

In the Dzogchen teachings a mirror can be used in many ways as a metaphor to clarify various aspects of the teachings and as a symbol to explain the functioning of the mind.

THE MIRROR

THE INTERNATIONAL NEWSPAPER OF THE DZOGCHEN COMMUNITY
INSPIRED BY THE TEACHINGS OF AND UNDER THE SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE OF
NAMKHAI NORBU RINPOCHE

One of the ways in which a mirror is used as a symbol is to remind one to observe oneself at all times and to check whether one is distracted or truly present in the moment.

THE DZOGCHEN COMMUNITY PREPARES FOR THE VISIT OF HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA TO MERIGAR

REFLECTIONS FROM MERIGAR. John Shane.

The last month has seen Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche at Merigar much less than in previous months, but work on all the various projects the Community has undertaken here this year has proceeded apace. After an initial set-back caused by a national strike of lorry drivers here in Italy, which meant that the printer had no paper on which to print the newspaper, the first issue of THE MIRROR went to press and was mailed out around the world. All those who worked to produce the newspaper were waiting with interest to receive letters and faxes from our readers telling us how it has been received. The response has been very favourable. It has created a lot of excitement among the Community in Italy, and we have received phone calls and letters from places as far away as California, Venezuela, and Australia to say that the newspaper has met with great enthusiasm there. The first subscriptions have begun to reach us and now we are waiting to hear from more of you!

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INFORMATION FOR THOSE COMING TO ATTEND NEXT MONTH'S VISIT OF H.H. DALAI LAMA.

As we are all aware His Holiness the Dalai Lama is coming to Merigar between the 28th May and 1st June, on a visit that is of purely cultural and spiritual significance. Although his visit is not a political event, the fact that His Holiness, in addition to his spiritual responsibilities, is also a political figure of major importance in world affairs means that a high level of security is necessary at an event such as we are now planning. The Italian state authorities will naturally be attending to many of the matters relating to security, as will His Holiness' own entourage, but the Dzogchen Community will also be taking its share of the responsibility to ensure the safety of His Holiness and all those attending the event. The Community will have a large number of security staff present officially appointed by the Community. All those attending are asked to collaborate with them to ensure that His Holiness' visit is as inspiring, trouble-free and enjoyable as we all want it to be.

Community members are asked to remember and to remind others to be especially considerate towards the Community's guests, most of whom will not have been to Merigar before. This consideration should include understanding that the Community's official invited guests will be given priority in seating at the various events of the Inauguration. Please note that relatively few people can be in the Gompa during the Inauguration ceremony to be held on the first day of the Dalai Lama's visit, and that passes will be issued to those who will be seated inside the Gompa. These passes will be issued by the Institute to important officially invited guests. Those who do not have such passes will be able to follow the proceedings via loudspeakers (and possibly a giant video screen which we are trying to rent) which will relay the speeches to the area outside the Gompa, where most Community members will be seated. On the first day of His Holiness' visit, he will be inside the Gompa for the Inauguration ceremony. On the second day, however, when he gives teachings, he will speak from a dais set up outside the Gompa so that everyone will be able to participate more fully.

Most members of the Community will require no reminder of the standards of conduct expected on such an important occasion. But it may be worth pointing out that the eyes of the media will be focussed on the Community at this time, and that our appearance, manners, and behaviour should be at their best. Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche should always be addressed as Rinpoche, and other Lamas similarly addressed by their title and not by their personal name. When sitting on the floor or ground please do not sit or lie with legs outstretched and feet pointing at the Dalai Lama or other Lamas, since among Tibetans this is considered to be a sign of lack of respect. For similar reasons the standard of dress should be appropriate to the occasion and miniskirts and shorts for example should not be worn.

Please respect the environment at Merigar, and do not drop litter. No smoking is permitted anywhere on the Merigar property during His Holiness' visit.

Please be sure to book your accommodation well in advance as many people are likely to attend this event. Everyone is asked to make their hotel bookings through the appointed agents

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REFRESHING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE TEACHINGS TROUGH OBSERVING OURSELVES An interview with Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche

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PROGRAMME FOR THE INAUGURATION OF THE SHANG-SHUNG INSTITUTE.



Tuesday 29th May 1990.

10.00 am. Conference Hall, Merigar.

A meeting of the authorities and specialists in Oriental Studies; An introduction to the Shang-Shung Institute. Inauguration speech by His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

2.30 pm Merigar.

Opening of various exhibitions. 4.15pm Arcidosso, Aldo-brandeschi Castle.

Opening of various exhibitions. Wednesday 30th May 1990

10.00 am Conference Hall, Merigar.

Teaching given by His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

4.30pm Merigar and Aldo-

brandeschi Castle.

Guided visit to the exhibitions, and a film presentation.

Thursday 31st May 1990.

10.00am Conference Hall, Merigar.

Speeches followed by Questions and Answers.

4.00pm Conference Hall Merigar.

Speeches followed by Questions and Answers.

Friday 1st June 1990.

10.00am Conference Hall Merigar.

Speeches followed by Questions and Answers.

11.30am Conference Hall Merigar.

Closing Ceremony.

Rinpoche's visit to Lombardy

The visit of Rinpoche to Lombardy was a 48 hour of intensive activity working for peace and the preservation of the cultural and spiritual heritage of Tibet.

From March 30th to the 31st Rinpoche was involved in a very busy program of talks, interviews and spiritual teachings. His visit to Lombardy started in Brescia, of the 30th of March, he met the town authorities, and in the city council's hall, crowded with more than 250 people, he gave a talk on the importance of preserving the precious Tibetan culture. Rinpoche explained that recent historical events have endangered its survival, and that the disappearance of this culture would represent a terrible loss, not only for Tibetans but also for the whole world.

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Lama Tenzin returns to Merigar.

On Sunday 22nd of April Lama Tenzin Wangyal returned to Merigar after teaching at a retreat in Devon, England, the last retreat in his series of retreats that took him all around the United States of America. Lama Tenzin's car appeared out of the mist that was shrouding the hillside around

Merigar, and a crowd of Community members spontaneously assembled to welcome him in the entrance hall with happy smiles and warm applause. Lama Tenzin kindly agreed to be interviewed by THE MIRROR, and the interview will be published in serial form in the next three issues of the newspaper.



A TIBETOLOGIST IN TUSCANY

The first part of
An interview with
Adriano Clemente

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EXTRACT FROM THE NOBEL LECTURE BY HIS HOLINESS TENZIN GYATSO THE XIV DALAI LAMA OF TIBET 11th December 1989

..... Because we all share this small planet earth, we have to learn to live in harmony and peace with each other and with nature. That is not just a dream, but a necessity. We are dependent on each other in so many ways that we can no longer live in isolated communities and ignore what is going on outside those communities. We need to help each other when we have difficulties, and we must share the good fortune we enjoy. I speak to you as just another human being; as a simple monk. If you find what I say useful, then I hope you will try to practice it.

Tenzin Gyatso
The XIV Dalai Lama of Tibet

LAMA WANGDOR IN EUROPE
Lama Wangdor is a Druppa Kagyu Lama and a practitioner of Dzogchen, who was also a disciple of Master Changchub Dorje, Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche's root-guru. For many years he has been living and giving teachings at Tsopema, in India, a place sacred to Padmasambhava (in many stories of Padmasambhava's life it is said that the King of Sahara ordered Padmasambhava to be burnt alive, but Padmasambhava miraculously transformed the fire into a lake, which was then called 'Tsopema', 'the Lake of Padma'). Over the years many western students have come to Tsopema to receive teachings from Lama Wangdor. In 1988 he travelled to America and taught in many places of our Community there. He will be coming to Europe next May, visiting the following countries:
Finland: May 19th-25th, 1990
Norway: May 30th-June 5th 1990
Denmark: June 8th-14th, 1990
Germany: June 18th-24th, 1990
Austria: June 28th-July 4th 1990
Italy: July 9th-17, 1990
Greece: July 22nd-29th, 1990
Yugoslavia: August 1st-6th 1990
Switzerland, August 10th-15th 1990
Holland: August 20th-26th, 1990
England: August 30th-September 5th, 1990
These dates may be rearranged, so in any case people who are interested should contact the Gakyils in their countries, to make sure that this schedule has not been changed.

REFRESHING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE TEACHINGS THROUGH OBSERVING OURSELVES.

AN INTERVIEW WITH NAMKHAIR NORBU RINPOCHE.



THE MIRROR: It is a great pleasure to interview you for a second time for THE MIRROR, Rinpoche, and we would like to thank you for finding the time to talk to us before you leave for the Far East. For the second issue of our newspaper we would like to ask you some questions relating to practice and how practice can influence and guide the Community in its activities. During the Christmas retreat you suggested that individual members of the Community should all seek to 'refresh' their feelings in relation to the teachings and to the Community. Could you please explain for us what you meant by this?

NAMKHAIR NORBU RINPOCHE: As time goes ahead the teachings are no longer as new for people as they were when they first heard them, and there is the danger that individuals may become 'stale' in their attitudes to the teachings, and in their relationships with other members of the Community with whom they are trying to collaborate. We need to keep our feeling for the teachings and the atmosphere between the individuals in the Dzogchen Community fresh, and I think that the most important way to ensure that one maintains this freshness, or refreshes one's attitude if the freshness is lost, is by observing ourselves. We need first of all to observe what our own limitations are, and to check what our attitude and motivation is, really observing how we are actually behaving in carrying on the activities of our daily lives. This is necessary because most people, after they have been following the teachings and practising for a while, tend to forget the real meaning of the teachings. They forget that what is most important in the teachings is not some abstract, intellectual knowledge, but really understanding our real situation in our lives as we live them, and being aware of that situation and remaining present within it. If we lose the state of presence in our daily lives our practice remains stuck at the level of mere concepts, and at the level of practising rituals and making analyses in a superficial way. Then we may find that many things don't make sense any more and what we are doing as spiritual practice is not truly meeting our real needs in our daily existence. We may then, for example, find that we have many problems in general with all the confusions we find ourselves caught up in, and we become more and more tense and nervous.

If we don't observe ourselves and check whether this is happening to us or not, we don't discover what our real condition is, and in this way it is possible that there comes to exist a very wide gulf between the teaching and the person who is interested in the teaching. When an individual does not continually observe him or herself any real connection between that person and the teaching gets lost. So whether we are talking about practising Dzogchen, or about collaborating together as a Community, the real key to refreshing our spiritual activity is to be found in observing our own

condition. We need to check how we actually are in our daily lives, and to try to relax and enter into our real, natural condition, the state of presence and contemplation.

THE MIRROR: So observing ourselves is the key to seeing how one's condition is at any given time, and through observing one's condition one is able to decide what specific practice one should do if one is becoming stale, tense, distracted, and so on?

NAMKHAIR NORBU RINPOCHE: Yes, that's right. Through self-observation you can decide what secondary practices you need to do to get back into the state of contemplation if you have lost it. You can do any kind of practice that is necessary, as it is necessary. For example, you may find that you are very tense and agitated. In such circumstances it is best to do some practice that will relax you, such as breathing or movement, rather than doing something involving concentration, visualization, or purification, that might at that moment make you more tense. Then again, if you discover that you have a problem stemming from the fact that your pranic energy is disordered, you can do a practice that will restore it to balance and coordinate it.

THE MIRROR: So the best way for an individual to refresh their relationship with the teachings is by coming back into a real connection with practice through self-observation. But what about groups of individuals? If there have been difficulties between individuals in a group of practitioners in any country or city, with different points of view emerging which it is difficult to reconcile, how should practitioners refresh the connection between them in such situations?

NAMKHAIR NORBU RINPOCHE: When we talk about observing ourselves in the context of the teachings, we mean that we develop awareness in relation to our own behaviour and motivation and we really discover how limited we are, noticing that we are always caught up in the grip of our ego, always thinking of 'I', 'myself', 'my condition', 'my conviction', 'my position', 'my point of view', and so on. We build up this kind of ego-centered pattern day after day in our thoughts and our actions, without really noticing that we are doing it, and remaining unaware of all the tension within ourselves and with others that we are creating by maintaining this kind of attitude. If we observe ourselves and discover that we are continually involved in this ego-centered construction, we can relax out of it. Then it becomes very easy to collaborate with others, and we can develop a real understanding of what collaborating with other people means. A real respect for others develops from observing oneself, noticing the tension created by maintaining the ego-centered view, and relaxing out of it. That is what the Buddha meant when he taught that if you begin by taking the example of yourself you can understand everything and everyone around you.

