theological Seminary recognition hard won and well deserved. We swim along in the river of time, steadily heading for the waterfall in the land of a thousand dances.

## Australian Tinderbox



Photo: Jean Macintosh

by Jean Macintosh

The weather in Sydney is becoming cold now in July and August, but it was not so cold a few months ago on the 25th of April when the Dzog-chen Community of Australia gathered at the forest retreat center, the Wat, for a four day practise retreat.

I had been staying there for one week helping to paint the Mandala for the Vajra dance on the cement floor of a big shed which is open at the sides, so that people will be able to dance amongst trees with the presence of space and natural elements around them. As we sat in the shed, painting day by day, the smoke hanging in the air became thicker as the week progressed. It became evident that there were bush fires burning throughout the many square kilometers of eucalyptus forest that surrounds this retreat center. The summer had been hot and dry, water was scarce, and the bush was like a tinderbox. On the evening before the retreat I drove to Sydney to pick up some people from Melbourne at the airport. Driving back in the night, across the river by ferry and through the forest we smelled the heavy smoke and saw the glow of distant fires.

The following day we were sitting upstairs in the cool of the mudbrick house, preparing for the retreat and waiting for the people to arrive in the afternoon, when the often present helicopter seemed to come very close and we realised it was about to land in the clearing. After much flurry and excitement, we were told we must leave, evacuate the centre, that the fire was close and the wind was blowing in our direction. We were to leave within two hours. Everyone was quite shocked but worked quickly to prepare the retreat centre for the possible onslaught of fire. Gutters were cleared away from houses, gas bottles disconnected and rolled into the open in case of explosion, kerosene and petrol drums placed away from the houses. So much to do, and as people arrived for the retreat they quickly began to prepare for the evacuation. The pace of activity quickened as evening approached, and cars were loaded with a few precious possessions. We quickly loaded the huge canvas mandala we were painting for use by the Sydney and Canberra group. The thought occurred that nothing would be here on our return. It was possible that all would be burned; trees, buildings, the large meditation hall, all the beautiful wild animals and birds that live on the land, books, machinery, everything. Despite this possibility it was hard to believe this would happen. We seemed to be enacting our parts in a drama, but one that did not feel as though it would end in tragedy.

Six police cars with sirens screaming roared to the gate at dusk to escort us to safety, out of the forest. We drove in convoy, an hours drive to the main road, chanting some practice as we passed fires burning in the valley very close to the centre. We regrouped at the road with our retreat group but nowhere to go. Finally we sang the Song of the Vajra standing beside our cars at the edge of the forest. We were very fortunate to find a Caravan Park, 5 minutes away, by the edge of the Hawkesbury River.

As a group we managed to stay together for the next 2 days, remaining in touch with the Bushfire Brigade, practising together and attempting to relax the tensions that arose due to the uncertainty about the fire, and for some, less comfort than what they were used to.

The next morning there was a huge and complete rainbow over the river where we stayed. In the night a wild fox came up to our camp and licked one of the group on the face as he slept on the ground. Twice that day I saw eagles flying over us, soaring in the wind. As we practised together it seemed that it was the group that was important and held the spirit of the teachings and that the land and the retreat centre were less so.

We returned to the land again two days later and all was safe.

The Wat was safe and the next weekend welcomed many people to a short retreat given by His Holiness, Gyalwang Drukchen Rinpoche, who taught Mahamudra. He came with his father, Bairo Rinpoche and his mother, Kunchog Peeldun, a Dzog-chen practitioner.

In the beginning of June the Dzog-chen Community held another short work/practice retreat at the Wat. This time the drought broke and the rain continued non stop for three days. The river rose and the car ferry that is used to cross the river stopped working for half the day. It seemed like a purification by fire and water.

The Community is now in the midst of making arrangements for the possible purchase of a house at the Wat as one base for their activities, and for people to use for personal or group practice retreats.

## Lama Tenzin's last weeks in Europe

By Kaisa-Liisa Puonti

Lama Tenzin Wangyal spent almost two weeks in Finland at the end of July. He had been invited by the Finnish Tibetan Cultural Association in collaboration with the Dzog-chen Community of Finland.

On Friday July 19th, Lama Tenzin gave a public lecture in Helsinki about "The Original Religion of Tibet" to an audience of more than 60 people, which on a sunny Friday during the holiday month was a considerable gathering.

From July 20th to 26th, Lama Tenzin Wangyal gave teaching of the Shang-Shung Nyin gyud in an old farmhouse situated by a lake.

There were 16 people on the retreat, most of them from Finland and a few who had come from Norway and Denmark.

The daily program was very tight with teaching and much practice together, and every evening, after dinner and the last teaching, there was a relaxing sauna.

After the retreat Lama Tenzin travelled around Finland a couple of days before flying back to Italy, where he gave teachings in Treviso and then started to prepare for his journey to the USA.

By Matthias Winter and Michèle Lantéri

Around 350 people came to the Judlen Retreat at Merigar on the 26th to 28th of July. In the beginning some of them thought that they had to fast for these days but actually the Judlen practice means to live taking in the essence of the elements, which is light. As Norbu Rinpoche explained, this is already a little realisation, which occurs only after some practice. He underlined that it is important to combine certain breathing practice with Judlen and the practice of Mandarava. Without that, taking Judlen would only be like taking vitamin pills.

Doing Judlen one should, of course, avoid alcohol, meat, coffee or heavy food, but Rinpoche made clear that it is not helpful to stop eating altogether.

There are seven types of Judlen in the Judlen of the Immortal Dakini. For this retreat a Judlen based on honey had been prepared. In it old and pure honey from the medicine room was used, which bees had already collected before the atomic disaster of Chernobyl.

Before the retreat started, Judlen needed many days and weeks of preparation: picking special flowers and herbs from around Merigar as



well as from other places, waiting for minerals to come from Sardinia, pulverising the different ingredients, altogether about 50. Rinpoche was engaged with the preparation every day in the 40° heat of the medicine room (the honey had to be warmed). Norbu Rinpoche also made a special gift of a herb to the Judlen, which is

said to be half plant and half animal and which is only found in Tibet. During the last days before the retreat started, everybody helped in the medicine room. There was always a very good feeling in the room, and people could already taste little drops of the medicine. "It was like children playing, like a continuous party",

Liakos from Greece said. "Almost everything was done by hand."

Rinpoche himself poured Judlen into 800 little plastic-bags which were given to people on Saturday and Sunday during the practice.

In front of the house, five-coloured strings, representing the five elements of wisdom, were made. On Friday morning the strings were spanned in the Gonpa for people to take hold of while sounding the mantra OM AH HUM.

Most people took the initiation on Friday, a few came only to do the practice on Saturday and Sunday, when the actual Judlen practice took place. The last day, portions of Judlen were sold for those who wanted to continue the practice at home.

The purpose of Judlen is to reinforce one's energy and to purify body, speech and mind.

There is an additional effect on special illnesses like problems of liver, problems of digestion or stomach, paralysis and intoxication (for example with alcohol or tobacco).

The whole Judlen Terma as Norbu Rinpoche discovered it, will be explained in a book, which Shang-Shung Edizioni will bring out in the near future.

Prima Ma

## Merigar 10 Years



## Anniversary Festivities

The 16th of August 1991 is the Tenth Anniversary and the Inauguration of Merigar.

Many festivities have been planned. A grand lion-headed dragon leads the way through the hills from the Vajra Dance in the Caparnone to dramatic performances, exhibitions, and music. Kites are being made and masks for the Children's Day on the 17th of August.

The 10th Anniversary of Merigar is also the official inauguration of this first gar of the International Dzog-chen Community.

## The great choice Laura Berle Albini

From the 19th of January 1974, when by chance I met Prof. Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche at Fiumicino airport, I started to ask him to give teachings to a small group of people, who were interested in Tibetan Buddhism, and who met periodically at my house. It seemed totally useless to insist, but I insisted.

Two years later I rented a villa in Subiaco for four months and suddenly the master agreed to teach but to no more than 21 disciples. In September there were more than 70...

After that first, incomparable retreat the search began for a place to continue the teachings.

We seemed to be marvellous nomads of the practice, always desperately searching for gymnasiums, halls or museums where we could get together, not only in Rome, but also in Campania, Sardegna, Veneto and Piemonte.

Each time the number of people interested in participating increased; we were becoming more and more cosmopolitan; the master was asked to hold various seminars abroad: Austria, England, France, America and Greece.

The need for a place to put down our roots became more and more impelling. So our young volunteers set off to look for interesting places but with little success.

A friend of mine, who had moved house to Arcidosso, invited the Master, Rosa and their children and me to visit her. She claimed that it would not be difficult to find some piece of land suited to our purposes.

As soon as we began to skirt around Monte Amiata the chestnut trees overflowing with nuts seemed like a good omen. We went to visit several farmsteads.

It seemed long, steep and dusty, the lane leading to the farmhouse with 30 hectares of land. A rudimentary wooden gate introduced us to the so called Podere Nuovo, New Farmstead, which in the past had belonged to the family of Davide Lazzaretti, the "Saint of Amiata". A strange committee came to welcome us: seven dwarf Tibetan nanny goats with their billy goat.

When Rinpoche arrived they were all immobile, lined up along a little slope. They bowed their heads as if in obedience to some invisible command, and the head of the flock came to meet Rinpoche. The atmosphere was magical. We went up the broken stairs of the ruin and found another surprising good omen: a great tree stump was blazing in the fire-place even though we hadn't seen anyone around.

Norbu Rinpoche, taking Yuden by the hand, went to walk around the land and didn't come back for quite a while. In the meantime we discussed practical matters with Rosa.

There was only one room fit to live in where one could cook in the fireplace. All the rest was in ruins. When the Master came back his face was lit up with a great smile. The choice had been made. And that was it. Merigar was born.

Gar means a place of arrival, of hospitality, an assembly place.