THE MIRROR: Following

This interview was recorded in the veranda of the main house at Merigar on the 2nd. of April, 1990, the day before Rinpoche was due to fly from Rome to Singapore to begin his series of retreats in the Far East. Through the window in front of which Rinpoche sat as he answered these questions, the Editor could see the work proceeding on the building of the new Gumpa in the distance. Bulldozers and diggers moved laboriously around the building site like giant beetles intent on imponderable tasks. In the foreground closer to the house, Alix de Fermor who is in charge of the landscaping works at Merigar was busy planting newly acquired large trees along the roadway leading from the main gate into the Community's property. The road all the way down to the 'Cappanone' or big barn is now lined by a row of various kinds of fir trees and a number of willow trees have been planted by the lake.

through the theme we are developing to the practical level of the activities of the Community, can we turn to the problem that has arisen in one of the countries where the Community has been in existence for many years, and where some serious differences of opinion have marked the relationship between the Gakhyil (the group of nine persons chosen for one year to organise the Community's activities in that country for that period) and many of the other members of the Community there. At the annual general meeting there, a proposal was made by a Community member that, since the Master was not himself present frequently in that country, there should be a way in which the Gakhyil was more accountable to the members of the Community as a whole. It was proposed that there should be regular meetings four times a year between the membership of the Community and the Gakhyil, and that the Gakhyil should listen more to what the Community members wanted to do as a whole Community, rather than having the Gakhyil members dictate what was going to happen. There had been many arguments in the Gakhyil itself over what the Community of that country should or should not do, and the members of the Community as a whole were frustrated by this and wanted to be able to have more possibility to resolve such a situation. There was a suggestion that controversial issues should be put to a vote of the membership as a whole. Could you please give us some guidance on this issue?

NAMKHAIR NORBU RINPOCHE: I think it is very important that the Gakhyil in every country should act in accordance with the wishes and needs of the whole membership of that country. When we choose the nine members of the Gakhyil for the year to put the Community's plans into action, we must try to choose people who are really knowledgeable about how to collaborate with people in the way I have spoken about already in this interview, and who understand how to collaborate with and integrate with all the other members of the Community, rather than choosing people who are just good at putting themselves forward, thinking only of themselves. If we don't choose the people on the Gakhyil carefully the Gakhyil may just become a limited group with a limited vision and a limited position. I think it is very important that we learn from the kind of experience you have described to me; and if someone is chosen to serve on the Gakhyil who it later transpires is not suitable for such a role because they are not able to work together with others in the right way or because they sow seeds of disharmony, then this problem should be discussed calmly and clearly between all the interested parties. If, from these discussions, it becomes clear that someone on the Gakhyil must be changed, then they should be asked to stand down, and someone else selected to take their place. Individual Gakhyil members should not be regarded as some kind of 'chief' who can hold on to office if they are creating obstacles for the Community as a whole.

THE MIRROR: So the Community can change the members of the Gakhyil?

NAMKHAIR NORBU RINPO-

CHE: Yes, of course; that's useful. In any case we have always changed the persons who make up a Gakhyil every year. Why is that? Because a year is after all not such a long time, and by changing the Gakhyil we avoid the possibility of someone trying to construct a kind of political position for themselves in the Community, or developing a power base. People are generally very caught up in this kind of political attitude, and they can tend to develop a position on any topic just to oppose someone else with whom they have had an argument. If we change the Gakhyil very frequently we can train many people in collaborating with other people. Since we change the Gakhyil every year anyway it is not such a very big problem to change someone on the Gakhyil before the full period of a year is up, if it turns out that the membership of the Dzogchen Community as a whole is not happy with the way a person on the Gakhyil is behaving. They can discuss the situation and make the necessary change.

THE MIRROR: Changing the people on the Gakhyil?

NAMKHAIR NORBU RINPOCHE: Of course, otherwise the situation would not be good.

THE MIRROR: How would they go about making such a change, practically speaking? Should they hold a vote of all the members of the Community?

NAMKHAIR NORBU RINPOCHE: A vote of Community members could be held, but the necessary change could also be made just by discussing things and coming to an agreement that someone is not really suitable and someone else is more suitable. It doesn't have to be a confrontational situation. They can also refer to the Master for advice on such an issue.

THE MIRROR: So, in such a situation, the people concerned should first try to reach an agreement in a non-confrontational way through understanding the real needs and wishes of the Community as a whole, and taking into consideration the various merits or problems of the people involved. But then, if there is no way that things can be resolved satisfactorily, the matter should be referred to the Master for a decision, or lastly put to a vote.

NAMKHAIR NORBU RINPOCHE: Yes, they can ask the teacher, or vote if that is not practical.

THE MIRROR: It has been suggested that when there are difficulties such as we are discussing, the meeting of the Gakhyil should be preceded by a session of practice, in order to encourage the meeting to take place in the right frame of mind. Would that be a good idea?

NAMKHAIR NORBU RINPOCHE: It might help people to remember that the Dzogchen Community is a group of spiritual practitioners rather than just an ordinary worldly group of people meeting together. The spiritual practice of the Community is its real basis. The Community really must develop and collaborate through the spiritual practice of its members. The Gakhyil is simply the way in which we put our collaboration into practical action. The Community is not an organisation in the ordinary sense of the word. For practical reasons we have to have some level of organisational structure,

and that is why we need something like a Gakhyil, but we have to keep the wider spiritual perspective of the Community in view, and not lose sight of it in dealing with the practical matters. The various Gakhyil should discuss and have a clear idea of their role in the Community, understanding the things I am saying here.

THE MIRROR: To return the conversation to matters regarding practice itself, could we now talk about the collective practice that the Dzogchen Community does? When the Community meets to do practice sessions together and people from outside the Community attend what they see is principally the various practices involving chanting and so on. They don't see any intense collective sitting meditation practice such as they associate with Zen Buddhism, Vipassana (Insight) meditation, and other schools. Could you please talk a little about contemplation and collective practice from a Dzogchen point of view?

NAMKHAIR NORBU RINPOCHE: The principle practice in the Dzogchen teachings is the practice of contemplation; but contemplation doesn't necessarily mean sitting in silence. Sitting in silence is one aspect of our condition, but movement (both in the sense of the moving of thought in our minds and moving around doing things) is also a part of our condition. We have to be able to integrate both this movement and silence into our contemplation. For this reason, in the Dzogchen teachings we perform practices like chanting rituals and other related practices collectively when we meet together. Sitting in silence can be done anywhere; it's not necessary for it to be done all together in the same room or hall. Furthermore, there are in the Dzogchen teachings very many methods that one might use sitting in silence in order to get into the state of contemplation. There are, for example many Semzin, that exist for just this purpose. But the individual practitioner selects which Semzin to do depending the condition of that individual. So it's clear that the practice is selected to suit the need of the individual in any given moment, and the individual needs of a group of people may not be the same, so these practices are not generally done collectively. At any given moment, one person might be in a state of clarity and want to work with that condition to gain the maximum advantage from the time they have to practise, while another person might be suffering from a lot of mental confusion and want to work with a practice that would bring them into a calm state. And there is not much sense in doing those practices collectively, because all the people involved don't have the same needs at the same time.

THE MIRROR: So in Dzogchen, the individual observes his or her own condition, and notices whether they are in the state of contemplation or not, notices whether they are present or distracted, and then, on the basis of that self-observation, applies a practice that is suitable to the situation he or she finds himself in. If they are distracted, they do a practice to return them to presence; if they are already in the state of contemplation they continue in it, working with it in a certain way to develop it. I remember you quoting a Dzogchen text that

states that "in Dzogchen the teaching must be adapted to suit the needs of the individual, and not the individual to the needs of the teaching." That clearly doesn't mean changing the way that the teachings have always been transmitted, but refers to the situation that you have just been explaining. I feel that there are times, however, when an individual can benefit from the supportiveness of group practice of contemplation, particularly when they get into a sort of inertia as an individual with regard to actually applying the methods they have learned. What do you think, Rinpoche?

NAMKHAIR NORBU RINPOCHE: When we practise together collectively many people who share a common spiritual bond are sitting together, chanting and visualizing together. Through the practice they are also coordinating the functioning of their energy through breathing in the same manner as each other at the same moment in time. All this means that they are collaborating with each other, developing their clarity and their capacity in the same way in the same moment, which brings great benefit. You can't achieve the same thing by just sitting in contemplation in silence. Contemplation itself is more concerned with the condition of each individual, and the relative condition of each individual is different. But that doesn't mean that in the Dzogchen Community we only chant and are never silent. We should also practice silent contemplation.

THE MIRROR: So do you think that at the end of the Tun (session of practice) we should sit a little in silence?

NAMKHAIR NORBU RINPOCHE: Yes; after singing the Song of the Vajra at the end of the Tun you can sit for ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, or however long you feel, in silent contemplation, and then conclude by dedicating the merit of the practice to all sentient beings. But you can also continue your contemplation as you get up and move, returning to the normal activities of your life, without that silent sitting.

THE MIRROR: Could the person leading the chanting of the Tun, at end of the practice, after five minutes or so of silent contemplation, lead the group to sing the Song of the Vajra a second time, and then continue in silence for another five minutes, and so on?

NAMKHAIR NORBU RINPOCHE: Yes; if there is time, and people feel like doing it that way.

THE MIRROR: To conclude this interview for the second issue of THE MIRROR could you please sum up the most important points of our discussion?

NAMKHAIR NORBU RINPOCHE: Observe yourself, be aware, and relax. Try to understand your real condition, enter into the knowledge of it, relax and collaborate with other practitioners. These are the most important points I have tried to make.

THE MIRROR: Since you will be leaving Merigar later today and flying from Rome tomorrow to lead retreats in Singapore, Taiwan and Malaysia, we would like to wish you 'Bon Voyage' and a safe return. We also hope that all that you undertake to do on your journeys will be successful.

NAMKHAIR NORBU RINPOCHE: Thank you.

THE MIRROR: Thank you, Rinpoche.

REFLECTIONS FROM MERIGAR

by John Shane

continued from front page



The work on the Gompa has been going well, although the weather has entered one of those uncertain phases so typical of the spring in Tuscany, with days of intense rain followed by bright warm sunny weather. The rain slows up the building work, but is welcomed by all the local farmers and gardeners as the whole of Italy has in the last few years undergone a climatic change that has seen the average annual rainfall drastically reduced. Many towns and villages rationed water last summer. Several major steps forward in the process of building the Gompa have been taken: the electric company came to lay the power cables to carry electricity to the site, the work of laying the drains was completed, and the large beams that will support the decking around the structure were laid in position. But the really exciting moment came when the main beams that will support the copper dome of the roof were raised into position by the construction crane that now dominates the hill on which the Gompa is being built. The raising of these roof beams was not without drama. The crane that was originally rented proved unequal to the task required of it, and another heavier duty crane arrived to take its place. The prefabricated beams are made from laminated wood, which is stronger than concrete, by a company from the north of Italy which is one of the finest of its kind in the world. Anna Fiori, one of the Community's architects working on the project, has been singing their praises to anyone who will listen, and the men that the company has sent to carry out the work are so friendly, enthusiastic and hard-working that they have become firm friends with those of Merigar's own builders who are working on the project. The Gompa that is being built is smaller than the one originally planned, for various reasons. It will now be able to seat about 250 people in accordance with the regulations governing building use. The plans for the further development of the Merigar

land, including the four retreat 'bungalows', the offices for Shang-Shung Editions, and all the other publication activities, have also been approved. Italian planning regulations are based on the number of cubic metres of built space needed for a proposed project, and the fact that the Gompa being built is smaller than the one originally approved means that the cubic metres not used by the Gompa project will be transferred to the construction of these other buildings, which will go ahead in due course, funds permitting. Despite Rinpoche's busy schedule, the Editors of THE MIRROR were able to interview him again for the newspaper when he came to Merigar for two days, before he set off on his teaching tour of the Far East. Before we began the interview, Rinpoche stood looking out the window of the veranda of the main house across towards the building work on the Gompa taking place on the other side of the valley, and he said with evident satisfaction: "Now Merigar is really moving ahead!" Rinpoche spent some time this month in Naples teaching at the University, and also gave a weekend seminar of Dzogchen teachings in Rome, on which a report is included in this, the second issue of THE MIRROR. He later went to Milan, the business capital of Italy, where he gave a Press Conference to answer questions about the coming important events the Community is planning, after which he was interviewed for the principal national television channel of Italy. Over the last few years Rinpoche has become more and more well-known in Italy, and has been featured in a number of television programmes and innumerable articles in the Italian national press. Part of his own video record of his private journey to East Tibet, entitled "Timeless Present", which shows him being welcomed with great honour and devotion at the remote East Tibetan village in which his own master Chanchub Dorje lived, was even broadcast on a breakfast tv programme on Italy's main channel. Paulo Brunato's film of Rinpoche's journey with a number of members of the Community to Mount Kailash in Western Tibet was also shown on the same channel and won a national television award. Television is a medium that often seems to trivialise or distort the subjects that it presents, and it may seem an unlikely means to communicate anything of real value connected with a profound subject such as the teachings, based as they are on a living