Meri means fire mountain. For Tibetans Meri is also the most ancient symbol of absolute protection of heaven and earth, a tradition going back thousands of years. All this seems like yesterday but instead it is today.

The next day, before signing the contract Norbu Rinpoche wanted to go to the top of Monte Amiata, but there was a thick fog covering everything. Then he wanted to climb onto a big rock and suddenly the fog cleared revealing a wonderful panorama sloping right down to the sea.

Davide Lazzaretti, whose family owned the podere a century ago, and who was famous for his prophecies, had called, this place "Little Tibet" and had predicted that a hundred years after his death a large spiritual group would come here from many different countries. Ten years have passed since the day we discovered Merigar. The house in no longer a ruin, it has been transformed into a beautiful place, more land has been added to it and many new structures have been built. All of this has arisen from the miraculous visions and the will of our teacher, with the help of us, his disciples, inspired by his example and his teachings.

Best wishes to Merigar! May it progress and bring light to all living beings! Long life to our Master, Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, to whom goes our gratitude for the precious gifts he continuously and generously grants, and our devotion for his preciousness.

Tashi Delegs!



Tai's birthday 1982. Children from the left Nicola, Tai, Viola, Marius.

The first retreat at Merigar was held in 1982 with more than 200 people under a white canvas.



By Liz Granger

A new visitor to Merigar, turning the corner on the country road that leads there, would be struck by the unusual new Gomba perched on the hill of yellow flowering broom against a background of scenic, rocky hills. He or she would be able to have a coffee or lunch in the cool, wooden floored refectory at the main house, search for a contact in Taiwan or Brisbane on the modern computer upstairs, or even take part in a group practice in the cushioned shrine room, surrounded by precious old tankhas. Nowadays, a multilingual secretary answers the frequent phone calls and queries from across the world. The Gekod welcomes visitors and even takes Sunday sightseers on tour of the Merigar complex.

Down the road hidden behind a hill at the long red-pink building called the "capannone", are the offices of the publishing company, Shang-Shung Edizioni and The Mirror, where the hum of the computers is interrupted by incoming faxes and international telephone calls. Next door to this hustle and bustle is the peace of the library, large and cool, the walls lined with shelves of texts in a variety of languages, the floor mandala-painted. The third part of this curious trio in one building is the modern carpentry shop. Where, ten years ago, there were patches of brambles, rocks and building rubble, spread fresh green lawns and bright clumps of flowers. Newly planted trees line the roads and green grass covers the slopes in front of the house.

The recently bought buildings and land of Merigar 2 are 10 minutes walk along the bramble lined country path that leads towards Monte Labro. Here too, the work will soon begin to renovate the buildings for different uses. All this and more did not come about overnight, but is the result of ten years hard work on the part of Namkhay Norbu Rinpoche, his wife Rosa and many, many people of the Community who contributed financially and physically to the development of Merigar.

#### Podere Nuovo

Ten years ago Merigar was called Podere Nuovo and belonged to a local constructor. The run-down house consisted of three upstairs rooms and two manure filled stables downstairs. There was no electricity or running water. Norbu Rinpoche first saw the place on October 4th, 1981. He had already seen several places in the same area but had found them positioned unfavourably. He was almost ready to return home when he arrived at Podere Nuovo. It was a cloudy and rainy day and the road was in such bad condition that Rinpoche and his party had to get there by jeep. When they arrived at the gate of the property, there were seven tiny Tibetan goats, the only inhabitants, lined up in a row as if in greeting. Those accompanying Rinpoche suggested that these small creatures even bowed down before him.

Norbu Rinpoche took a look around and liked the place immediately. The position was good and everything was as it should be according to what he had in mind.

When Rinpoche and the people of the Community heard the price, they didn't know how they would be able to raise that amount. Norbu Rinpoche signed the preliminary contract at the airport as he was leaving for Tibet with his family on his first visit there since his departure. He and a few Community people managed to raise the amount for the first payment. The second payment was due after two months and was paid for by almost the entire savings of Rinpoche and his wife and by others. Money was gradually collected and the last payment was finally made.

Although the property had been in Rinpoche's name after he signed the first contract, it was immediately transferred to the name of the Associazione Culturale Comunità Dzog-chen.

The first visitors of the Community came to Merigar in February 1982 to celebrate the Tibetan New Year with Norbu Rinpoche. It was snowing heavily and the house was full of big rats who took very little notice of the visitors. There were people who slept in sleeping bags in a row on the floor of the upstairs room. Heating was provided by an enormous chimney in the kitchen which blew back most of the smoke into the house when the wind was unfavourable.

The first planting was five roses in different colours in front of the house. One of the first plants that Rinpoche had noticed growing freely here was the wild dog rose and he said how much he would like to see Merigar full of roses. We are still working on that.

More Community people came up to Merigar at Easter and started the essential jobs such as building the wall behind the house to stop landslides and retilling the upstairs floor which had made one of the rooms uninhabitable.

#### The first retreat

The first retreat was held in June 1982 under a large white sheet of canvas bordered in blue at the side of the hill where the Gomba now stands. There were profusions of gaily coloured butterflies and a wide perfumed variety of wild summer flowers across the land. People came from all over Europe for the retreat. Major work on the old Gomba began at this time and continued throughout the summer. Previously it had been full of hay and manure where the grass grew freely and the roof had virtually fallen in. The walls were raised, the west door closed, the roof redone and windows put

in. The last work was the wooden floor. This room was and is still used for teachings, practices, yantra yoga and children's games.

During that summer the stupa was built principally by Tsaltrim Lama. Those present at Merigar during the construction each donated reliquaries, precious stones and metals to seal into the foundation.

At Christmas time of the same year, the first Gekod and Gakyil of Merigar were nominated. There was still no running water or electricity and during the following year a windmill was erected on the hill above the stupa that would supply electric current to the house.

Since the main west door entrance that led directly to the upper storey was considered unfavourable, this was closed and the main entrance became the east door into the lower part of the building.

During this first year, many of the people who had come to help with the initial works started to settle here in the surrounding villages and farms of Arcidosso, Castel del Piano, Seggiano, Bagnore and Santa Fiora.

The group was mixed and consisted of people from all over the world.

Once the upper part of the house had become habitable, the work on the two large lower stables began. This started by removing a great quantity of seasoned manure off the floors. The stables had virtually been two dark caves and so windows had to be put in to shed a little light on things. The walls were plastered, wooden floors laid and the whole painted and waxed. Since none of the workers were professionals, the job took some time but finally a refectory and dormitory took shape.

Combined with the steadily progressing improvements to the building, there were regular retreats at Merigar in the summer and at Christmas. As the numbers of people coming to the retreats increased, so did the need to have a large space available where teachings could be given. The problem was easier to resolve during the summer when we could use the great canvas tent roof on the land.

The difficulty was during the cold period at Christmas time when the weather could range from warm sun to inches of snow accompanied by icy winds. One Christmas, the organizers of the retreat managed to rent a nearby barn in which to meet. Another time, a colourful circus tent was erected just outside the main building to house the retreat. This was torn down by howling winds one night.

Merigar is located at more than 900 metres above sea level and in a position on the slope of Mount Amiata that gives it the wildest and most unpredictable turns of weather. Not only is it called little Tibet by those who have spent a lengthy time here in the winter, but it is said to have appeared on old administrative maps with the same name, Piccolo Tibet, long before the Community settled here.

#### Year of the Wood Mouse

The Tibetan New Year in 1984 was the first year of a sixty year cycle, and considered a particularly auspicious moment. Preparations started several weeks beforehand and included the preparation of five coloured prayer flags to be put up on a very brisk New Year's morning.



and the drying of two cow's heads to be prepared as part of the delicacies of the day. These were cooked the last day of the old year. An all night Ganapua was held and at the first morning light we all rushed out into the freezing morning and washed our faces in the "star water" that had been left outside all night.

A few circumambulations at the stupa brought blood back into our stiff limbs and opened up our sleepy eyes. Celebrations continued throughout the day with games and food in abundance.

The year after, Norbu Rinpoche started work on building a hot house just below the main house. Previous building work had been done laboriously by hand. On this occasion there was finally a cement mixer to do the work and all the people who participated in the construction considered that Merigar had arrived at a superior level of technology.

Norbu Rinpoche directed the operation selecting building stones that were carried with difficulty and trepidation of Rinpoche's refusal from the nearby field by the many assistants. The frequent requests for more cement from Rinpoche rose up to the cement mixing area as wheelbarrows of the stuff were precipitously rushed downhill.

Water for the hot house was a problem in those early days before Merigar was attached to the mains. It was channelled from the roof gutters of the main house when it rained.

#### Water, water

In fact, lack of water was to remain a real inconvenience for some time. During the first year it was carried up to Merigar by car in plastic tanks that were filled at nearby water sources, when there was a car available. Later an enormous container was placed behind the house and filled from time to time by a truck.

In this "dry" period, a water reservoir was dug by bulldozer just below the house as an additional source of water as it accumulated during the winter. It is still located on the slope of a hill that goes down for a great distance into the valley.

During the early history of the reservoir, one of the tubes to prevent the lake overflowing became displaced, and during a terribly stormy and rainy night as the lake was about to burst its banks and create havoc on the land below, all hands were called out from the house with shovels and various equipment to bale out the disaster and prevent a landslide.

Water was also another problem on the country road that winds for more than a kilometer in an uphill direction to arrive at Merigar from the main asphalt road. During heavy rain or snow the steep uphill part of the road would turn into an impassable sea of mud.

This slippery passage was asphalted, unfortunately without sufficient foundations. After a time the asphalt gradually broke up and it was then dug up and the work started again with the offerings of many people who wanted to be able to reach Merigar in all seasons.

At a later date in the story of Merigar (1987) it was decided to put up a big barn (capannone) that could also be used as a place for Community activities.

#### The Gomba

One of the most important and ambitious works to date has been the Gomba, built principally of wood and glass and topped by a pointed copper roof. Based on an idea by Norbu Rinpoche, it was built in sections by an Italian firm and assembled on the spot.