transmission. But a television programme can provide a means to place a cause for someone who watches it to develop an interest in the teachings at a later date, and can also communicate simple truths in a very direct way. Masters such as His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche have shown great skill and understanding in choosing topics of general interest to speak about on television, and in answering questions in such a way as to turn the answers they give to even hostile questions into profound and revealing comments on the human condition that deeply touch all who hear them, whether those who listen are interested in spiritual matters at all, or are Buddhists, or not. It is at this level of addressing the common humanity of all who meet him that His Holiness the Dalai Lama shows himself to be a truly remarkable person, irrespective of his rank or title. Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche once remarked about His Holiness: "Even if he was not the Dalai Lama everyone would recognise him as a truly exceptional human being", and as the Dzogchen Community prepares to receive His Holiness we would do well to reflect on the qualities that make him so exceptional. To list only a few of those qualities, we could say that he shows himself at all times to be so deeply interested in the welfare of others that many feel they know him without ever having met him; he remains profoundly committed to his own spiritual tradition, while at the same time always finding common ground with other traditions; he shows a touching and sincere humility despite his high rank; he is a master with great intellectual knowledge not only of the most complex Buddhist teachings, but also of much of Western thought, and yet he radiates a simple and earthy human warmth. Each of us, even those of us who have not yet met him, has some story of how something the Dalai Lama has said, written, or done has effected us in our lives, making us reconsider our own way of thinking and behaving, and often making us change our way of life. The example of the way in which he has integrated all his many practical responsibilities with his spiritual practice is present before us as we prepare to receive him at Merigar, and we are all in some way measuring ourselves against that example as we try our best to carry out our various responsibilities with the highest level of awareness and compassion that we can bring to the tasks assigned to

us. The harmonious accomplishment of our activities depends on this kind of attitude being present in each individual. At the same time, although our Master, Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, is physically very far away at this time, his spiritual influence is very much in evidence at Merigar in these days, particularly since the Easter retreat is now in progress, and Rinpoche left a set of envelopes behind containing his instructions for the practices to be done in each session of the retreat. There are three formal sessions of practice each day, one at 9 am, one at 3pm, and one at 8 pm. (Others are meeting at 7 am for an additional Long Life Practice) At the beginning of each session, the person who has agreed to lead the practice for that session opens an envelope that contains the instructions as to what practice those participating should do. Until the envelope is opened no one knows what will be done. The instructions in first envelope began with a request from Rinpoche that all present should examine themselves: "... asking yourself what it is that you really lack. Is it really the physical presence of the Master that is missing at this retreat? Is it that you lack teachings? Or is that you lack practice, the putting into practice of what you have learned?" The instructions continued along those lines, and then asked those attending to sit in silence for half an hour to consider the questions that had been raised, after which we practised a medium tun, and sat in contemplation for 15 minutes. These 15 minute silent contemplations have been a notable feature of the retreat, and formed the heart of each session, whether the other practices combined with the silent sitting were the Purification of the Six Lokas, the fixation on the letter Aom (taught at the Christmas Longde retreat), transformation practices as found in the various tuns, the practice of the yoga of the peaceful and wrathful divinities (Shitro), or Yantra Yoga. Each evening there was a practice of offering to all the three principal guardians. The complete retreat schedule as contained in the envelopes will be made into a book and published so that it can be followed on other occasions. As the building work proceeds and the preparations for the visit of His Holiness the Dalai Lama continue to develop, we are at the same time working on integrating our contemplation with all these many activities, developing the principal practice of Dzogchen, the essential reason for our Community's existence.



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TEACHINGS FROM THE CHRISTMAS RETREAT AT MERIGAR. 3RD JANUARY 1990 NAMKHAIR NORBU RINPOCHE.

"They are all more than adults in years, but in their ideas and behaviour they seem sixteen-year-olds, and even if they try to pass off their bragging for the teaching, what they apply is beyond all shame.

Don't these victims of the passions and of double and triple illusion ever look at themselves in the mirror?

With intention pure and clear as Venus

I have given many teachings and much advice in order to help, and, just as if I had poured nectar onto an overturned vase,

I have never seen any change in their dry rigidity.

But even though I have thought about continuing my practice and stopping teaching, I cannot in any way give up the Bodhicitta commitment."

(Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, "The Voice of the Bee")

Since there are so many of you gathered together here, I want to take this opportunity to ask you all to collaborate. It is very important for practitioners to collaborate. Many of you seem to think that you lack teachings, and lack knowledge of methods of practice. But that is not true, and you will see it is not true if you just take a look at all you have written down in your collection of notebooks of all the teachings you have received so far. It is not so much teachings you lack as practice. You need to practise and to carry the practice into collaborating and living with the principle of awareness.

Many of you will have read what I wrote, in the style of a song, about the journey I made to Kailash with a group of my students. Those who have read it probably think: "How terrible they must have been, those people who went to Kailash." But it is not right to think of it in that way. I am not just criticising or condemning that group of people. I know very well that there are millions of people like that in the world, not to mention those amongst us in the Dzogchen Community, and especially those who have followed the teaching for many years. At first people feel fresh about the teachings and the practice, later everything seems the same, then after a while they get even less sensitive and they start to go stale. Instead of developing day after day, they just go stale. That is the nature of many people; but I am not at all surprised about this, because it is the normal human condition. But you should be aware of this.

I wrote this song to give an example, to help you to understand better. I am convinced that the people of the Community, and especially the "old practitioners" need to refresh their spiritual feeling. In this way they will be able to develop and make their knowledge more real.

But the people who are new to these teachings should also understand this aspect of human nature. Some people have followed other traditions of teachings, and when they have become bored by them have then come to me to follow the Dzogchen teachings, in the way that I communicate them. Then they feel something very real, and they feel much more fresh. It is true that it really happens like that. But they should realize that the "old" students also felt like that in the beginning.

Our eyes are so close to the eyebrows that we cannot see them. To people who have always been close to me and my teaching everything seems to taste the same; the flavour has gone out of them. That is happening to many of our "old" students.

That is why I do not feel like going around much more. I have decided not to carry on doing what I have been doing up to now. Until now, I have sacrificed a lot to go all over the world, thinking that people really were in need. But now that I am beginning to understand that people are not really drawn very much to this, and I am ready to make people really appreciate the value of these teachings. You must understand this. You should not think, "Oh! Norbu has abandoned us!" I will never abandon those to whom I have communicated or transmitted the Dzogchen teaching. Rather, since I am a Dzogchen practitioner, I work with circumstances. I have learnt that from the teaching. I think you should learn that too, because each person has the responsibility to realize himself, to help himself, and to maintain and protect the teaching and transmission.

With this principle in mind you should collaborate, firstly by doing the collective practices. Many of you live in cities where there are many other practitioners. Remember that practitioners are bound or linked by the principle of transmission. You must not think of yourselves as an ordinary worldly group. Respect each other. Remember that you are connected by transmission.

If, for example, one of you, who has followed the teachings from me, did something against me, I would never be against him or her, because I understand what the principle of the teaching is. I am not willing to break or destroy the transmission. I am not saying that you cannot do this. You can do it. That is your right. You also have the right to not be aware. But I try to be aware. So I am not willing to fight and quarrel and really break the relationship. What I truly feel, if someone behaves in that way towards me, is a great compassion. I feel really sorry for that person, but not for myself, because I know how to protect my transmission. You must learn this. Live more by this principle, and then you will be able to save your transmission and save your realization. If you break the transmission it is like cutting the electric wires. You can never turn on the light if the wires are cut. We need transmission to have knowledge. But just having knowledge does not mean that you are realized. Just give yourself a good pinch and you will see that you feel pain. That means that we have our physical existence, and so we have to respect it. Understanding your own circumstances, respect each other, work together and do the collective practices together.

Many people think, "I do not like mixing with a lot of people. I only like practising alone at home". If someone really succeeds in developing in that way, it is not all bad. But it is very unlikely that they will succeed. When someone is isolated, they might practise for a couple of days or so, but after a while their feeling for it will decrease, and in the end they will become indifferent. In that way they will go all through their lives with indifference, and their final realization will be indifference. It should not be like that. You should develop your spiritual feeling, and working together with other practitioners you do develop it!

When we recite the "Bodhicitta", we say that we aspire to benefit all beings; but if we cannot manage to integrate with a little group of fellow

practitioners, how on earth can we ever benefit all beings? First of all we have to learn to resolve the problems of a tiny group of people. We have to learn how to tolerate them even if there are a few problems. If you cannot do this it means there is no way to collaborate.

You should also be careful about your personal relationships, such as those between husband and wife, fiancées and friends. Friendship and love are perfect and beautiful; they are not at all negative in relationship to the teachings. But you should remember that they are often based on the passions. The passions are like the autumn sky: one minute clear and sunny, the next cloudy and raining. Similarly, we live in society with changing circumstances. Sometimes we feel very passionate, and totally change everything, breaking our friendships as well as our wonderful love affairs. But our bond through the transmission is much stronger than any of these relationships. Remember this principle. You have a perfect right to fight with each other, break your relationships, get divorced, separate and get together with someone else; but do not ignore the transmission! Respect each other and co-operate! This is the thing that I find gets more and more difficult: people do not respect each other, and do not give any consideration to the fact that there is a spiritual relationship between them.

On the other hand, I am not saying that people should make their spiritual relationship an excuse for being obliged to stay together as man and wife, for example. If a husband and wife are not getting on together, there must be some reason. People can talk reasonably together; they can look at the situation and co-operate to find the best solution. They do not have to fight and be enemies. When people get angry they insult each other and quarrel. That is normal; we are in transmigration. No one says that when people become practitioners of Dzogchen, they are never going to get distracted. There is always the possibility of becoming distracted. But those who practice Dzogchen try to be aware. Being aware means that after their quarrel something else should happen. You should not continue to protect your position, and carry on making mistakes in total distraction.

The principle of the teaching is illustrated by the example of the mirror. Looking in a mirror is not like making an analysis, as if we were an object. If we look in a mirror with the least bit of presence, we will certainly discover what is happening. Co-operation will then arise by itself. Often husbands and wives are both practitioners. There is absolutely no possibility that both of them should be totally distracted and carry on arguing.

I think this is much more important than learning a method or position for meditation. Using a belt and stick as meditation supports is very important, but your everyday behaviour is much more important. Practice does not only mean staying in a certain position. Life is the practice, and our behaviour is the practice.

You know what 'experience' means when we use that term in the teaching. If we fight it means we are angry. What is anger or any other emotion? All emotions are ways in which our energy manifests. Thus this anger is called an 'experience'. All such experiences are opportunities for understanding and applying the teaching. The experience of anger is already a method of practice. If you know how to use it for the practice, not becoming conditioned by the passion of the anger, but remaining in the presence of the state, then it is much better than applying any other method whatsoever.

I implore you to really co-operate: co-operate between practitioners and between countries where there are Dzogchen practitioners. Do not get stuck in only the organizational level of the Dzogchen community. I do not mean that you have to be against organization. When we form a Gakyil to get things done many people say, "The Dzogchen community is turning into an organization". But who says in the Dzogchen community has to be anti-organization? We live in society, which has system and rules. How can we always live like hippies? We always have to deal with our needs. How many problems we have to face just to build a tiny house! What a lot of permits you need just to change or move one window! That is characteristic of society. So, of course we need to organize ourselves to deal with these needs.

But having the organization we need does not mean becoming a slave of organization. The Dzogchen teaching never confuses teaching with organization. If we go to a restaurant we go to eat to relieve our hunger; we do not go there just for the use of a table and spoon and fork. These are secondary things, to make things easier and more convenient. That is what organization is for. Once we understand the principle of organization we do not need to condemn it.

It is much better if practitioners become more civilized, more like normal people, instead of looking rather weird, with long hair, wearing strange things around their necks, and weird clothes. You know very well that if you go to places like airports looking rather strange, you get thoroughly searched and checked trying to pass through customs, because they consider you to be strange, not normal.

If we continue with these old habits we will not be able to integrate into society. People will always consider us to be abnormal. That is the only "realization" to be gained from looking odd. There is no benefit at all from it. This is just one example of how people should try to be more normal, and face society with an understanding of what it is.

In that way we could become more responsible for society, instead of

just being dependent on it. We have to understand what society is: it is made up of people. If the people who make up society are aware, they can improve things and be of benefit. But if all of those who lead society are the opposite of aware, and all of those who have some understanding remain in the background, considered as a group of strange people, society will be led by those who have no awareness of human nature, because the people with a bit of understanding are not integrating themselves. This is negative. We have to understand that everything we do is related to the future of our society. We transmit many things to our children, and that is the way society continues and develops.

I try to explain this through the teachings, feeling that I am also somewhat responsible. You know that a teacher has responsibilities. A teacher who transmits the teachings is like a father with many children. I do not just come here and say a few words, and then say "Goodbye", and go away. I know very well that we have a relationship that lasts until total realization. I do my best. That is why I try to make everyone understand these things, just as we usually do for our children.

It is also important for you all, as practitioners, to learn how to behave towards your children, and to behave in the same way towards grown-up "children", friends, neighbours and everyone. For example, we feel responsible for our children.

There is a prevailing modern idea is that children ought to be free; you should let your children do whatever they like. I agree with that - up to a certain point; because it means that one should respect the dimension of children and give them the possibility to carry out all the activities they want. But that does not mean we should be indifferent to them. Many people are confused about this, thinking that letting them do all the things they want is the same as abandoning them to do as they please.

Of course, little children do not know what they can do and what they cannot do. We were born before them. We have already had millions of experiences of "good" and "bad". Even though society is not perfect and ideal, in society there are lots of things you can and cannot do. So, of course, we have to inform our children of these things. We do not have to be severe with them, shouting at them or hitting them. Children these days are not like they used to be. They are very intelligent. If you reason with them, they know very well how to listen and reason. So, respect them, give them space and explain things.