The construction team often worked through weather conditions of strong winds, hail, rain and snow to complete the construction which was erected in about four months in time for the visit of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Merigar in May 1990. The Gomba is built on the top of a small hill just below the main house at Merigar and commands a panoramic view of the surrounding countryside.

The most memorable event in Merigar's ten years has been that of the visit of His Holiness to Merigar in 1990 to inaugurate the Shang-Shung Institute and draw attention to an initiative whose aim is to safeguard the historic and cultural heritage of the Tibetan people.

On May 29th, His Holiness officially inaugurated the Institute and the following day gave teaching at the Gomba from the secret teachings of the Fifth Dalai Lama, the first teachings to be given at the Gomba.

There had been a great flurry of activity to finish the final touches to the Gomba and many people had been busy sewing thousands of prayer flags to line the road to Merigar for the occasion.

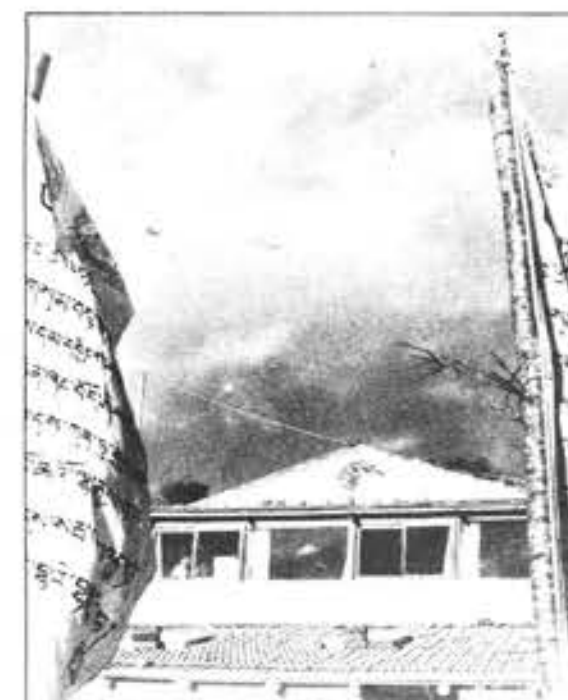
At the Castle in Arcidosso volunteers and professionals had set up an exhibition called, "Tibet: a land and its culture", with a push button installation of various types of Tibetan music, video projections on Tibet and a fine exhibit of photographs on Tibetan landscape, people and culture. On the first floor, a darkened room had been prepared which was a realistic representation of the interior of a small Tibetan temple.

The entire programme of events for the occasion was the most complex endeavour the Merigar Community has ever taken on.

Apart from the tremendous expense, the organization involved was extremely vast from the greatest detail of construction of the Gomba to the delicate bouquets of flowers which were presented to His Holiness by the children.



The big excitement of the building of the Gomba was whether it would become ready in time for the visit of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. It did, so did the prayer flags everywhere on the land. Like all building and developing at Merigar, this work was keenly supervised by Norbu Rinpoche himself.



## Fabio Andrico in Saint Petersburg

by Vladimir Montelevich

Assigned by Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, Fabio Andrico, one of the oldest disciples of Norbu Rinpoche and a Yantra Yoga teacher, arrived in Leningrad on April 26th, 1991.

He spent only one day in Leningrad, visiting the Hermitage and walking around in the old city. He met and spoke with the members of the Dzog-chen Community, Sanjei Ling, and presented them with several gifts including a white A on a silk flag, reproductions of tankas of Ekajati and Rigzin Chang Chub Dorje and several books on Dzog-chen.

The following day, Fabio and Vladimir Montelevich arrived at Padma Ling in Riga where the first Yantra Yoga lessons were given.

Yoga lessons which were held for ten days at the gymnasium of a school. On several occasions there were special meetings with Fabio where he gave more detailed explanations on Dzog-chen practices such as Semzin, Kordas Rushen, the short tun and the practice of the Six Lokas. He also gave an explanation of "Instructions on the Ngondro" of Norbu Rinpoche. At the very beginning of Fabio's visit, we did a Guru Puja in the Buryatian style of the Dandaron tradition and at the end of his visit, we did a Ganapuja together in the Dzog-chen tradition. On July 4th, Fabio was invited by Galina Montelevich, the literary editor of an independent philosophical magazine, "Stupeni" (Steps) for an appointment with the editor-in-chief about publishing some articles of

There was an exhibition on Buddhist culture and art in the beautiful Kazansky Cathedral and we visited the famous Hermitage Gold Treasury. There happened to be also a Tibetan Exposition which was very small but interesting. And generally we enjoyed the ancient streets of the city where the great masters of Italian architecture had built their splendid constructions on what had once been a marsh. Fabio also attended the wedding party of two young people from our Community, Elena and Slavik Korotkovi.

On July 6th, Fabio left Saint Petersburg for Riga to have a rest, but people from Estonia unexpectedly asked him to come and give them lessons on Yantra Yoga. The invitation was given by the Estonian Tibetologist, Maret Kark. Fabio went to Tallin, to the capital of the third Baltic Republic. Unfortunately we were unable to organize a trip to Buryatia but some people from this eastern part of the USSR were present at the Yantra Yoga courses in Moscow and Leningrad.

In all the six towns in the USSR where Fabio gave Yantra Yoga teaching he was admired for his openness, his endurance and for helping us to understand the problems which can arise among people.

About 200 people studied Yantra Yoga with him. In Moscow and Kharkov, groups of people are already continuing to practice Yantra Yoga.

We hope that Lama Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche will be able to visit us in the USSR and we would like to thank Norbu Rinpoche for sending Fabio Andrico to visit us because through this visit our contact has grown even stronger.

## Guru Padmasambhava Fraternity



Photo courtesy of Seraphino Sidorov

A new Dzog-chen group, the Guru Padmasambhava Fraternity, has been organized in Buryatia, in the USSR. The group is international and consists of Buryats and Russians and includes lamas, young monks and lay people. The group plans to build a gonpa for those who seriously intend to practise Dzog-chen.

Some members of the group participated in a course of Yantra Yoga and instructions on preliminary Dzog-chen practices that was given by Fabio Andrico during his tour through the USSR.

The group is very interested in establishing contact with other Dzog-chen groups and can be contacted at the following address:

Ulan-Ude, Karl Marx Boulevard, 9-2b Vyasnikortser A.J, Buryatia, 670D31 USSR.

## The Buddhists in Russia

Corriere Della Sera, Monday, July 15th 1991

Moscow: This is a historical day for Soviet citizens of the Buddhist faith. Thousands have gathered yesterday in the city of Ulan Ude, capital of the autonomous republic of Buryatia, to attend a religious ceremony performed by the Tibetan Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of all the Buddhists in the world. According to the TASS agency, more than twenty thousand people participated in the ceremony.

On the occasion of the Dalai Lama's arrival, the authorities decided to give back to the Buddhist community more than two thousand sacred objects that had been seized and confiscated from the monasteries during the period of "militant atheism" in the 1930's and, since then, stored away.

Among these objects there is a famous sandalwood statue of the Buddha, which, after more than sixty years, has been restored to the faithful.

The Dalai Lama was invited to Ulan Ude to take part in the celebrations for the 250th anniversary of the recognition of Buddhism as a state religion.

It was a decree issued in 1741 by Empress Elizabeth of Russia, the daughter of Peter the Great, which granted official recognition in exchange for an oath of loyalty to Russia from the Buddhists of Buryatia.

With the population of around one million, the Republic is an autonomous region within the Russian Federation. It is situated in Siberia in the Lake Baikal region, at the border with Mongolia. It is estimated that there are five hundred thousand Buddhists living in the Soviet Union.



Fabio Andrico

After visiting Riga, Vilnius, Kharkov and Moscow, Fabio returned to Leningrad on June 24th. It was a tiring trip and many thanks are due to the translators who assisted, especially Lena Kovalyeva from Riga.

Coming back to Leningrad the city had just been given back its original name, Saint Petersburg.

50 to 60 people attended the Yantra

Norbu Rinpoche on Dzog-chen teaching in the next issue of the magazine.

The cultural programme in Saint Petersburg was very concentrated. We visited with Fabio the famous Russian park called "Tsar's Village". We walked around the ancient parts of the city where the most interesting sightseeing spots are situated, such as "Peter and Paul's Fortress".

## House for sale near Merigar



Podere Fontanelle. Located in the vicinity of Seggiano and only about 20km from Merigar, this classic Tuscan style farmhouse has been completely restructured. It consists of two floors, with four upstairs rooms and four downstairs. Plumbing and the electric system have been newly installed. The roof is new.

There is a double garage and a lean-to barn attached to the house.

It is situated in 10 hectares (25 acres) of beautiful countryside in a secluded situation with panoramic views. There are about 300 cultivated olive trees and a number of vines and fruit trees.

For further information contact:

Mr. and Mrs. Vita-Finzi, 22 South Hill Park, London NW3, GB  
Telephone 071-794 4415

## Geshe Tenzin Wangyal in Austria

by Oliver F. Leick

From Saturday 13th July till Friday 19th July, 1991, we had a retreat with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal in the mountains of Austria. A wooden house at 1450 meters altitude had been rented for the occasion.

35 people, of whom 15 were from Austria, 19 from Germany and 2 from Italy, had the possibility to follow the teaching of Lama Tenzin and practise with him.

The main goal of the retreat was to experience and understand the teachings and in order to reach this goal we did a lot of practice.

Lama Tenzin gave teachings from the Shang-Shung Nyin gyud, the oral transmission of Shang-Shung. The first part of the retreat was dedicated to explanations of Nondro and of the Dzog-chen view. During the latter part of the retreat Lama

Tenzin concentrated on the fourth chapter of the Shang-Shung Nyin gyud called "the 21 seals". In the evenings we received the teaching of the dream practice of the Shang-Shung Nyin gyud.