Explaining what they can and cannot do, make them responsible. Children have to become responsible for themselves and you have to make them understand that. That is what a Dzogchen Master does in relation to his students. I am asking you to be responsible for yourselves.

Try to do what you have to do in the right way. Try to avoid and diminish harmful things. If you cannot manage to develop in this way, co-operate with other people. First of all you can collaborate with your Masters. Next you can collaborate with old practitioners, who have some knowledge. You should not always think egotistically, "I do not accept the ideas of that person, because he is not a Master". This egotistic way of looking at things is very habitual. We should not look at things in this limited way. If something is valid you can even accept it from a dog or a cat.

Try to protect the teachings, because you have to gain realization through them. Maintain the transmission purely. Do not mix it up with who-knows-what. This does not mean being limited. It is not necessary to make limitations. You can use anything. But do not mix other things with the teaching and with the transmission!

When we transmit and apply teachings, we have to enter into the culture and knowledge of the student. For example, it is not that you who follow the teaching have to become Tibetan. The knowledge transmitted in the teaching is beyond colour and beyond form. This knowledge has no nationality. Therefore it can be integrated perfectly into your culture. But integrating into a culture does not mean destroying the transmission. The transmission should be maintained and continued exactly as you received it. Often people asked me, "Why do we have to do practices in Tibetan?" Firstly, we hardly ever do the main part of a practice in the Tibetan language. Even if we have to use words, we try to use as few as possible. Even those few words that we use in the short and medium Tuns, for example, are all mantras in Sanskrit or in the language of Od-di-yana. But the practice of the Chod, for example, which is a bit longer, is a teaching that arose and was applied in Tibet. It is connected with movement and the playing of instruments, all of which are connected with its transmission. If you want to use them you should use them precisely in the same way as they were transmitted to you, in order to develop the transmission.

You should not compare the transmission and the teaching with sectarianism or nationalism. What we want is realization. If it were possible to gain realization using dog language I would learn it. It does not matter to me whether I achieve realization with dog language or human language. But if I could not gain realization by speaking only English or some other western language I would not be satisfied. You have to understand why we do things. First you have to understand the real meaning of the teaching, and then there are many related things. You should not be limited about these things.

When we say you should integrate anything in your life with the teaching, that means you should not be limited, and you should know how to use things from your own culture. But integrating in this way does not mean changing or transforming the methods of the teaching.

Once someone said to me, "When you talk about the Dhyani Buddhas, they are always presented as Indian or Tibetan deities. We in the west don't have any knowledge of these kinds of deities. Why don't we integrate more with western ideas, and have say, five angels instead of these five deities?" But I feel that if you want five angels, why not just follow the Christian religion? There is no reason to interrupt or destroy the principle of the transmission of the teachings. This transmission has been linked to the five Buddhas from the beginning. What does it take to learn the forms of five figures? That is not the problem. The problem is egotism and nationalism. That is what you have to discover. Why should we remain within these limitations? Try to get free of them. This is the principle of the teachings. The principle is not to shut yourself in or create your own methods.

Working with the principle of the teaching means truly understanding the meaning of the teaching. If someone finds him or herself in the state of Dzogchen, he or she finally liberates all of these kinds of limitations and can then integrate with anything. This is a very important point in the teaching.

LOPON TENZIN NAMDAK

Lopon Tenzin Namdak is the principal Master of the Bon monastery at Dolanji, in India. He is a Dzogchen Master who transmits the most ancient Dzogchen teachings of Shang-Shung. He has also been actively responsible for the Bonpo refugees of Tibet, establishing for them a prospering settlement in India, at Dolanji, where, thanks to his efforts, a new site was found for Tibet's old Menri monastery, where he became the main teacher, or Lopon, as a young man of thirty.

Tuula Saarikoski



Buddhism; but the original old Bon also influenced Buddhism at the time when the Buddhist teachings came to Tibet. The old Bon, the Yungdrung Bon, is a still existing unbroken lineage from the times of Shang-Shung. Tenzin Namdak was born to a Bon family at Chungpo Karu, near Chamdo, in Eastern Tibet in 1927. He left his mother at the age of five and went to live with his uncle in the same village where his mother also lived. Like his uncle, all his main Masters were of the old lineage of the Yungdrung Bon, or the Swastika Bon. The first of them was Gonruponlob, with whom he spent six years on a small island of Namtsoto studying grammar, astrology, poetry and Sanskrit. The Master and the young student were the only inhabitants of the island, and part of the intense process of his education involved the boy having to find his own nourishment, with the result that he was hungry most of the time. "When I become a Master and have disciples, I shall give them food" he then decided.

I left my own country and came to Menri monastery when I was fifteen," Lopon Namdak recalls. Menri monastery in Tsang, near Shigatse, was the most important Bonpo monastery in all Tibet. The name of the monastery, Menri, means medicine mountain. It was after having finished his early studies on the island, where he had to find his own food, that he first arrived at Menri monastery. He then made a pilgrimage to Mount Kailash, from where he once again returned to Menri. There Tenzin Namdak continued his education under the guidance of the Menri Lopon Sangye Tenzin, his principal Master and his predecessor as the main Master of the monastery. He finished the studies for the Geshe degree and was elected by all the teachers of the monastery to be the new Lopon of Menri.

From Menri to Dolanji

After three years in England, Lopon Namdak went to India at the end of 1963 in order to find land for a monastery and a settlement of Tibetan Bonpo refugees. In 1966 he found some land in Dolanji, near Simla, and gathered all the remaining monks together there to found the new monastery. He was fortunate in obtaining the economic assistance of the Save the Children Fund to start this Bonpo settlement. After this great effort he went back to Europe, where he worked for six months in Munich, Germany, with Western Tibetologists. He might have remained in the West, but the monastery and the settlement needed him badly in Dolanji, so he returned to India. Ten years later the students of the Dolanji monastery were ready for higher education, so the time had come for establishing a Bonpo Dialectic School.



Lopon Namdak received a donation for starting this school from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Since that time the Dialectic School has been maintained by the settlement, with some occasional outside sponsorship, and the Lopon has had a hard time keeping his early decision to always give food to his disciples.

"Whenever someone offered him some special food, he always shared it with us," says Geshe Tenzin Wangyal, who was one of the Lopon's first students, and one of the first Geshe to qualify at Dolanji after completing the eight years of study there. He was also the first Bonpo Master to come to the West to teach. New students now come to Dolanji mostly from the Bonpo monasteries of northwestern Nepal. A few manage to come from Tibet, too, and at present the number of student is seventy. The settlement has also a primary school for the boys and girls of the village. In 1986 Lopon Namdak and two of the newly-qualified Geshe from Dolanji travelled for eight months in Eastern Tibet and Amdo, and they also visited the old Menri monastery on their way back to India. Lopon Namdak has recently founded a Bonpo education Centre in Kathmandu.

It is entirely sponsored by Tibetans living in Nepal and gets no official help from anywhere. The Educational Centre now has all the necessary buildings ready, but otherwise very little means of support. Lopon himself divides his time between Dolanji and the new school in Kathmandu.

The laughing Bonpo Master

"You Western people are so easy to teach, you always say 'yes' to everything," said Lopon Namdak at the retreat he led in Devon, bursting into the joyful laughter that is so typical of him. There were sixteen students at the beginning of the retreat and twelve at the end, none of whom was a Tibetologist who would have been able to debate with him. Everybody was happy to say 'yes'. Lopon Namdak gave teachings from the commentary of the

"rDzogs-pa Chen-po Shang Shung snyen bgyud", the practice of the space and light and dark, the Phowa and the Bardo teachings, the Introduction to the Natural State and the Dzogchen view. At the retreat in Devon the main practice was the Guru yoga of Taphritsa, a Nirmanakaya manifestation, who was a historical person. He, like Garab Dorje, lived in the seventh century and realized the Rainbow body. All the above was preparation for the last two days of the retreat, the first of which was spent getting everything ready for the formal initiation of Shang-Shung Meri, and the second of which was dedicated to the initiation itself. This was the same initiation that Namkhair Norbu Rinpoche and some of his Italian students had received from Lopon Tenzin Namdak in Dolanji, India, in 1977. Lopon Namdak also gave the same initiation in Merigar, in August, 1989, after he had finished giving the lung of the essential part of the "Shang-Shung Nyen Gyud" in the "capannone", or barn, of Merigar where willing students came each morning to receive the transmission. Between the retreat in England and the retreat at Merigar Lopon Namdak had left from London airport to go for the first time to the USA. That was the last time I saw him before he came to Italy. In America the surgical operation that Lopon underwent was successful. We were glad to hear that the operation wound was healing well, and that the Healing Light organization was taking good care of him.

Finally, after his long and eventful journey to the Western world, Lopon Namdak left for India and Dolanji. The last that was seen of him were his red robes, trimmed with blue, and a tremendously impressive brown cowboy hat on his head. His plans for the near future are to stay in Dolanji, to go regularly to teach in the Kathmandu school, and to recover properly from the operation. To the question of whether he would come back to Europe and America, Lopon answered "perhaps", which, as we know, may often turn out to be a promise.

An Interview with Rosa Namkhair

Rosa Namkhair, the wife of Namkhair Norbu Rinpoche and the gentle and understanding vajra sister of the practitioners of the Dzogchen Community kindly agreed to give the following short interview to "THE MIRROR".

"The Community has grown over the last eight years" she said "and that means the experience and knowledge of the Dzogchen Community also should be at the same level of growth and maturity. Talking about Merigar: Merigar was like a dream but this dream materialised only with hard work and collaboration of Community members. Merigar developed not only as a place for meeting and teaching but also a centre for publishing. The Shang Shung Institute for the preservation of Tibetan culture and traditions is a part of this development. As Rinpoche has explained, Merigar is now like an eight year old child with a lot of positive activities and behaviour on the spiritual and material level. That means that the negative symptoms can be overcome by more organisation and productivity. In order to



achieve more effective and successful results we should be working in groups with qualified leaders who can collaborate with others."

Rosa feels that the most unforgettable day in her life will be the day the Gompa is finished and inaugurated during the visit of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

My First Retreat with Namkhair Norbu Rinpoche in July 1977.

by Nicoletta Liguori.



I had no idea at that time what it would entail to organize a retreat for the Dzogchen Community. All that was available to us was a small house and about seven acres of land, four kilometres from the nearest village and 1 kilometre from the nearest paved road. There was not enough water in the well for everyone to have a wash even once. It was hot and the earth was dry and dusty. We put up our tents and so did the Master, renouncing the "comforts" of staying in the house, which anyway lacked electricity and water. Norbu Rinpoche decided to give the teachings under a big oak tree, sitting on a simple woollen blanket. Prata di Principato Ultra is an old-fashioned little village in Irpinia, about fifty kilometres from Naples. Its inhabitants are suspicious of innovations. I had to write a presentation of the planned "gathering" for the police and the local authorities. So I introduced Rinpoche as a knowledgeable professor of Tibetan and Mongolian languages from Naples University, putting little emphasis on his titles related to the teaching. Many people came. There were about eighty, few compared to how many come these days. What struck people more than the number of participants was the way they looked: they were all exotically dressed, in ragged jeans, long flowery skirts, with bracelets and necklaces worn by both men and women.

Being the organizer of the retreat, I was in no position to take a rest, especially since in those early days (July 1977) the group

was quite excitable because of the exceptional nature of the event. And in fact the event was really special: Namkhair Norbu Rinpoche was there to give teachings, spontaneously but formally, to all of those who were interested! The echo of the news that a Tibetan guru was teaching at a retreat on the hills around Monte Vergine had even got into the mass-media.

Apart from the colourful mundane events that took place, the retreat was, for me, an extremely important starting point. I saw, for the first time, the gathering together of nearly all of the "old faithfuls" of the Dzogchen Community. Apart from Laura Albini - who had been the organizer of the very first retreat, the one held in Subiaco, near Rome, the previous Summer - some of those who took part were: Adriano Clemente, Cristiana De Falco, Enrico Del'Angelo, Pina Arpaia, Tiziana Gottardi, Mario Maglietti, Clara Pagnozzi, Antonio Morgione, Aldo Oneto and the Simmons family, as well as many others too numerous to mention. It was moving then to meet with vajra brothers and sisters, and it still is now. That was the first time I heard the Master talk about the bond that connects the people who learn about and sing together the Song of the Vajra, and how the place where this happens becomes sacred. The bond that is established in this way is unbreakable and even stronger than bonds of kinship.

It is now almost ten years since that house and land were sold. The Prata retreat is now just a memory, that can be refreshed by looking at photos. I went back there a few months ago with my little son Poli. Everything was completely abandoned, immersed in a suffused, clear light. When I sat down to sing the Song of the Vajra, I felt I could hear the sound of the Master's voice, and all the others, singing together once more "Emakiriki-ri..."

Practices for the Special Days

Continuation of the practice calendar devised by Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche (in each section the Tibetan date is followed by the western date).