The daily schedule was very strict beginning at half past seven with collective practice until breakfast at 9 o'clock. Then with short pauses and a lunch break, there were practice and teaching sessions till seven o'clock in the evening: shine practice for the newcomers, contemplation practice for the old practitioners. After a Tun there followed teaching of the dream practice later in the evening.

In spite of this very tight schedule Lama Tenzin was always ready and willing to answer our questions and clarify doubts.

Lama Tenzin and all the participants of the retreat were very satisfied with the organisation of the retreat as well as the house, excellent food and the translator.

The Austrian Dzog-chen Community hopes to be able to see Lama Tenzin in Austria again, maybe in the summer of 1992 when Lama Tenzin Wangyal is expected to give a seminar in neighbouring Germany.

## New German Gakyil

BLUE

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Tel. 06105-5848

## The life of those who possess a body

### Book review

O Victorious Vajra-dhara, speak to me of the bar-do of the moment of death. At the moment of the death of men, how do the signs appear?

What are the methods of overcoming death? How can people apply these methods at the moment in which the force of elements is exhausted, and one begins to walk on the path of death?

O, Victorious one, speak to me of this!

The Master said:

Mi-rtog-ye-shes Thub-pa listen, it is good that you have made this request:

The life of those beings who possess a body,

Is impermanent like a dream:

And a dream has no concrete consistency

This life is impermanent like rushing water:

The water of a mountain stream does not halt in one place.

This life is like the wind, it is not to be grasped:

The wind cannot be caught by men.

This life is short like a magical enchantment.

A spell does not last forever.

This life is not something real, it is like an illusion:

Illusion has no truth---

One moment there is light, in the next there is not.

The length of men's lives is like this."



This is an excerpt from "The Tantra of the Great Secret Union of the Sun and Moon", a text of the Nyingma Dzog-chen tradition. The Tantra is written in a form in which a Bodhisattva, Mi-rtog thub-pa, motivated by compassion for all sentient beings, asks a series of questions concerning the means by which sentient beings may reach liberation. The supreme deity, Dorje Chang, personification of pure wisdom and knowledge, illustrates the esoteric doctrine to the Bodhisattva. An extract of this Tantra has been translated by tibetologist Giacomella Orofino. As well, she has given us a translation and commentary taken from 'The Doctrine of Six Lights', which comes from the oral tradition of the Dzog-chen teaching of Zhang Zhung. The appendices include the translation of a Bonpo text, "The Light Which Makes Clear the Signs of Death".

These ancient texts presented in this book, Sacred Tibetan Teachings, have never before been translated. They describe the process of dying and the after-death state as understood by the highest and most ancient systems of the Tibetan religious teachings, that of Dzog-chen, which is found in the unreformed Buddhist tradition of Nyingma, "The Ancient Ones" and in the religious tradition of Bonpo. Tibetan thought considers dying to be a period of transition between two realities, a 'bardo' state. There are different bardo states described in the Tantra of the Great Secret Union of the Sun and the Moon. These are: the bardo of nature, the period between birth and death; the bardo of the moment of death; the bardo of essential reality, which is

after death, during which appears the luminous nature of reality, to those who can recognise it; and then may follow the bardo of arising existence. The Tantra describes signs of approaching death, how to recognise these and describes ways one can possibly avert untimely death. Also described is the bardo of essential reality, the after-death experience in which the true nature of being manifests. As Giacomella Orofino describes in her introduction:

"From the point of view of these teachings, at the moment of death, the aggregate of all of one's internal elements separates from the mortal body and gradually dissolves. The mind then finds itself in a pure condition, uncontaminated by gross material existence. In that moment, the person who has died clearly experiences the nature of his existential reality, which is none other than pure rainbow light, a source of infinite joy, in which all phenomena manifest themselves as an expression of the dynamic energy of being.

Thus, if one is free of the constrictions of ignorance, and can remain in this condition of perfect union, one recognises all sounds and visions as the projections of one's own mind. To do this means to liberate one definitively from the causal chain of birth and death, union and separation, joy and sorrow, which binds all of the beings who are lost in the ocean of existence. If on the contrary liberation does not take place, and one continues to be prey to the illusory projections of one's own mind, trying to grasp them as a child tries to grasp the reflections which appear in a mirror, it will not be possible to stop the

flow of samsara and one will continue to transmigrate according to one's karmic tendencies".

The Doctrine of the Six Lights', also concerns the bardo of essential reality. It begins:

Homage to Kun-tu bzang-po,  
My own innate state of pure Awareness

Completely purified.

O Noble being, during the light of the moment of bar-do, one arrives at the borderline between real understanding and error."

The essential point of this doctrine is to understand how samsara separates from nirvana; how the mind separates from the body; the teaching on the way liberation can occur if real understanding arises, and the way in which one falls prey to illusion if real understanding does not arise. There is a description of the method of practice during the period following death, that moment where there exists the ultimate possibility of understanding the essence of reality.

The final translation, "The Light Which Makes Clear the Signs of Death", a Bonpo text, analyses and explains in great detail, all the signs of approaching death that were previously mentioned in the Tantra of the Great Secret Union of the Sun and Moon; also detailed accounts of ways to avert such untimely death.

Dr. Giacomella Orofino, a graduate of Tibetan Language and Literature at the Oriental Institute of the University of Naples, has studied in India under the guidance of Lopen Tenzin Namdak, a meditation master of the Bonpo monastery of sMan-ri, now refounded in Himachal Pradesh. She has also been guided and encouraged by Professor Namkhai Norbu, a Professor of Tibetan Language and Literature at the Oriental Institute, University of Naples. She also mentions the great value of the oral transmission of these teachings by Tibetan masters, in particular oral information received from Professor Namkhai Norbu and Lopen Tenzin Namdak. Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche mentions the importance of this book in his preface, noting that those who wish to gain a deeper knowledge of Tibetan doctrines of the post-mortem will find in this study a tool to gain access to their essential meaning. This book makes available ancient texts of great beauty and clarity that have been, until now, unavailable to English readers. It gives the Dzog-chen practitioner a further guide to the understanding of the true nature of being.

Jean Mackintosh

*Sacred Tibetan Teachings on Death and Liberation.*

*Preface by Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. Translation and commentary by Giacomella Orofino.*

*First published in Italian in 1985.*

*Re-written in English, by Giacomella Orofino and published in 1990 by Prism Press, Bridport, Great Britain.*

*Avery Publishing Group, Inc., New York U.S.A. Uvery Press, Lindfield, Australia*

## Sweat Lodge at Tsegylgar



by Woody Paparazzo

We had the good fortune last summer at our retreat at Tsegylgar to have the opportunity to participate in a Lakota (Sioux) sweat lodge lead by Sparky Shooting Star. Sparky, of both Native American (Cherokee) and Irish descent, is a student of Mary Thunder and a follower of the Sun Dance Trail. She is also a student of Rinpoche. With the aid of Tsaltrim Lama and others, she directed the building of a sweat lodge on our land. During the first half of our retreat, sweat lodges were offered each day after the morning teaching. Just before Rinpoche returned to Italy in September, we were fortunate to have Mary Thunder come and lead a sweat lodge for our whole community. The following is an account of a personal experience: I sat on the ground with the others outside the sweat lodge and waited for the ceremony to begin. The smoke from the firepit behind us drifted above our heads in long thin ribbons that intermingled with the dark scents of the earth and woods that surrounded us. It was summer but it smelled like autumn.

Sparky began by telling us that stones are the oldest beings on the earth and that they hold within them the memories of all that has come before us. I could see the large stones being heated in the firepit behind me. Sparky said these stones were old and wise and, when they were red hot, they are ready to be brought into the sweat lodge where they will be put into the pit in the center. Here in the pit they are sprinkled with water which allows them to release their spirits in a shower of steam as a gift to us and our prayers.

The sweat lodge is an ancient Lakota ceremony that originated thousands of years ago. It was transmitted to Sparky by her teacher Mary Thunder who in turn received it from her Elders. It is a ritual ceremony of prayer and purification in which one can have contact with one's ancestors, visions, journeys to the past all the way back to birth and beyond, revelations about oneself that can bring healing. Everything in the ceremony is a symbol of our journey back to the womb. The lodge itself is shaped like a turtle so that when we look up we can see the ribs of our mother.

I walked around the firepit outside the lodge and then bent down, entered the low opening, and crawled on the dirt to my place. The lodge was a simple hut made of blankets, sticks, and black plastic. Inside we fit together like pieces of a puzzle, knees up or knees down. In the center I saw the pit where the stones were to be brought and remembered that it was the womb of the mother earth. I watched as each stone was carried on a pitchfork, placed in the womb, and thanked for its sacrifice.

Sometimes a stone would break in half revealing a red-orange glow and it was said then that the stone had opened its heart to us.

The flap over the door was shut and we sat in complete darkness, except for the dim glow of stones in the center. Onto these stones water was sprinkled and hot steam filled all of the space around us as the stones offered their lives to us. Our guide, Judy, beat her drum and asked us to pray aloud together.

I sat on the dirt floor and breathed fire, fire, fire. Sweat spilled from my pores. More water, more steam, more sweat. I could not breathe, I was on fire. It was completely black, just like the womb, but the blackness was spacious and filled the whole universe. The light I could see with my eyes must have been coming from within.

Four times the door was opened, stones were brought in, the door was shut, water was thrown on the stones, and we prayed and hollered aloud to the beating of the drum. The pile of stones in the center grew large and heat from the steam became so thick and hot it was like a wall wrapping itself around me.

The last time the door was opened we were asked to make a prayer for ourselves. Water was thrown on the hot stones and the drum again began to beat. Suddenly, I began to pray for my voice, that I may speak the truth, that this light I saw within me may never dim. The steam was fire transformed to water that burned in tiny flames of sweat all over my body. I am fire. I am water. I am the blackness and I am the light. I am the stones who are now being sacrificed and I am the steam. I am the mud and the dirt beneath me. I am my voice, that is all that is left of me here in this darkness....

Afterwards, we shared the peace pipe outside the lodge. It was filled with tobacco and herbs and is believed to be a vehicle for prayer.

I was surprised as I looked about me to see that some of us were covered with mud, others very clean. Later we swam in the pond.



## ASTROLOGY

### The five elements in one's chart

The five Elements (Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, Water) can be seen as being like five stars in an individual's personal sky, five energies or functions that come together to distribute their changeable influences through space and time, governing the characteristics, circumstances and changes in the lives of each and every one of us.

Therefore, these five elements, the very substance of existence, enter into the fabric of the individual's universe at the gateway of birth, and leave their special mark: a collection of individual characteristics, a set of relationships that at death will dissolve into their immaterial essence.

There are Wood people and there are Fire people, that is, people whose characteristic condition with regard to the Elements is that particular type. This general condition can be clearly identified by external signs, such as the timbre of voice, a particular way of emitting sound. Complexion, and the appearance of the body, attitudes, and recurring dreams can all give precise indications about the individual's Elements, too. The identification of a person's characteristics is generally based on the year of birth and the resulting typology is particular to that person and cannot be altered.

All five Elements constantly enter into the psychophysical make-up, and it is actually their mutual relationship which determines a particular typology. Therefore, one refers to a person's 'Elements'. The aim of Jungtsi astrology, or rather one of the ways it can be used (although not the only one!) is a comparison of the individual's Elements with the corresponding Elements of the year in course. In other words, when predicting, one studies the combination of a person's Elements at the moment of birth, with the Elements of a current or future year, month, day and hour. This comparison is used in finding out whether or not the year, month or day in question may have a positive influence on the life of that particular person. This method is called Kegtsi (skek rtsis).

How does one calculate a person's Elements? Jungtsi astrology singles out five sectors, five essential constituents of the human being, in which it is necessary to know the specific Element: Wangtang (dbang thang) Capacity, Sog (srog) Life, Lu (lus) Body, Lungta (klung rta) Fortune and La (bla) Soul, as well as a number, Mewa (sme ba), and a Trigram, Parkha (spar kha). There are therefore a total of seven basic features which define somebody's particular situation concerning the Elements, which we will now briefly consider one by one.

#### Wangtang (Capacity).

Wangtang (dbang thang) literally means Energy but the idea the word expresses can be effectively rendered as an individual's Strength or Capacity. The quality of this Strength can be deduced by considering the Animal and the Element of the person's year of birth.

To do this, it is necessary to have at least some idea of the annual cycles as defined by the Tibetan calendar: the twelve symbols of the Animals

(Mouse, Ox, Tiger, Hare, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Sheep, Monkey, Bird, Dog, Boar) are always combined with the five Elements, each of which is repeated for two years, the first year being considered as masculine and the second feminine.

Combining the twelve Animals and the five Elements gives rise to a cycle of sixty years, called a Loghen (lo rgan) sixty, in which each of the twelve Animals appears five times, each time coupled with a different Element.

Each one of us is born in a fixed year, which corresponds to a single Animal and likewise to a single Element. For example, 1988 was an Earth-Dragon year. The Wangtang of a child born in this year would therefore be Earth-Dragon and the child's Element of Capacity (Wangtang, dbang thang) would be the Earth. The Capacity Element of children born in 1989 (Earth-Snake year) or in 1990 (Metal-Horse year) will be Earth for the former and Metal for the latter.

The Wangtang can be calculated not only for the year but also for the month, day and hour of birth, and these can then be compared with the current year, month, day and hour, or with times in the future. Although in what follows we will discuss only the year of birth, it should be borne in mind that more specific calculations taking into consideration the month, day and hour of birth are possible for all the symbols and in all sectors of Jungtsi astrology.

#### Sog (Life).

The second feature to be examined is called Sog (srog), which can be translated as Life. This aspect is of prime importance as it refers to a person's actual 'life', from the moment of conception to the time of death, and therefore constitutes a vital term of reference for all the other aspects of an individual. In other words, without Life there would be no sense in talking about Capacity or Fortune.

The idea of Sog can be rendered by thinking of a plant which lives and progresses in its life cycle. If, at a certain point, it is cut, it dies, that is it stops growing and its life is interrupted.

To work out someone's Life Element, or Sog, one considers only the Animal of the year of birth and not the Element.

As well as a temporal cycle, a spatial relationship also exists which relates the twelve Animals to the four main points of the compass. In practice

the twelve are diagrammatically set out along the sides of an imaginary square (or else, in a more Tibetan-like manner laid out along the joints and fingertips of one hand). The four sides of the square each correspond to a cardinal point and the corners represent the points in between. Each cardinal point (and thus the Animal which it corresponds to) is always associated with the same Element.

The top side of the square represents South and the Element Fire (Snake, Horse).

The lower side represents North and the Element Water (Boar, Mouse).

The left-hand side represents East and the Element Wood (Tiger, Hare).

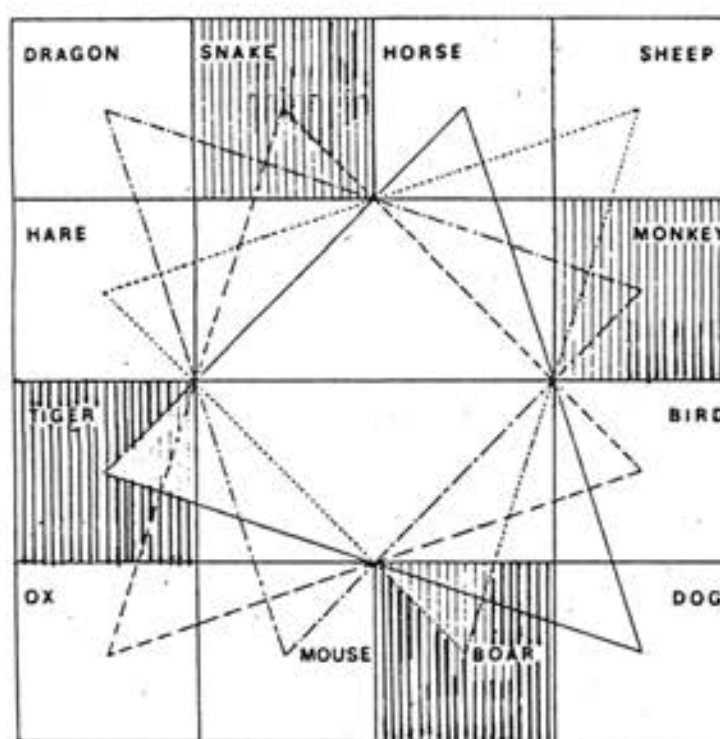
whether a given period will be favourable or not for the person's physical body, that is whether or not there are likely to be diseases or disturbances and how severe they may be.

Calculating the Lu is a little longer and more complicated, and so will not be dealt with here.

#### Lungta (Fortune).

The concept of Fortune in Tibetan expresses something fundamentally different from mere 'fate', which one tends more or less consciously to make it coincide with.

We have all occasionally found ourselves thinking things like, "This is a really unfortunate period", or, "That chap's really fortunate",



FORTUNE CHART

The right-hand side represents West and the Element Metal (Monkey, Bird).

The four corners correspond to the four mid-way points of the compass and the Element Earth (Ox, Dragon, Sheep, Dog).

The Life Element, for example, of a child born in a Monkey year would be Metal, as the Monkey is to be found on the West side of the square, which corresponds to Metal.

#### Lu (Body).

The third aspect is Lu (lus), which can be translated in English as Body. Lu represents the strength of the physical body, and its calculation is important in establishing what type of constitution an individual has and his or her material body's inherent tendencies.

Comparing someone's Lu (which also depends on the year of birth) with the current Lu, one can find out

thereby emphasizing the accidental quality of the word 'fortune', which might be said to be 'outside' us.

For Tibetans, it is different. Fortune or misfortune is merely a visible result of something else.

They prefer to see the matter in terms of the relationship between an individual's internal energy and his or her external energy made up of a combination of circumstances and causes, external influences and conditions. When our personal energy is strong, as a result, we become somehow compact and impregnable to any negative external causes. Instead, positive causes tend to be attracted and to come into contact with us. This is what is generally translated by the word 'fortune'.

On the other hand, if an individual's energy is weak, a vacuum is created, a hole which acts as a pole of

By M. Rita Leti

This article follows *Astrology of the Elements* published in issue 9 of *The Mirror*.

attraction for all negativities, and it is this which is generally defined as 'misfortune'.

Naturally there are many both positive and negative external causes present at any one time, and likewise it is very unlikely that one's internal energy will remain intact and so virtually invulnerable. What is certain is that the manifestation of positive or negative causes, fortune or misfortune, depends on our internal energy situation.

So the term Lungta (Fortune), far from implying the mere action of an external force inflicted on an individual, really indicates the delicate and ever-changing relationship between the phenomenal universe and the interior world.

How does one go about calculating someone's Fortune Element?

Once again one refers to the twelve Animals and their relations with the Elements; except that in this case the twelve signs are grouped into four triads, and each triad is geometrically represented in the form of a triangle. The Animals that belong to the same triad have the same Fortune point, that is an Animal outside the triangle referred to as its 'Particular Fortune Point'. The Element of the latter Animal (on the basis of the North-South-East-West orientation outlined above (will be the Fortune Element for that triad.

So in practice:

- Mouse, Dragon, Monkey form the Wood triangle (Particular Fortune Point: Tiger, Wood).

- Ox, Snake, Bird form the Water triangle (Particular Fortune Point: Boar, Water).

- Tiger, Horse, Dog form the Metal triangle (Particular Fortune Point: Monkey, Metal).

- Hare, Sheep, Boar form the Fire triangle (Particular Fortune Point: Snake, Fire).

The Fortune Element of a child born, let's say, in a Snake year or a Bird year (second triad) would therefore be Water and its Particular Fortune Point would be the Boar.