5th Month, 10th day
Monday 2/7/1990

This is Guru Padmasambhava day, a good day to do Ganapuja with Guruyoga of Padmasambhava. If you are unable to do this, try to do the Long-life practice connected with Padmasambhava, called "Universal Wisdom Union".

5th Month, 15th day
Saturday 7/7/1990

FULL MOON

This is a special day for the Long-life practice of the Dakini Mandarava, so you can do "The Cycle of Life's Vajra" early in the morning. If you cannot do it at that time, it is still good to do it later in the day.

5th Month, 25th day
Tuesday 17/7/1990

This is a Dakini day and an important day for the practice of Ekajati. Therefore, according to your circumstances, try to do the long Tun collectively with your Vajra sisters and brothers, or the medium Tun if you are practising on your own. In either case repeat the heart mantra of Ekajati as many times as possible.

5th Month, 30th day
Sunday 22/7/1990

NEW MOON - TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE 01.53 - 04.11 GMT
This is an ideal day for purification practices. It is best to do Purification of the Six Lokas either collectively or alone, preferably in the morning. Otherwise you can try to do a medium or short Tun. **The time of the eclipse is a very good time for practice, because it is considered that during that time all effects of practice are multiplied.**

6th Month, 4th day
Wednesday 25/7/1990

This is the anniversary of the Dharmachakra (the first turning of the Wheel of the Dharma), the first teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni (the Four Noble Truths), which he gave to his disciples at Sarnath, shortly after his illumination. On this special day you can do a Ganapuja with your Vajra brothers and sisters.

6th Month, 10th day
Wednesday 1/8/1990

This day is considered by many great Masters to be the birthday

of Guru Rinpoche, Padmasambhava. This year, on the 1st of August 1990, when it is eight o'clock in the morning in Oddiyana, (see Universal Timetable) we Dzogchen practitioners all over the world will do a Guruyoga with the medium or long Tun, according to our possibilities. Those who can manage it can also add a Ganapuja. Thus we will practice together, communicating all transmissions in the same instant in the state of contemplation.

6th Month, 14th day
Sunday 5/8/1990

This is the anniversary of the 3rd Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje. On this day it is good to do "A Kar Lamai Nalgyor", Guruyoga with White A.

6th Month, 15th day
Monday 6/8/1990

FULL MOON - TOTAL LUNAR ECLIPSE

This is the anniversary of Gampopa, the chief disciple of Milarepa. Therefore it is an excellent day to do "A Kar Lamai Nalgyor", Guruyoga with White A. Since it is also a full moon day it is also good, if you have the possibility, to do the Long-life practice of Amitayus, "Union of Primordial Essences".

6th Month, 25th day
Wednesday 15/8/1990

This is a Dakini day, so it is a positive day for reinforcing the function of your energy and creating a vital contact with the energy of the universe, by doing a Ganapuja 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 Simhamukha, it is good to recite her heart mantra as many times as possible.

6th Month, 30th day
Monday 20/8/1990

NEW MOON - PARTIAL SOLAR ECLIPSE
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.

7th Month, 10th day
Tuesday 30/8/1990

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 the Guruyoga and Long-life practice associated with Padmasambhava, "Universal Wisdom Union." If you have the opportunity it is beneficial to do a Ganapuja.

7th Month, 15th day
Wednesday 5/9/1990

FULL MOON

This is the anniversary of Tsarachen Losal Gyatso and Padma Karpo, a famous 17th century Drugga Kagyupa 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", Guruyoga with White A.

7th Month, 25th day
Friday 14/9/1990

This is a Dakini day and also the anniversary of Pagmo Drugga (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 Simhamukha, recite her heart mantra as much as possible and then do an intensive practice of Ekajati.

7th Month, 30th day
Tuesday 18/9/1990

NEW MOON

This day is ideal for purification practices. Try to do either the "Purification of the Six Lokas" or the "Namchos Shitroi Nalgyor", the "Yoga of the Peaceful and Wrathful Manifestations", either collectively or on your own.

8th Month, 10th day
Saturday 29/9/1990

This is a very special day of Guru Padmasambhava, therefore try to 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.

8th Month, 15th day
Thursday 4/10/1990

FULL MOON

This is an important day to do the Long-life practice of Amitayus, "Union of Primordial Essences". It is best to do Long-life practice early in the morning if you can, but if you cannot it is still good if you can do it later in the day or evening.

8th Month, 25th day
Saturday 13/10/1990

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 Ma-

ster of the Nyingmapa school. It is therefore an excellent day to do "A Kar Lamai Nalgyor", the Guruyoga with 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 Simhamukha.

8th Month, 30th day
Thursday, 18/10/1990

NEW MOON

This day is excellent for practicing the "Purification of the Six Lokas", if you know how to do it. Otherwise you can do the medium or long Tun.

9th Month, 3rd day
Sunday 21/10/1990

This is the anniversary of Rigzin Jigmed Lingpa (1729-1798), a great Dzogchen Master who was the author of many books, among which is found the Longchen Nyinthing (*Klongchen snyin thig*), which he wrote after having contact with Longchenpa through visions. Therefore, on this important day, you should try to do "A Kar Lamai Nalgyor", Guruyoga with White A.

9th Month, 10th day
Monday 29/10/1990

This is Guru Padmasambhava day and also the anniversary of Terton Tsogyal, a previous incarnation of Sogyal Rinpoche and discoverer of many Termas. It is therefore a good day to do the Long-life practice of Guru Padmasambhava "Universal

Wisdom Union", which is included in the medium or long Tun. You can do this in the usual way or, if you have the possibility, you can do a Ganapuja.

9th Month, 15th day
Friday 2/11/1990

FULL MOON

This is a good day to do the Long-life practice of Amitayus, "Union of Primordial Essences", either collectively or personally, according to your possibilities.

9th Month, 22nd day
Friday 9/11/1990

This day is the great celebration of Buddha Shakyamuni's descent to earth from the realms of the Divinities. It is called "Lha bab dus chen", "the Great Time of the Descent of the Divinities". It is an ideal day to do a Ganapuja with your Vajra sisters and brothers. If there are none nearby you can do a short or medium Tun on your own.

9th Month, 25th day
Monday, 12/11/1990

This is a Dakini day and the anniversary of the very important Dzogchen Master Adzom Drugpa (1842-1924). He was a disciple of Jamyang Kyentse Wangpo and a Master of some of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche's Masters, including Chanchub Dorje and Ayu Kadro. He was also a previous incarnation of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. It is therefore a very important day to practice "A Kar Lamai Nalgyor", the Guruyoga with White A, according to your possibilities.

9th Month, 30th day
Saturday 17/11/1990

NEW MOON

This is a good day to try to do "Namchos Shitroi Nalgyor", the Yoga of the Peaceful and Wrathful Manifestations, in the morning. It is also an important day for the practice of Ekajati, so try to do a long or medium Tun in the usual way, reciting the heart mantra of Ekajati as many times as possible. The best time for this practice is around eight o'clock in the evening.

10th Month, 10th day
Tuesday 27/11/1990

This is an important day of Guru Padmasambhava, so try to do the Long-life practice associated with him, "Universal Wisdom Union", included in the medium or long Tun. Otherwise, if you have the possibility, it is benefi-

UNIVERSAL TIMETABLE

31 July	16.30	Fairbanks, Hawaii
	17.30	Dawson
	18.30	San Francisco, Los Angeles, Vancouver
	19.30	Denver
	20.30	Chicago, Mexico City
	21.30	New York, Montreal, Lima
	22.00	Caracas
	22.30	Buenos Aires
	23.30	Rio De Janeiro
	01.30	Reykjavic, Capo Verde
1 August	02.30	London
	03.30	Rome, Berlin, Oslo, Paris, Madrid
	04.30	Moscow, Nicosia, Helsinki, Athens
	06.00	Tehran
	08.00	ODDIYANA, Delhi
	08.30	Rangoon
	10.00	Ulan Bator, Djakarta, Singapore
	10.30	Beijing, Lhasa, Manila, Hong Kong
	11.30	Tokyo, Seoul
	12.30	Sydney
	14.30	Wellington, Marshall

INFORMATION FOR THOSE COMING TO ATTEND NEXT MONTH'S VISIT OF H.H. DALAI LAMA.

Amiata Viaggi e Turismo, Casella Postale 10, 1-58033 Castel del Piano (GR), tel: (0564) 957225/957211, or (0577) 777464/778810, or FAX (0564) 957211. **Please book before the 21st of May sending a deposit of 50.000 lira per person (20.000 lira for children).** A special rate is available for those attending the Inauguration, as follows:

	Superior Hotel	Medium Hotel
Bed and Breakfast	Lit.28.000	Lit.23.000
Half Board	Lit.42.000	Lit.34.500
Full Board	Lit.54.000	Lit.44.500

A limited number of single bedrooms is available for a supplement of Lit. 8.000 a night. A discount of 30% is available for children under the age of 10.

The Shang-Shung Institute will be operating a shuttle bus to and from the more central hotels during the visit.

On arrival in Arcidosso, those attending the Inauguration should contact the Information Office in the Palazzo Comunale di Arcidosso (Arcidosso Town Hall), where they will be informed as to which hotel has been allocated to them, and where they can get the meal coupons ("buoni pasti") which will enable them to get meals in the local restaurants at a special price.

If you are coming by public transport you should get to Grosseto railway station and take the bus from there to Arcidosso. Bus times

are as follows on the bus line known as "Autolinea R.A.M.A.":

Weekdays: buses leave at 6.10, 11.15, 13.20, 14.10, 17.00, 17.35. Holidays: 11.15, and 17.20.

No accommodation will be available at Merigar. The dormitory will be needed for Merigar staff organising the events.

The upstairs part of the main house at Merigar is private, and no one is allowed to go up there without a prior invitation.

A baby-sitting service will be available at Merigar, for those who book in advance by phoning Merigar on (0564) 966837 as soon as possible. Arrangements for this service will depend on the number of children requiring it, so please don't just let us know at the last minute on your arrival.

For security reasons there will be **no camping** allowed on Merigar's land. Those intending to camp should camp at one of the local camp sites.

All cars will park down in the **car parks** around the Faggio Rosso Hotel near the main road into Arcidosso. A **shuttle bus** service will carry those attending the events up and down the hill. **No private vehicles will be allowed up to Merigar.**

No food will be available at Merigar, and those attending are asked eat at their hotels or in restaurants.

No photographs or videos may be made during the official events, during lectures or teachings, except by official photographers who have written permission to do so. These photographers must not use flash lights. Private photos and videos may only be made outside, and even then those making them should show respect for His

Holiness and others attending the events.

Microphones and Tape recorders must not be set up on or near the platform in front of His Holiness or other speakers by private individuals. Official recordings will be made, and these will be available for purchase after the event.

The Community will be selling books and other practice-related materials during the events, but **no sales stalls may be set up** by private individuals.

The **weather** is usually warm at the end of May in the region of Merigar, but it is cool at night. Since the weather is variable because of the mountainous nature of the area, however, those attending are advised to bring clothing to suit all weathers, including rainwear or an umbrella. You will need to take your own **cushion or blanket** up to Merigar to sit on.

Finally, we would like to wish all those coming 'Bon Voyage'!



A TIBETOLOGIST IN TUSCANY

Part one of an interview with
ADRIANO CLEMENTE.



The following interview took place in the tranquil study of Adriano Clemente's house amongst the green countryside of the lower slopes of Monte Amiata, a few kilometres from Merigar. Prayer flags hang from trees in the garden, and close to the house is a fine 'orto' or vegetable garden which Laura tends with loving care. In a wire netting enclosure lives the family's goose, which has seems to have a healthy appetite. Tai and Yesang, the two daughters of the family, were downstairs as the interview was recorded, and the scales and tunes that Tai was practising on the piano can clearly be heard on the tape that was transcribed to produce this article. It is a musical household: Adriano is a firm favourite at Community parties in the Merigar area, with his fine repertoire of Italian and international folk songs and music being much requested.

In Adriano's study, however, another atmosphere prevails: one of ordered and patient work. As we spoke Adriano's new computer sat silently on his desk in front of him, surrounded by the manuscripts of translations from the Tibetan that he is at present working on.

THE MIRROR: To begin our interview, Adriano, could you please tell us what it was that first attracted you to Tibetan studies?

ADRIANO CLEMENTE: I first became interested in spiritual teachings in general, not particularly in Tibetan teachings. Then I met Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche in Naples in the January of 1975, when he gave a lecture on Bon, the indigenous pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet. You could say that meeting him in such circumstances was a kind of sign, because I have since worked on things related to Bon for many years. Rinpoche was lecturing at what is called the 'Palestra', a kind of gymnasium where previously, in 1974, an Indian yogi called Satyananda had been giving Hatha Yoga lessons. That Indian master went away, and then Rinpoche gave a lecture there. I knew he was a Lama, but frankly he didn't at first impress me at all because he was wearing ordinary western lay person's clothes and he seemed more like any University professor. He

seemed to me to be intelligent, but beyond that at that time I didn't feel anything in particular. I was very attached to the idea of learning from an Indian style guru with long hair and a beard. But after that first lecture Rinpoche began teaching Yantra Yoga in Naples and I went to the first two lessons. I didn't like it, though, perhaps because I was used to Hatha yoga, and after all I was only 17 years old at the time!