The particular grouping arrangements helps as well as to calculate one's Fortune Element, to also illustrate certain relationships that exist among the twelve signs: in general, the Animals belonging to any one triad can be said to have a good mutual relationship and tend to agree with one another; but for all three there is only one particularly positive sign, and that is the 'Particular Fortune Point'.

The mutual relationship with this sign, however, is not outstandingly good. So, for example, while for an Ox, a Snake or a Bird it is particularly propitious to meet a Boar, for a Boar the relationship with an Ox is neutral. The two couples, Tiger-Monkey and Snake-Boar, form the only exceptions to this rule, in that in both these cases the one Animal forms the Fortune Point of the other.

Continued on page 13

# Jungtsi Astrology

Continued from page 12

This sort of consideration has a certain importance in the evaluation of unions between two or more people.

## La (Soul).

La (bla), which is generally translated as Soul represents what might be called an 'essence'. It is not the Soul in the Christian sense, but rather an individual's overall psychophysical energy, his or her vitality.

If the Soul is lacking, a person is tired, pale and frightened. When we meet someone who we instinctively do not like, who without any apparent reason transmits to us an unpleasant sensation, what we are really perceiving is the weakness of the person's La. When, on the other hand, somebody immediately strikes us as being nice, friendly and positive, pleasant to come into contact with, this is the sign of a strong La.

In other words when one speaks of Soul in Tibetan astrology, one is referring to conditions similar to that of a plant which, when planted in good ground in a sunny spot in the presence of water and all other favourable factors, will be able to grow well and be beautiful and healthy. If, on the other hand, these things are lacking, the plant will still grow but this time slowly, weakly and laboriously. The same thing applies to a man, who can continue to live even without Soul, but will live badly. However an excessive weakness in the La over a long period of time can actually endanger the life itself of an individual.

Calculating the La is very simple: all that needs to be known is the person's Life Element as the La is just the Mother of the Life Element. For example, someone born in a Monkey year (Life Element Metal) will have Earth as La, in that the Mother Element of Metal is Earth.

Having dealt with the five aspects of the individual that are all in some way derived from the Animal or Element of the year of birth, we can look at the other two: the calculation of the Number (Mewa) and the Trigram (Parkha).

## The Mewa.

In the ancient system of Tibetan astrology of Bon origin, each year was not only defined by an Element and an Animal, but also by a number called Mewa (sme ba).

The Mewa consists of a series of nine numbers, from nine to one, which in combination with the twelve Animals and the five Elements give rise to a cycle of 180 years called a Menkhor (sme 'khor) or the Necklace of the Mewa.

This means that while it takes sixty years (Logan 60) for the same Animal to be associated again with the same Element (e.g. Earth - Dragon), 180 years are necessary for the repetition of an Animal - Element - Number combination (e.g.

Earth - Dragon - 3). In other words, three complete cycles of sixty years, called first, second and third Metren (sme phreng) - go to make up a Menkhor.

The nine Mewa numbers each have a fixed position in a nine box square which represents their spatial relationships. Each one also corresponds to a shape, a colour and an Element.

In ancient Tibet, this square (which is in fact a magic square) with its nine coloured boxes was the actual symbol of astrology.

Here is a list of the correspondences:

- The numbers 1 - 6 - 8 correspond to the colour white and the Element Metal.

- The number 2 corresponds to the colour black, the number 3 to blue, and both correspond to the Element Water.

- The number 4 corresponds to green and the Element Wood.

- The number 5 corresponds to yellow and the Element Earth.

- The numbers 7 and 9 correspond to red and the Element Fire.

Each Mewa has its own particular character: some are more 'ferocious', while others are more 'peaceful', and in yet other cases, 'movement' is the predominant aspect.

Mewa literally means mole or beauty-spot. Moles can appear anywhere on the body for no apparent reason, either at the time of birth or many years later. In any case, a mole appears in places where many secondary causes come together. This point of collection or union as a characterizing force is linked with the overall energy condition containing all the many possibilities for manifestation, and is simply called Mewa.

S		
4 WOOD GREEN	9 FIRE RED	2 WATER BLACK
3 WATER BLUE	5 EARTH YELLOW	7 FIRE RED
8 IRON WHITE	1 IRON WHITE	6 IRON WHITE
N		

MEWA CHART

Starting from the Mewa of someone's birthyear, the individual Mewa can be calculated for the Life, Capacity and Fortune.

As with the other aspects, the Mewa can be calculated not only for the year but also for the month, day and hour, and it is possible to compare the birth Mewa with that of the

present moment.

## The Parkha (Trigram).

Along with the set of nine numbers, there is another way of calculating a type of energy similar to that of the Mewa, using a set of eight Trigrams, called Parkha (spar kha) in Tibetan and akin to those of the Chinese I Ching.

Each of the nine Mewa numbers corresponds to a Trigram (with the exception of 5, the central square, which remains empty).

The eight Trigrams are arranged in relation to the four main points of the compass and each corresponds to a specific Element (different to that of the corresponding Mewa number). Elements at the cardinal points opposite to one another have complementary Trigrams, and numbers:

- South: the number is 9, corresponding to Fire. Its Trigram is called Li.

- North: the number is 1 (complementary to 9), the Element is Water and the Trigram (also complementary to the preceding one) is called Kan.

- East: the number is 3, the Element Wood and the Trigram Sin.

- West: the number is 7 (complementary to 3), the Element Metal and the Trigram Da, complementary to the preceding one.

- The intermediate points contain the numbers 2 - 4 - 6 - 8, which correspond to four different aspects of the Element Earth (Earth, Earth-Sky, Mountain, Plain - Wind). The number 2, Earth (Kon) and the number 6, Earth - Sky (Ken) have complementary Trigrams (but do not have complementary numbers). The same applies to 4, Plain - Wind

of birth. These Trigrams can be compared with those of the present moment to find out whether or not it is favourable for carrying out certain actions.

## The Kegtsi Method

We said at the outset that one of the ways that Jungtsi can be used is in the comparison of a person's Elements (that is his or her Elements of Capacity, Life, Body, Fortune, Soul, Mewa and Parkha) with the corresponding Elements of the year in course, so as to see whether or not the present year has a positive influence on the person's life. This is the Kegtsi (skek rtsis) method. But in Tibet this type of astrology is also used in other ways, for instance to find out how compatible two people are and how they might get on together in marriage (Pagtsi, bag rtsis, from Bag meaning marriage calculation) or else to establish the most favourable day for someone's funeral so as to avoid negative influences on the surviving relatives. How can one get an easy answer? In practice, all the aspects listed above are compared with those of the present moment. The comparison between the year of birth and the current year gives very precise, fixed results, while comparisons for the month, day and hour give imprecise results as other considerations must be taken into account concerning the phases of the moon, the sun and the stars.

By reference to the four possible relations between the Elements (Mother, Son, Friend, Enemy) one can identify clearly the nature of the outcome.

1. When the Elements under comparison have a really negative relationship, the outcome is indicated by two black circles. This happens when the year's Element is the Enemy of one's own (e.g. the person's Element is Fire and that of the year is Water).

2. If the Element of the current year is the Child (bu) of one's own Element, the outcome is very slightly negative. This is illustrated by a black circle together with a white one to indicate a relationship which is partly negative, partly positive, somewhat balanced.

3. The Friend (grogs) relationship is considered positive and is presented by two white circles (e.g. the person's Element is Fire, that of the year is Earth).

4. The Mother (ma) relationship is

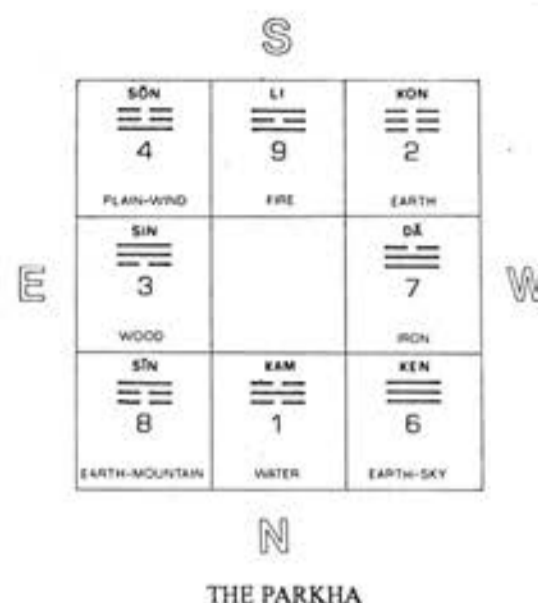
especially positive and is represented by three white circles (e.g. the person's Element is Fire, that of the year is Wood).

5. With recurring Elements (e.g. the person's Element is Water and that of the year is Water), the outcome depends on whether the Elements involved are Wood, Fire or Metal (one black circle), or if they are Earth or Water (one white circle). Finally it is necessary to bear in mind some general considerations. What is important is the balance between the various aspects; an excess of white circles for instance is not altogether positive.

Numerous additional considerations can be derived from the overall pattern of the reply.

By way of example, here are some general considerations: Life is especially important for males and living conditions; Body is particularly important for children as regards health; Capacity for females, earning, finances and the family; Fortune for intellectuals and people with important social positions. According to the Tibetans, our whole life is influenced and regulated by the stars, planets, sun, moon, Numbers, Trigrams and Elements. But a Tibetan does not give up in the face of this startling array of data, references, relationships and analogies. On the contrary, he feels reassured to know, by means of astrology, the appropriate way to react to any event or influence, be it positive or negative, that may occur. A millenary tradition has codified for him methods which are extremely refined and leave little or no space for subjective interpretation. Their effectiveness, however, can be put to the test day by day: first to identify the type of energy or rather the combination of energies at work at any one moment, and secondly to be able to operate on them effectively and with precision. Changes can be made in behaviour, rites, actions and details so as to confront any difficult or undesirable situation. In a way which is often difficult for the Western mentality to understand, astrology helps to simplify life, making it lighter and more in accordance with one's expectations, certainly not to make it more complicated.