THE MIRROR: What was it that had interested you in Hatha Yoga?

ADRIANO CLEMENTE: There were very many reasons. But mainly it was because I was searching for some deeper meaning in my life. At that time Hatha Yoga was the only form of eastern teaching with which it was possible to have some contact in Naples.

THE MIRROR: You grew up in the Italian city of Bari didn't you?

ADRIANO CLEMENTE: I was born in Lecce, near Bari, and then lived in Bari for six years before my family moved to Naples.

THE MIRROR: Later you enrolled at the University of Naples to study Tibetan with Rinpoche, didn't you?

ADRIANO CLEMENTE: University came later, after I had already been following Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche's teachings for a while. Rinpoche had taught Yantra Yoga for a few years in Naples at the beginning of the seventies, but I didn't yet know him at that time. In 1975, however, when he began to teach Yantra again, I went to the first lesson. I didn't continue to follow his classes, but I sent along a friend of mine who did follow them, because I thought what was being taught was good, although I wasn't following it myself. I went along sometimes at the end of the classes to meet up with my friends there, and because I liked to see Rinpoche. Then sometimes Rinpoche would speak to me, and he said some interesting things. So I started to think that maybe this master had some wisdom. But it wasn't until the Autumn of 1975 that I really felt that he was my master. There was a change inside me that made me realise this. And then I went to his house. I was very attached to this Indian guru Satyananda, who now lives at Assisi. He was very

special, very open-minded, and was a disciple of Ananda Moyi Ma, a famous woman yogi. But in some way I felt that Satyananda was telling me to follow Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche for now, and that I would meet Satyananda again later. So I went to Rinpoche's house where he was living at that time in Pozzuoli on the coast just outside Naples. Rinpoche was already married, and his son Yeshe was at that time about five years old, and his daughter Yuchen was three or four. When I went to their apartment Yeshe opened the door and said: "Do you want to see my father?" I said: "Yes", and went in. Then when I entered the room where Rinpoche was he said right away: "What has happened to you?", which was very strange, because usually when you go to see someone you don't know very well they don't usually say things like that. So I started to say many things, and he began to teach something, and then he said that the Dzogchen Community was beginning. There were maybe ten of us who met every Friday at his house. This was in the period between November 1975 and February 1976, and during that time Rinpoche gave informal teachings, not really practices, more just answering the questions people put to him. The idea of forming the Dzogchen Community was in the air, and Rinpoche would teach to those who came to his house. Every week he would say: "Next week I will start the teachings." Then in February he started. It was in Ramon Prats' house in Naples. Ramon was one of Rinpoche's first students at the University. Rinpoche began by teaching the practice of Vajrasattva, and giving a kind of initiation, and then he continued to give teachings from February to June. He gave the essential teachings of the Upadesa series: the Internal and External Ngondro, Tummo, Powa, Tregchod, giving transmission and so on. About 12 or 13 people met there every week. Among us there were Antonio Morgione, Ramon Prats, Nuria Prats, Nicoletta Liguori, Sergio Campodonico, Roberto Ventrella, Eugenio Amico, Enzo Desio, Gennaro Anziano, Ciro Marolda, and a few others.

At the same time Laura Albini was in contact with Rinpoche

from Rome, and Rinpoche decided to hold a retreat at Subiaco, so there was a Community developing in Rome. I went to the retreat with three other people from Naples, including Ciro Marolda who is quite a famous healer in Naples who also exorcises negative spirits from houses and so on. At the time that I went to the retreat I had to take the exams at my High School, so I spent only three days there. The atmosphere at the retreat was very different from the way it was in Naples, because we began to do chanting practices, which were something we had never done in Naples. We had never even done the Guardian practices in Naples. I remembered how the Sutras tell that the Buddha had given teachings according to the desire of those who came to hear him, and I thought that Rinpoche was teaching these chants because that was what the people at the retreat wanted. They were Buddhists, and all had malas (rosaries for counting the recitation of mantras). I didn't feel Buddhist myself. There were about forty people there at that retreat at Subiaco, and afterwards there were more teachings in Naples during the following winter of 1976-77. Many people like Giacomella Orolino, Giorgio Amilano and others joined the Community at that time. At Christmas Rinpoche went to Sardinia and gave teachings there to a group of people. Then there was a summer retreat at Prata in 1977, which drew the groups from Naples, Rome and Sardinia together. That was the real beginning of the international Dzogchen Community.

THE MIRROR: When did you begin your studies with Rinpoche at the Oriental Institute of the University of Naples?

ADRIANO CLEMENTE: In 1976, after the Subiaco retreat. I went there to study Tibetan. I wasn't concerned about a career at that time; you could say that my head was somewhat in the clouds as far as that was concerned. I attended the University for about one year, studying Tibetan and other things. Then in 1978 I lost interest for a while, and did not attend the University, except for a few Tibetan classes. At that time I still had not developed any interest in Tibetan culture at all, although

I was interested in the teachings. I really wanted to be a musician, and so I started to give some concerts playing the repertoire of songs that I knew. I also set some of the poems of the English poet William Blake to music. I did some concerts in Rome, and had a little group. The vocalist was Miranda Simmons. The Simmons family had been at the Subiaco retreat.

Then I went to London for the Christmas retreat Rinpoche gave there in 1979, which was the second visit Rinpoche made to London to teach. I made some money busking in the underground (subway) there. I needed some money because I wanted to buy a lute, so after the retreat was over I played in the underground, which was very depressing and cold. I didn't make enough to buy the lute, but with the little money I did make I bought a Tibetan-English dictionary by Chandra Das. I decided to go back to Italy and begin studying again. I finished my studies and graduated from the University very quickly after that. I studied many interesting courses there on the different philosophies and religions of the world, which were very useful in giving me a background for the Tibetan studies in which I majored, and are still useful for the work I am doing now. When I was eighteen I was really too young to study, but after the time I took off from the University I was really ready for it and got a lot more out of it.

THE MIRROR: You are lucky the University system allowed you to do your course in that way. The course is four years, isn't it, at your University, and then you have to write a thesis?

ADRIANO CLEMENTE: That's right. After finishing my studies at the University, I went to India for eight months. I spent three of those months at Dolanji where there is a settlement of Tibetans and a Bon monastery. I studied a lot of Tibetan there, working with Lopon Tenzin Namdak, the founder and main teacher of the monastery, who helped me a great deal. I had a lot of time to study because there was nothing else to do at the monastery, and I was with the monks who were also all studying. I met Tenzin Wangyal there, who was at that time still a student, and we became friends. That period

of study brought a great improvement in my knowledge of Tibetan, and after that as I travelled around India I found for the first time that I could understand a little of any Tibetan book that I picked up. I was very happy about that, it was a great achievement for me. Since that time I have gone on consistently reading Tibetan, and trying to develop my knowledge. In the last few years I have become very interested in Tibetan history, and have been studying that a great deal.

THE MIRROR: What did your parents think about your choice of Tibetan studies as a career?

ADRIANO CLEMENTE: My parents were always very kind and supportive. Of course they were worried when I didn't have a regular job, and wanted me to teach in schools, which I could do with my degree. But they never created any obstacles for me. As you know, I work now as a supplementary teacher in schools in this area when such work is available, as well as receiving sponsorship from the Community for the translations of Tibetan texts that I work on.

THE MIRROR: What was the first Tibetan text that you translated?

ADRIANO CLEMENTE: Tibetan is a difficult language to translate, as there are many levels of meaning in it. So the first text I translated was the one I did for my thesis, which I was working on while I was in India, a text called 'Trenpa Serdang' (Dran Pa Gser Gdang) which is a kind of terma (hidden treasure) of the Bon Dzogchen tradition. It is a very beautiful text. There is a chapter in it which describes all the visionary meetings of the tertön (discoverer of hidden teachings) who wrote it with the Ringzin (knowledge holders) and the Dakini, as well as many other things. One day I hope to have the opportunity to publish it.

In the next part of this interview Adriano will talk about his work on translating from the Tibetan Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche's Books on Bon, and on Tibetan nomad's



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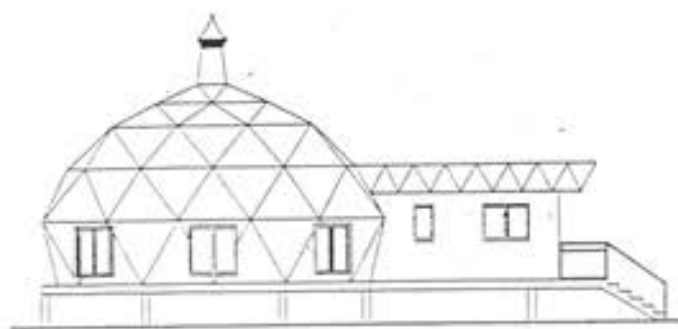
THE M

Construction of the Dark Retreat House in France.

Construction work on the dark retreat house in Brittany, in Northern France, is now under way. As shown in the plan and elevation included here it will be in the form of a geodesic dome that will have individual rooms for seven practitioners at a time. Financial support for the project is requested. Please see the article on the back page of this issue of THE MIRROR for details.

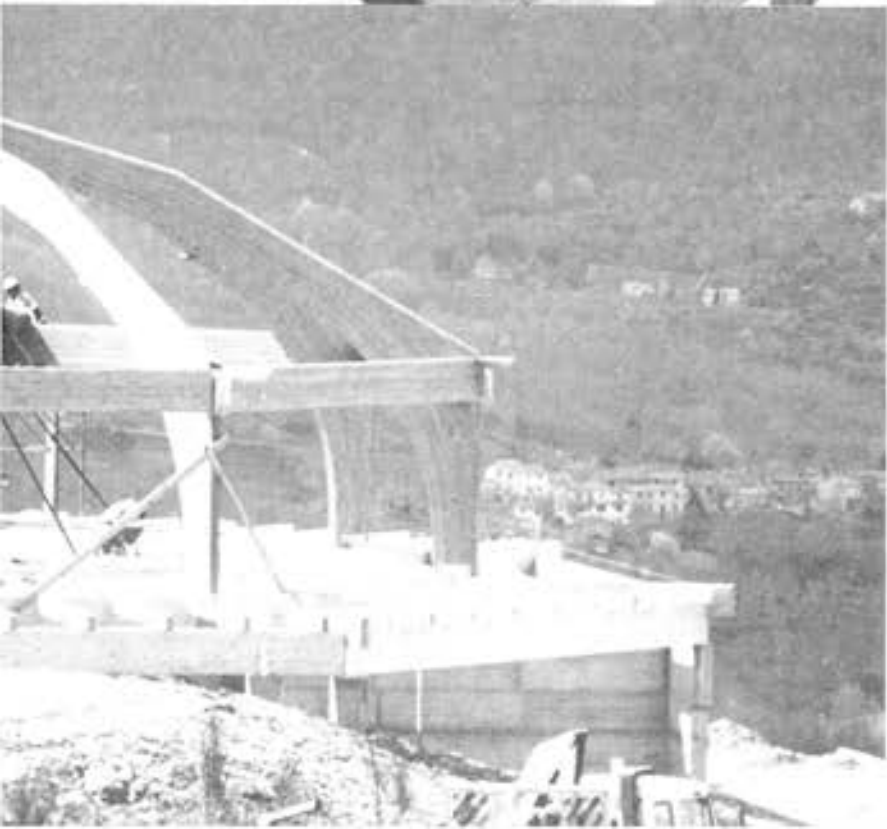
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Construction work on the dark retreat house in Brittany, in Northern France, is now under way. As shown in the plan and elevation included here it will be in the form of a geodesic dome that will have individual rooms for seven practitioners at a time. Financial support for the project is requested. Please see the article on the back page of this issue of THE MIRROR for details.



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Building work on the Merigar Gompa (teaching and practice hall) is going ahead fast, thanks to the dedicated efforts of the construction team, the architects and the engineers, pictured here on these pages. They have worked on through often difficult weather conditions of high winds, rain, hail and even snow., but as the simple elegance of the structure emerges, all feel a sense of growing excitement. Perched as it is on the top of a small hill in the valley below the main house at Merigar, it commands a panoramic view of open country on all sides, and it is clear that the finished building will be exceptionally beautiful.



The Cabin shown in this line drawing is being built to provide accommodation for the Master on the land at Tsegyelgar, Buckland, Massachussetts, USA. It will be ready in time for the retreat there in the last two weeks of July of this year. At present there are no other buildings on the land, and those participating at the retreat will bring their own tents, or stay in nearby motels. The teachings will be given in a large marquee.



MERIGAR PREPARES FOR THE GREAT EVENT

BY CESARE SPADA

His Holiness, the Dalai Lama will be in Arcidosso - as a guest of the Shang-Shung Institute and of Merigar - from May 29th, the date of the Inauguration of the Institute, to May 31st. During his visit he will give public teachings at Merigar. The whole Community is at present involved in preparing for this great event.