Translated by Robin Cooke  
Reprinted from 'Merigar' magazine,  
October 1988.



THE PARKHA

## Children's Class

by Tzultrim Allione

Last winter some friends and students asked me to start a children's class. They were often coming to practices and having to leave their children in childcare, and the children were left out. They were growing up without the benefit of the spiritual teachings that their parents were benefitting from. We don't live in a Buddhist culture.



Our children are exposed to constant violence on television and materialism in Western culture. In Tibet a child with spiritual inclinations could have gone to a monastery or retreat center to study, and he or she would have been living in a non-violent Buddhist environment. We don't have this situation. So, thinking about all these things I agreed to do a children's class, but only for the children who were interested. They should never be forced.

We met each Sunday morning from eleven to twelve. There were between six and ten participants, and they ranged between the ages of six and seventeen.

We began outside at the Stupa. At first no one knew the meaning of the Stupa, so during the first class I explained it. After three circumambulations we stood in front of the Stupa and placed our hands in prayer posture and made a silent prayer. Then we all put our foreheads on the side of the Stupa to receive the blessing energy from it. The next week I had them explain the meaning of the Stupa to the new children. In general I got them to teach the new children anything they had learned. We started in the winter so the rest of the early classes took place inside. We started around the time of the invasion of Iraq, so I began asking them why they thought that there is a war. From this I explained passion, aggression, and

ignorance and the fundamental ideas of Buddhism and Dzog-chen, in very simple terms. Then I asked them to talk about an example of these principles in their own lives.

I taught them basic sitting posture and we decided to sit for three minutes without moving. I had some candles in the center of the circle and they chose one to concentrate on for their three minute "Shine"

practice. At the end we dedicated the merit of our meeting to all sentient beings.

During later classes we did many things. I encouraged them each to have their own shrine even if their parents already had one, and to make it meaningful to themselves by putting things they liked on it. One time I made Tara Kutsas (little statues) for them and we empowered them with mantra and visualization. Then they took them home to their own shrines. Several times we practised the invocation to Machig Lapdron, and they tried the drum and bell. I also taught the Tara Mantra and the Eho Shudde purification mantra. One time we went on a mindfulness walk. We walked in silence and tried to be present and undistracted the whole time.

Another time I showed them some of my special things like Ringsel and gave them some Dutsi to eat explaining how it is made. I told them how lucky they were to be coming to the teachings at such an early time in their lives, and that they have a karmic connection with the teachings that is very precious. When spring came we started to go outside more. We did integration with water at the lake, and one day we created a children's shrine. They chose a place under a bush very near to the Stupa. We asked permission of the protectors through silent meditation. When we all felt we had permission, we made offerings of

incense to the protectors. The children designed a bow shaped shrine of stones with special crystals and rocks and a wooden elephant on it. I gave them a choice of some statues I had and they chose a small statue of Vajra Yogini. We gathered flowers and candles and when it was all finished we sat in a circle around it and invited the parents to come to the opening. Each person made a prayer about what benefit the altar would create, and lit a candle. We had offered food, so we did a "mini" feast offering. I explained about one taste and not judging the food as good or bad, just being in the taste itself. Then they ate in silence and drank juice. The mini feast offering was part of the class whenever anyone brought something to eat. The children really liked the classes, they would ask their parents to bring them, and I also really loved being with them. For me, it was like giving something to the child inside me who had nothing like this when she was young, and longed for it. I was surprised the teenagers also really liked coming. The thing that I noticed was how hungry they are for meaning and spiritual substance in their lives. The Buddhist teachings and Dzog-chen principles are simple enough for a child to understand, yet so deep that the same explanation is very meaningful for teenagers. They also asked me for recommendations for books to read.

All too soon the end of the year came and everyone dispersed for summer, but we plan to meet again in autumn.

Some ideas I have for the future are short skits portraying the Paramitas or parts of the lives of teachers or the Buddha, working with clay and paintings, visits to lamas and museums, campouts with practice in the woods, integration with fire and the sky and integration with air. They could get Tibetan pen pals. Maybe they can eventually connect to the children in the Tibetan Village Project.

The possibilities are infinite and the children are so open and beautiful. I also noticed after coming to the class they would come to parts of the adult practice and know what was happening and be able to join in, feeling connected and part of it. I would love to see schools started with a Dzog-chen curriculum of science and humanities.

## Jewel in the mountains

Dear friends,

At the end of May I spent some days at Azamgar to do a personal retreat. When I arrived there, the air was cold and at the back of the house there was snow. Coming from Germany, I like the cold so I felt comfortable there. Being far from daily work, traffic and noise and spending some days and nights up in the mountains, I succeeded quite well in doing some practice and strengthening my energy. I shall never forget the marvellous moon passing over the valley and shining



on the snow covered peaks around this place! All night long I couldn't stop watching this miracle and looking down on the birth of the new day from the house. What a wonderful place Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche has found for us all. To me Azamgar seems like a jewel in our so crazy, unquiet world. Thanks to Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. And thanks to all the people who helped in some way to keep the place clean and who have done all the work of the last years.

Helmut Reile

## Children in Bodhgaya



Blessings to you all,

I think of you all enjoying bread while I lay in Bodhgaya Village trying to recover from a kidney infection, urinary tract stones and hepatitis. Overworking in the heat = dehydration. Enough of that.

The children and the school are established here in Bodhgaya. It has been a lot of hard work, and finally now I can see the fruits of constant effort. I am enclosing some photographs that were printed in India. I hope they are clear enough to use in the Mirror.

The update on the school: Prajna Vihara School is temporarily using two dormitory rooms at the Root Institute. The first few days were chaos as children played in the little rooms with doors (toilets and showers). It took some time for them to understand the very rare porcelain bowl set in concrete was not meant for them to pee in. I would bang a door bolted from the inside to find four or five or more little ones doing what village children do around a porcelain bowl with the door bolted. Showers were an absolute novelty - something between a toilet and a washroom, used for both. The village faucet is where water comes out like a waterfall, so all taps were left open with water gushing out. So, in order to retain a little sanity for those living at the Root Institute I had to lay down some strict rules. Happily now the children fully understand a toilet and a shower and a tap. What a relief. Land has been purchased near Mastipur village and a hut will be built to accommodate the 24 children who passed examination to become class II and the 40 children now enrolled in class I; there are also three teachers now. We are hoping for funds to build a permanent school and any assistance would be most welcome. We have to move out of the Root Institute before September. So, building is the next priority.

Again, I extend an open invitation to anybody visiting Bodhgaya, please visit the children at the school, at the Root Institute near the Tourist Bungalow.

Love to you all

Alice Presley  
Auckland, New Zealand

Editor's note: This letter follows A. Presley's letter to *The Mirror* in issue no. 7, March 1991, where she spoke about her plans to found the school.

## House for rent



Does somebody want to live near Merigar for a year or two? We are renting our rustic farmer's house, kitchen with a fireplace, complete bathroom, 2 rooms, accessible by road, 3 km from Merigar, quiet and panoramic position with a view of the Gomba. Electricity has been requested and may be installed in a few months. Low rent for longer leases.

Possibility of agreement: Free lodging for craftsmanship in carpentry, electric work, gardening, plumbing, etc.

If you are interested please write to:

Christina Tomshinsky  
Haus Fontana 12, CH - 3920 Zermatt, Switzerland, or  
Telephone, after 8 P.M.: 0041-28-673826

## Forest Friends

by Phil from the Wat

And in the forest my frenzied friends  
search for food and other requisites  
driven by survival  
and the urge to renew their kind  
Whilst I dream of yesterday  
like a rainbow clutching at a cloud  
and looking at a furrow in the ground  
is this what becomes of a raindrop  
In the same way should I consider my body a corpse  
A fallen raindrop forming a humble furrow  
The water has long since passed into the ocean



## Bodhisattva path

Sydney, Australia,  
June 26th, 1991

Dear Friends,  
In the report of his visit to China in the May issue of *The Mirror*, Andrea Dell'Angelo mentioned a pilgrimage to Mount Omei, which he correctly describes as a place sacred to Kuntuzangpo. But perhaps some readers may not be aware that this Kuntuzangpo, or Samantabhadra (in Chinese: Puxian), is not the naked blue buddha symbolizing primordial awareness

that we are all so familiar with, but the bodhisattva who personifies the practice of the bodhisattva path. Samantabhadra, the bodhisattva, plays a key role in the soteriological drama of the great Avatamsaka Sutra. In this text, and in the Hua Yen School based on it (Hua Yen being the Chinese equivalent of Avatamsaka), Samantabhadra is one member of a trinity - Vairocana, who represents the mind of Enlightenment (the Dharmakaya); Manjusri, who, as primordial guru,

stands for communication of the Dharma (i.e. the Sambhogakaya principle); and Samantabhadra, who is specifically associated with the commitments and practices of the bodhisattva path, and so ultimately with all enlightened activities, and who therefore represents the Nirmanakaya principle. In Dzog-chen terms, these three figures would correspond to essence, nature and energy respectively. With best wishes

Tony Prince

## "Presence" and "awareness"

Mérida, Venezuela,  
May 14th, 1991

Dear Friends,  
This is not the first time I find this kind of problem in Dzog-chen Community publications, but it is the first time I have decided to comment on them in order to try to resolve them (I mean to resolve what I perceive as problems, which may not be so considered by other people). I think it is of utmost importance to distinguish between relative presence or relative awareness - which involves the attention a mental subject pays to an object - from Absolute Presence or Absolute Awareness, which involves the dissolution of the subject-object duality as well as of attention as such.

In the January '91 issue of *Merigar Letter* - Il Bollettino, I found two translations that illustrated what I perceive as a problem. The first is the Italian translation of the English rendering of the Rin-chen sGru-bo by K. Lipman and M. Peterson, which appears on p. 3. In it, the word "awareness" - which in the Tibetan original was probably "rig-pa" or some other word indicating Absolute Awareness/Absolute Presence - was translated as "consapevolezza". The Anglo-Saxon etymology of the word "awareness" is "being true", and there is a tradition of using the word "awareness" for translating Tibetan terms indicating the Absolute Condition as Fruit or as the Way ("rig-pa", and sometimes also "ye-shes", etc.) In Italian, instead, "consapevolezza" is a word that is generally used in the sense that Rinpoche illustrated with the example of a glass of poison: if we are "consapevole", we won't

drink the poison, for we are aware that this could result in our death. In the first Italian edition of *Lo Specchio* (I haven't read the second one), the word is used in its relative sense. If the same term "consapevolezza" is used for translating the very different meaning of the Absolute Condition as the Fruit or as the Way, and, moreover, no indication is given that the term is being used in a sense that is absolutely different from the usual one, the result may only be an enormous confusion.

The same happens with the dictum



by Garab Dorje which appears on p. 6. If people take the word "presente" to mean the presence of the mental subject seemingly separate from its object, the result will be a great confusion and people will have no idea of how to practise. Remaining in the relative presence, the inadvertent reader will believe that he or she is in the absolute condition that is beyond karma and will think that, therefore, he or she can give free rein to whatever impulses come to his or her mind. A means for avoiding this problem may be using capitalized words for referring to Absolute Awareness and Absolute Presence, warning the reader that those words, when capitalized, refer to the Absolute

Condition as the Fruit or as the Way, and explaining what is the difference between Absolute and relative awareness and presence. Then the words by Garab Dorje could read:

*Se il pensiero sorge  
(tu) rimani nella Presenza (dello)  
Stato; (1)  
se il pensiero non sorge  
(tu) remani ugualmente nella  
Presenza (dello) Stato.  
Allora non c'è differenza fra i due  
momenti.*

(1. The word "dello" goes in parentheses because there is no dualistic relation between the one to whom the state is present (or who is present in the state) and the state that is present to her or him (or in which she or he is present). Thus the word "presence" is not being used in its etymological sense, that is "being before" (being in front of).

The same happens with the word "tu": it does not indicate that there is a mental subject seemingly separate from its object; therefore, it goes in parentheses.

The parentheses may be dispensed with, but capitalizing the words "Awareness" and "Presence" and explaining why this is done is essential for comprehending the meaning.)

I never communicated this before because ego is always involved in these things. However, I think it is important to clarify the teachings as much as possible, even if this may become fuel for the ego. Then one will have a more patent false appearance of ego that will be easier to recognize and liberate.

Yours

Elias Capriles

## Preventive Medicine: The Third Eye

Richard P. Huemer, MD

Reprinted from *Let's Live*, October 1990

It's a weird thought - that at the top of your head, near the hair whorl but deep inside, there's a little eye staring blindly, and perpetually, at the inside of your skull. It's the exact homologue of the third eye in prehistoric ocean fish, and the head-top optics of a certain exotic lizard.

It's your pineal gland.

The pineal can actually "see" in a roundabout way; it gathers information about the light perceived by your regular eyes. If the light is insufficient, the pineal gland makes more melatonin, the hormone that regulates other glands. It helps set your biological clock to the sun's cycle. Melatonin is also responsible for the "winter blues" that creep up when the days grow shorter.

Reader S.L. of San Leandro, California, recently sent me a packet of information about melatonin that's, well, eye-opening. First of all, melatonin is good for jet lag. A double-blind study reported in the *British Medical Journal* in 1986 showed significantly less jet lag in eight subjects who took melatonin for a few days before and after a long flight. This is reasonable, since melatonin is involved in regulating the body's 24-hour rhythm.

Moreover, melatonin has biological effects similar to those of certain antidepressant drugs. Therefore, it has been proposed as therapy for melancholic states (but not, of course, seasonal affective disorders or "winter blues"). Low melatonin has been found in some patients with panic disorders.

Scientists are pursuing other exciting leads, such as preliminary evidence of anticancer activity and an apparent anti-aging effect. All things considered, the pineal and its hormone melatonin are coming into focus as a major influence on health. Quite a role for a blind little eye that, until recently, was regarded as a useless and quaintly vestigial organ.

## Good news for the Bowhead Whale



*International Herald Tribune*  
Wednesday, July 3, 1991

The bowhead whale, hunted to near-extinction in the past century, is rebounding. An estimated 7,800 bowheads live in Alaskan waters. As recently as the 1970s, there were only 1,000. The bowhead can reach a length of 60 feet and weigh up to

100 tons. It uses its head, which makes up a third of its body, as a huge battering ram to make breathing holes in the ice. Bowheads, as a protected species, are no longer commercially hunted. But Alaskan Eskimos are allowed an annual harvest of 41 bowheads, which are part of their diet and culture.

## International Cooperation on Baltic Sea

Reprinted from spring 1991 issue of *Green Brigade*, Krakow, Poland.

The countries around the Baltic are well aware of the disastrous ecological situation of the sea and its coasts. Obvious are the threat of extinction of the seals and the dramatic decline in fish populations. More detailed investigations indicate that up to 50 per cent of the seabottom is now devoid of oxygen and aerobic life. The situation is aggravated by the very slow circulation and renewal of water in the Baltic.

The most severe polluters of the Baltic are the industries and cities situated by the sea. The rivers, such as the Vistula, transport large volumes of polluted water from the adjacent countries, and agriculture in the coastal areas adds excess fertilizer to the sea. The Baltic Sea concerns the surrounding countries as a whole and not only coastal areas. It is obvious that amelioration of the conditions in the Baltic requires improved control of industrial and municipal exhausts.



Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche  
**SANTI MAHĀ SANGHĀ**  
The rDzogs-chen Community

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If you wish please send your questions about your doubts and uncertainties to The Mirror. We shall try to clarify them together.

## To have a child?



energy. One is that energy which we have as a physical person and with which we can, in some way, work to help, improve and put right errors which come about through our incorrect attitudes, etc. What is important is to have a positive mental attitude because this generates positive energy.

In this case we can analyze the real situation with sincerity and respect towards the being that we want to bring into the world. One idea for this type of consideration could be this: am I capable of behaving with respect and trust towards this child that I wish to bring into the world? Or: what qualities do I have within me that I can give to this being? What can I give to this child to help him or her remain a human being in the real sense of the word? In what type of situation (family or my own) will this child find him or herself? And is this situation positive or one that will bring suffering to this being? We can continue this line of analysis. Then we should consider a very subtle, imperceptible form of energy which we don't usually manage to receive but which, however, exists and manifests in various ways. If the initial energy is positive enough, this subtle energy will also manifest more clearly, indicating the correct path.

The third point is easy to understand because it concerns our physical body. Then let us observe this. In what condition is our physical body? Does it have defects or sickness? Are there states of ill health in ourselves or our families which can be transmitted to our children? Let's think a moment before deciding. What kind of an action is it to give life to a being destined from the moment of birth to suffer? There are already many children (and adults) in the world who suffer for these reasons!

Rosa Tolti

I am very pleased to try and answer this question not only because I think it will be very useful for many people, but also because the question was asked by a man. If someone is thinking of bringing another human being into the world, the principles which should be borne in mind are many so I shall try to mention the main points.

First of all it is important to understand a concept: according to Buddhist principles, no being wants to reincarnate of his or her own will, with the exception of the Masters who instead have the possibility to be able to choose. Everyone comes into the world as a form of distraction.

When we think about conceiving a child it is a good idea to analyze the mind in all possible ways. The second step is to see if our energy is really adapted to give life to a being. The third element to consider is the condition of the body: is it capable and adapted to giving life?

If everything is positive and can help energy and sound, which are the basis of conception, it can be useful to do a purification of the body and recite mantra or the Song of the Vajra.

Let's go on to analyze the points mentioned in more detail.

What are we referring to when we speak about analyzing our mind? This concept, more precisely, means trying to approach things with a little wisdom and asking ourselves questions so that we can see into the depths of our Melong.

For example, in this case we could ask ourselves questions like, why am I thinking about a child? Why do I want to have a child? Do I want to bring a human being into the world or do I want a child that will be only mine? Do I want to bring into the world a perfect human being who will be able to give something to other human beings and who at the same time is my child or do I want to procreate only because I am afraid? Do I want a child to fill my emptiness?

Of course, we won't even take into consideration concepts such as wanting a child to bind another person to ourselves.

In conclusion, we can add that we can continue this line of questioning and that we can develop and use these questions according to our sensitivity.

Now let us see what we mean by energy.

The concept of energy is rather complex but can be explained simply like this: there are two forms of

## Dzog-chen Communities all over the world

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## What is Karma Yoga?

During this summer much work has been done in all Gars under the title of Karma Yoga.

This way of naming manual work, pruning trees, repairing sheds etc., has been considered by many of us as some kind of spiritual joke. But Karma Yoga is in fact not a joke. The definition for Karma Yoga can be found in both Buddhism and in Hinduism. The healthy attitude of Karma Yoga is to do all work that has to be done without attachment to the fruits of the activity. That is the attitude which makes any kind of work "right livelihood".

Here at Merigar, many people have been involved in clearing out the wood below the Gonpa. This area has been allotted as a place for doing personal retreats and the more space that is cleared means that more

practitioners can tent there for retreats. Most days there is an appointment with Norbu Rinpoche from six to seven o'clock for helpers armed with gardening gloves, scythes, hoes and other equipment adapted to chopping and hacking the brambles and dead wood. Karma yoga activities have not only been restricted to the wood but include other work on the land such as caring for the different lawns and flower beds, repairing the road and general spring cleaning around the buildings.

Working in the open air gives us the possibility to be able to practise a real purification in contact with the elements and to work in collaboration with other people of the Community.

A group of practitioners

### Photos on page 4

Lama Dancers  
by Louis B. Freenhan

Maitreya, the Buddha to  
Come, Statue at Tashilhunpo  
1949-50  
by Heinrich Harrer

Tanka painter  
by C. Suydam Cutting

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