On March 1st, during the press-conference held in Rome, in the Hall of the Italian National Press Federation, Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche as the President of the Shang-Shung Institute, together with the Vice-Presidents Giorgio Busetto and Barrie Simmons and with the journalist Raimondo Bultrini announced to the journalists assembled there the forthcoming Inauguration of the Shang-Shung Institute, an International Institute of Tibetan Studies, and the visit of H.H. the Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso. Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche illustrated in general the purpose and the programme of the Institute, as well as another of the many initiatives which he has inspired and promoted, the Project for a New Tibetan Village. Even before these future events had been officially announced, at Merigar as well as in Rome, Milan, Venice, Naples and wherever Dzogchen Community members live, everybody had started to work to bring these projects to fulfillment. Anna Eid, a member of Merigar's Blue Gakyil (a committee which is made up of nine representatives of the Community who are chosen to serve for one year, and whose task is to plan and organize the Community activities) had already been to Como where - with the help of Micaela Landoni, Mimmo Taborrelli and others - she had started to print on fabric the 1,000 and more prayer-flags needed for the Tibetan New Year, for the visit of H.H. the Dalai Lama and for the Inauguration of the Institute. Whoever comes to Merigar these days will have a nice surprise: trees are planted all along the road that leads from the gate down to the "big barn" (the building which is the seat of the offices of the Shang-Shung Editions, of the "Merigar" magazine and of "The Mirror" and also houses the carpentry workshop) and everywhere on the land, near the pond and in the beautiful flower-bed next to the "big barn". The new trees -



mostly pines and willows - have been planted by Alix De Fermor (who is the "professional" coordinator of all the planting work, who also does the same work designing and creating artistic gardens for private people who live in the area) by Franco Branca and many others. The various Inaugural Exhibitions are also being prepared. The castle in Arcidosso, that was built by the Aldobrandeschi family in the middle ages, which has already hosted the art exhibition organized by the Academy of Fine Arts of Munich and the Town of Arcidosso, will host at this time a big exhibition on Tibetan culture in all of its aspects, during the visit of H.H. the Dalai Lama. This exhibition will also include a section on the visual arts, showing tangkas, statues and craftwork in gold, a section on music, a very complete selection of photos and audio-visual displays, as well as a special section dedicated to the Tibetan Nomads. The exhibition will require a big effort to organize, and Patrizia Moscatelli, Claudia Ciardulli, Fabio Andrico, Fulvio Rossi and Enrico Dell'Angelo are now working hard, measuring rooms, buying equipment such as panels, projectors, etc. Renata Nani, Costantino Albini and others are also collaborating to make all this happen.

In addition to the work of mounting the exhibition, it will be also necessary to gather together the objects that will be on show and to insure them, and then to edit and publish explanatory material relating to them. An exhibition such as "Riflessi nel Borgo", which was organized by the Community three years ago in the small space of the "Theatre of the Unanimi", took two weeks of hard work to organize. We estimated that this next exhibition will require about three times as much effort, even though the Community has by now gained more experience of such

undertakings, which makes it possible for us to work more efficiently and with less wasted energy.

In the small office where the organization of the Shang-Shung Institute takes place, Paola Davico, a young woman who has a good knowledge of the Tibetan and Chinese languages and Lucia Sblendorio, the editorial secretary of the "Merigar" magazine, are alternating at the computers, fax machines, telephones, etc. The Institute, in collaboration with the secretarial staff of Merigar, particularly of Tiziana Gottardi, has sent out more than 3,000 invitations for the events that will take place during the Inauguration.

The feeling of growing excitement and expectation among all those working to prepare for His Holiness' visit is like that before a big celebration, or festival. This comparison with a festival springs readily to mind because such events are landmarks of our lives, whether they are solemn or more worldly occasions. The visit of His Holiness and the Inauguration of the Shang-Shung Institute are certain to be events that will remain in the memory of all those who have worked to prepare for them and of all those who attend them.

Translated by
Cristiana de Falco

The Easter Retreat at Merigar



Although there were one or two sunny days it was mainly rain, mist, and even snow over Merigar for the Easter Retreat. The patchwork fields looking across to Monte Labro were a deep green with purple and lemon wildflowers in the fields. Spring had arrived with the rain. The red and yellow tulips were blooming and the white cherry blossom tree was in flower at the "capannone". People came from many parts of Italy: from Milan, Rome, Naples, Venice, Bologna and also a few from other countries: France, Germany and Austria. It was a small retreat but also unifying.

to observe themselves. They were asked to reflect on various questions, such as: "What are the four awarenesses?", "What relationship do they have to you?" and "How do you apply them in practice?". Another day people were asked to "Observe the Vajra relationship between Master and student, and between student and student; those who are travelling together in the same boat". And then they were asked to reflect on these questions: "Is this relationship important?", "If so, why is it important?", "How can you maintain these relationships and collaborate?", and "What type of problems can occur and how must you overcome them?". Each tun lasted about two hours and there were three tuns a day. There was no Teacher to listen to, we had to listen to ourselves. We had to reflect and to contemplate. Yantra Yoga was integrated into the sessions, which helped people co-ordinate their energy, and to become quieter and more stable in their practice. I spoke to many people about how



What did we do for nine days without our Master? We did practice and more practice and at the end some people felt very tired, but many also felt that they gained more real understanding of the practice, of contemplation, and that they came closer to understanding their natural state. It was called the Practice Retreat, and "Aom" reverberated from the vast depths of time and space as practitioners meditated in the small "gompa" of Merigar. Our Master, Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, had given precise instructions on what to practice for the three "tuns" (sessions of practice) during each day. There was one at nine o'clock in the morning, one at three o'clock in the afternoon and one at eight o'clock in the evening. The envelopes remained closed, only to be opened at the beginning of each "tun". The instructions were all personally written by Rinpoche with the day, the date and the time written on each one. The number of each "tun" was marked in gold on the front of each envelope. Rinpoche had written communications about each of the practices and very precise instructions about how they were to be done. Practitioners who attended needed stamina and also dedication. They had to look at themselves and to look at their practice. It was not always easy for people to sit quietly, to look into their "Mir-

the retreat was for them, and this is what they said: "It is not always easy to confront yourself and realise where you are in your practice. It's difficult when you realise that you can't concentrate and practise as well as you would like," and: "There was a closeness and warmth among practitioners." One person told me that for her it was really like doing a personal retreat which she had wanted to do for some time but had never really known how to structure properly. Anna Eid from the Blue Gakyil said: "Without the envelopes it would not have worked so well, because while the retreat was in progress there was also a lot of busy activity at Merigar with many people working. The envelopes provided a structure and a continuation that in this present situation would have been harder to maintain without the Master present. The envelopes gave the retreat a real stability. The Master's presence was there every day as we opened each envelope. Many people have asked for a copy of the communications that Rinpoche wrote in the envelopes. We are making a little booklet of these which will be available soon." The Practice Retreat of the Envelopes was for many people a very wonderful retreat.

Jean Mackintosh
Merigar April, 1990



Cesare Spada



Lucia Sblendorio



Enrico Dell'Angelo



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NATURAL MEDICINE, TIBETAN MEDICINE

by Shaky Dorje



In recent years concern about the dangers and complications inherent in modern medicine has grown, and there is great interest in natural and alternative medical treatments. Some people are actually allergic to some or all synthetic medicines (particularly antibiotics) and experience violent reactions if subjected to them - in extreme cases coma or even death. In some cases allopathic medicine seems to function by 'suppressing' the illness, in such a way that the acute condition is no longer evident, but it is replaced by a chronic condition, whose origins are in the initial illness and its treatment. Some patients cannot tolerate the sometimes violent methods of therapy; the patient is left severely weakened by the treatment, or perhaps dies on the operating table. This is especially evident in cases of older patients, but occurs in all age groups. Even if one does not have such a problem, allopathy has little to offer but temporary relief in the case of certain illnesses, particularly chronic conditions such as arthritis or allergies.

So, for these and numerous other reasons there is currently a great interest in natural therapy treatments of various types, but how can one avail oneself of such treatment? One can hardly expect to have a meaningful cure by going to an herb shop and picking out a selection more or less on whim! Thus one might have recourse to a therapist. In Tibetan medicine the therapist (called 'Emchi') must diagnose not just a single illness but the whole condition of the individual. The whole of the patient's life history - his or her character, upbringing, habitual diet and life-style, personal psychology, the events of a lifetime - has created a certain terrain, which means that any illness will present differently in different patients, and require treatment personalized to him or her. The most important consideration in such diagnosis is the state of balance or imbalance of the elemental energies, or humours - wind, bile and phlegm. These dynamic energies underlie both physical and psychological functions in the organism - their balance is health, their imbalance leads to illness.

For the Emchi (as for Tibetans and for many other traditional peoples) in general man is not really alien to his environment -

he is part of it, a reflection of it. The interrelationship between the individual and the environment is in fact more important than either purely external phenomena or purely internal, personal states.

Over the millennia of its growth, Tibetan medicine has evolved as a system which is spiritual and psychological as well as medicinal. The Emchi learns to appreciate his patients, as well as his work, in a spiritual context, and to appreciate the whole of their being in relationship to their world and their life-process. This he does not only through interviewing the patient, but more especially by examining the urine and the pulse.

The Tibetan system of urinalysis is different from allopathic urinalysis and is entirely unique. The Emchi himself examines the urine 'esthetically', by observing deposits, colours, odours and so on, and thus gains an appreciation of the patient's general state. Some specific types of illness can also be diagnosed directly in this way.

Tibetan sphygmology is the Emchi's most specific and precise diagnostic tool. Emchis train for years to appreciate the subtle variations in pulse-beats, in different positions, chiefly on the radial artery. Sphygmology is also found in other medical systems (there was even a European sphygmology at one time, but it has died out), but the Tibetan system is distinct; it has been developed in Tibet in relation to other elements of the Tibetan system. A person wishing to receive a 'wholistic' therapy for his or her condition must be ready to take responsibility for his or her state. One cannot just swallow pills or undergo physical therapies and expect to be cured without any other personal participation, just as there is no cure for alcoholism without changing one's drinking habits. The very act of taking responsible steps for one's health is itself healing, and leads to a clearer appreciation of oneself. This may mean working with one's diet, lifestyle and attitudes in more health-giving ways. All spiritual paths begin with an appreciation of life and willingness to work with one's personal being, a willingness to change, and so should the path to health.

Basing his diagnosis and proposed cure on his vision of life and vision of the patient, the Emchi may suggest certain natural

remedies. Traditionally he will provide these himself, and, if he - or she - is a very traditional Emchi, he will have prepared them himself. They may be composed uniquely of herbs, but many Tibetan remedies also contain minerals, or even animal products. The tradition (originally found in many natural therapy systems) that the therapist should make his or her own medicines existed for a very particular reason: in the act of collecting herbs, compounding them and consecrating the medicine the therapist gains a deep feeling for the compound, he has a sense of vision about it, which he can then relate to the condition of his patient. He thus obeys the maxim, "The remedy meets the illness completely; it is not stronger, it is not weaker, it does not otherwise disturb the organism."

In Tibetan medicine we have the advantage of a great classical system of natural therapy with a strong spiritual base, still found in an unbroken living tradition. So much has been lost elsewhere, supplanted by allopathy or even persecuted. Aspiring Emchis still study in the traditional way with their master, in schools or apprenticeship, still learn all aspects of their art in its spiritual and practical aspects in the old style, and still study the ancient classics in the context of the living tradition.

Any medical system adapts constantly to changing circumstances in the world, such as environment, diet, lifestyle and prevalence of illness. Tibetan medicine is no exception - Emchis must appreciate modern man and his capacities and find ways to treat him and his illnesses. In order to combat severe modern illnesses, Tibetan medicine has turned to a series of compounds based on metallic ashes, particularly of mercury. The fabrication of those powerful remedies is a unique feature of the Tibetan system. But they must be used in an integrated fashion, in the context of a whole healing process. Life is a wholeness, and we need an integrated sense of involvement to be healthy people. Life is natural - however much we have a stressful lifestyle or live in a polluted environment, we are still natural, elemental beings. We are the elements, only they can sustain us.

Shakya Dorje

Shakya Dorje is a Canadian who lived in India for many years, he speaks and reads Tibetan fluently, has a deep knowledge of Tibetan medicine and travels the world extensively as the translator and assistant to one of the most learned and respected of the Tibetan Emchis trained in Tibet and now practising in the West, Dr. Trogawa Rinpoche.



spects of Tibetan Medicine in the West", with the participation of Tibetan and western doctors, open to everybody interested.

THE GOLDEN AGE.

TIBETAN MEDICINE BY MICHEL BRICAIRE.

Translated by John Sharpe.



I
"In the golden age when human beings had come into existence they, for a long time, did not have to eat material food but lived in samadhi (the bliss of deep absorption). There was neither sun nor moon nor stars for they themselves emitted light. There existed no words for night or day. They had miraculous powers, were able to fly through the air, and had beautiful bodies. They lacked nothing and lived as if they were in heaven. One day one man ate the bitumen on the ground because of a habit acquired in a former life. Then he suffered from indigestion and suffered a great deal. He wailed and lamented. Brahma heard about it and felt compassion and thought: 'How could one cure this?' He remembered the medical text taught by the great Buddha Sha-kya Thub-chen (in an earlier kalpa, or aeon) in which it is recommended to drink hot boiled water in order to cure digestive diseases. He taught the sick man to drink hot boiled water, and he was cured. Therefore they say that the first disease was indigestion and the first sick being was human and the first medicine was hot boiled water and the first doctor was Brahma."

[From: "The History of Tibetan Medicine", in "Tibetan Medicine" presented and translated by the Ven. Rechung Rinpoche. Published by the University of California Press, Berkeley, California 94720.]

II
My small experience of the study of Tibetan medicine which has been acquired while helping to treat the sick people who occasionally come to Merigar has taught me the importance of the digestive process in the functioning of our organism. This digestive process transforms the foods we eat into flesh, blood, fat, bones, marrow, and reproductive liquids on the one hand, and into waste matter on the other, and because of the importance of this process, I wanted to begin my column on Tibetan medicine with the above quotation which speaks of the mythical origins of stomach ache.

There are some theories that state that health depends on nothing more than good quality food, eaten in the right way. There is some truth in such theories, but one should not forget the fundamental importance which the individual's behaviour and life style, and above all their mental state, has on our physical organism. A person who is very emotional, for example, is considered by Tibetan medicine to belong to what is known as the 'Air' element type, and such individuals can easily be subject to a blockage of the digestive system if they suffer from or are worried by a strong emotional shock which hits them when they are distracted. In Tibetan Medicine, the three fundamental passions of attachment, aversion and mental obscuration (ignorance) are considered to be strictly linked to the three 'humours' lung (air, or prana), mkripa (bile), and bagan (phlegm). When these three

humours are in balance in the body and are circulating in the right places, the individual is regarded as being healthy.

Tibetan medicine is a wholistic science which takes into account all aspects of a human being's condition as well as all the factors governing the time and the circumstances surrounding the individual being examined, and in the modern world in which specialisation is so continually on the increase it is interesting to learn how medical matters are undertaken according to such an ancient and gentle scientific tradition.

It is useful to remember that above all in ancient times but also in the present day, many Tibetan doctors were spiritual masters as well as medical practitioners, and with that premise in mind let's turn to an example of the resolving of a specific medical problem.

A man arrived at Merigar complaining of burning pains in the stomach and difficulties with his digestion. First of all we enquired into his habits in daily life. It emerged from this that he was a sales representative for a company, and that he drove around in his car all day. He was divorced, on which we pass no moral judgement, and lived in a city that is generally damp. What this information revealed to us is that certain relative factors of the patient's life style were relative causes of the problem he was suffering from: the stress of driving all day, and the sedentary nature of his life - he didn't know anything about how the digestive system works and usually jumped into his car right after eating his lunch in a restaurant. Furthermore he liked a lot of spices and wine with his food, and smoked. He never thought of taking a short walk after meals to aid his digestion. On top of that he ate in an irregular manner, which was further aggravated by the fact that he lived in a damp place, the city of Ferrara the centre of the fogs of Italy, and he never wore long woollen underwear even in the depths of winter. Living in damp conditions, and above all sleeping in a damp place causes the bagan (or phlegm) humour to become unbalanced.

It might seem that all the factors that we have so far discussed might be taken into consideration by any kind of doctor from any medical tradition, but in my opinion Tibetan medicine has a very special way of dealing with all the various constellations of secondary factors that relate to a medical problem, and provide precise recommendations relating to the behaviour of the patient as part of the cure which can provide the basis for a real and lasting improvement of the patient's condition. Medicines themselves may provide temporary relief, but if the underlying causes of the disturbance are not discovered the help any medication can bring will always remain relative. This way of looking at things is particularly important for us as practitioners of Dzogchen; we need to understand that a lifestyle dominated by anger, desire, and mental obscurations is very harmful to our health. We need to govern these passions by observing

ourselves. In the case that I have outlined above, the patient was suffering from a disturbance that is principally linked to mental obscuration (ignorance) and thus to the humour of bagan (phlegm). By ignorance we mean those types of behaviour that are linked to both physical and mental laziness. The humour of bagan is also influenced negatively by overeating, eating old butter or meat, raw vegetables, raw fruit, goat's meat and pork, and the meat of all the herbivores; by eating irregular meals, by eating before one has fully digested one's last meal, by consuming too many foods or drinks that have sweet or sour tastes or oily and heavy qualities. As far as habits of behaviour are concerned, too much laziness, general apathy, bathing in cold water and dampness in general are negative for the bagan type, who should as much as possible take food and drink whose qualities are warming (heat), lightness, and roughness. As far as behaviour is concerned, for such people it is beneficial to take the sun, stay near the warmth of a fire, live in dry places, and to engage in moderate exercise, practicing yantra yoga in the afternoon on an empty stomach, and receiving massages.

What I have written here is only intended as an introduction to this complex subject, and in the coming issues of the newspaper I will discuss other aspects and organs of the digestive system, as well as other topics such as astrology, massage, and fasting, which are all part of Tibetan medicine.

To deepen your understanding of the principles of Tibetan medicine you can read the book written by Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche on the subject, entitled "On Birth and Life", which is shortly to be republished by Shang-Shung Editions in a new edition. I hope that this column in the paper will be of interest to the readers of THE MIRROR and that you will collaborate and participate in future editions by sending in articles about your experience with Tibetan medicine, relating specific cases which you know about which it would be interesting and useful for us all to understand, deepen our knowledge of and comment on.

III. MEDICINES.

It is my intention to write about specific medicines in this column, describing in detail the ingredients and effects of some of the most important ones. In this article I would like to describe a medicine that is used in the cure of bad digestion, which was given in the case described above.

White Pills of Realisation. (Drub Shob Rikar)

Ingredients: Terminalia Chebuli; Picrorrhiza Kurroa; Calcite; Corydalis sp; Prunus Armeniaca; Mineral Pitch; Honey. Used for: defects in the assimilation of food; impure blood (which also goes into the stomach and develops bagan); gastritis; acidity; bad digestion; vomiting old blood; ulcers (also developed towards the lungs); coughs, and coughs with difficulty of expectoration; Bronchitis; loss of voice, bad respiration; particularly good for ulcers.

Tibetan Medicine in Italy.

by Elisa Copello.

Knowledge of Tibetan medicine has gradually spread in Italy thanks to the frequent visits of renowned doctors such as Yeshe Donden, Dolma Lobsang, Trogawa Rinpoche, and Lobsang Raggal, who have held conferences and given seminars in several cities. Furthermore, in 1983 the first

International Convention on Tibetan Medicine was held in Arcidosso and Venice. Tibetologists from all over the world, Tibetan and western doctors took part. The Convention was organised by Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche and the Dzogchen Community in collaboration with the Cities of Arcidosso and Venice.

During the inauguration of the Shang-Shung Institute in Arcidosso, this Spring, there will be a discussion group on "Pro-

FACES IN THE MIRROR

ANNA EID:

A MEMBER OF
THE BLUE GAKYIL
OF MERIGAR.



I think everything that I did before, all my life previously, was in a way a preparation for what was to come. I studied Fine Arts in Munich and these were very intensive years for me. Later I lived a family life with my husband and two daughters. When my children grew up I felt there was something missing in my life. I began to think more seriously about why I was living in this world. I became involved in therapy, in particular Gestalt therapy and Psychodrama. I began to discover that my suffering was material to work with. My daughters left home to make their own home. And I continued to search for something. During this time I separated from my husband. About one year later a friend told me about Dharmasala, about the Dalai Lama and about Buddhism. All this was very new for me. I felt very open, very interested. The first teaching I heard was in Pomaia in Italy. The Dalai Lama was teaching and I went along. After this I tried to follow the Gelugpa school for one year. Then one afternoon, in a garden near my home in Germany, I heard some chanting and I felt very close to it. It was very strange, because I felt that this chanting was something that inside me, I knew from the very beginning. It was as though I was really coming home. The chanting was the "Long Tun" with "The Song of Vajra". I had such a strong wish to go to the place where they sang these chants. But it was very difficult to find the exact source. My friend did not even remember where the tape came from. Finally we found out it came from a place near Arcidosso in Italy where a Tibetan Lama was giving teachings. In the summer of 1983 I went with a friend to Arcidosso and without much knowledge of Italian, I tried to find this place. It was really difficult. We had really searched every-



here and were about to give up and go home, when I talked to an old woman who was working in the fields. She said some words that I did not understand in Italian, and pointed up the mountain. We drove up the rough road around the mountain and I arrived at Merigar. Some months later at Christmas, I heard Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche teaching down in the old barn near the Hotel Faggio Rosso. There were many people. It was cold. I did not understand anything. When I returned to Germany I became very sick. I took the purification medicine which Rinpoche had given us. I became much worse, very sick. Afterwards however I really felt so much clearer in myself. The next teachings I heard were in Nepal. This was a trekking retreat with Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche on which we went to Tolu Gumpa and the cave at Maratika. It was a very important retreat for me and after that I really felt that I was a student of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. Now for three years I have lived near Merigar and I am really very glad to have arrived here and to have found this teaching and this precious Master who is awakening something inside me. It is not always easy to be here, and it has taken a long time to feel integrated with the Community in Merigar. Things are growing very slowly and the circumstances are not always pleasant. Sometimes life is really hard, but when things grow here they then become really stable. I have confidence in what is happening now. Sometimes I am still afraid about how I will earn money, but less so than before. I am working from time to time, cooking for German people who come to Tuscany. But I

would like to earn my living from painting. I like very much how Tibetan people paint their houses. I like to paint furniture and to paint on wood. I have done this work for people who live around Merigar.

Last year I was selected to be one of the three people on the Blue Gakyil of Merigar. When I was chosen I was very honoured, but I did not really believe that I had the ability to fulfil this task. During the course of the year I discovered that I really could do it. Slowly I gained more knowledge about what was involved and then I gained more confidence and trust in myself. It has been a big opportunity for me to learn how to be responsible and also relaxed at the same time. This has not been too easy for me. This year I offered to continue for a second year on the Gakyil. Rinpoche asked that some people remain from last year as Gakyil members this year because there is so much to be done with His Holiness's visit. I offered because I live close by and I come here most days. Although it has taken me a long time to get this far, I now feel that I really understand the work that has to be done. Besides the preparations for the Dalai Lama's visit, which everyone is involved in, I am busy organising aspects of the various retreats we will hold at Merigar this year, in particular the Easter retreat; and the Summer retreat, with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal. We are also trying to have Lama Wangdor with us again, soon. The Gakyil turns, it is not limited and the responsibilities belonging to the three colours overlap. Especially now we are all preparing for the Dalai Lama's visit. I will try to do my best.

Anna Eid.

ALIX de FERMOR AND THE GREENING OF MERIGAR.



In the sunny "spring" days of March and then the cold rain and hail of April she has been out in the elements almost every day, planting trees, shrubs, trees and more trees. On weekends people have come sometimes to help her. But many days she has worked alone, pushing the wheelbarrow, raking the earth, digging holes, collecting the manure from the stables and directing the "ruspa" (bulldozer) driver to the correct places to dig the holes. The work has seemed never-ending, for Alix has planted over one hundred trees and also one hundred shrubs at Merigar. Now there are pine trees right along the drive from the entrance gate to the house, and cypress trees from the house to the "capannone" and even on a small section of the long road to Rinpoche's house. There are willows by the lake. There are birch trees, maple trees, oak trees and cedar trees. There is also a sacred ginkgo tree. I talked to Alix about her interest in trees and plants and she told me in her French-Italian accent, and with much humour that it began when she was very small. "My childhood was based on flowers. My grandfather had a passion for plants and flowers and even though we lived in Paris he had a huge garden. I was always in the garden. There was always something in bloom. The scent was incredible, really. The garden was very beautiful, quite wild and mysterious with secret shadowy paths, grape vines running on the stone wall meeting honeysuckle and wisteria, and roses, roses all over,

in huge bushes, climbing and falling, all pervading. I remember a cherry tree that had died covered in roses hanging down from all the branches. It was fantastic, really. I remember that when there was a strong wind blowing from the sea I would climb in the top of the tallest cherry tree and, closing my eyes, imagine I was flying in the air. When I was a child whenever I felt unhappy or I had a problem, I would go into the garden and everything would be alright. All my problems would disappear dissolving in the green like a sugar lump in a cup of hot chocolate. As a child I was convinced it was through the magic power of plants. I felt very peaceful and relaxed in the garden, and so it has been all my life. I have a special feeling about plants. Rinpoche always says its very important to relax. The garden is a place where I can relax, and I feel that if a garden helps me then maybe it will also help others. When I first came to Merigar I saw it was a very beautiful place; very strong and powerful. Sometimes there is even a violence in the elements. It is not just that there is wind or snow or hail but there are violent wind storms which turn suddenly into a mild gentle stillness. There can be an incredible hailstorm and then just dense blue space, so serene as if nothing had ever happened. It is hard to be indifferent to nature here, there is a quality in the elements that will not allow that. It is not always very easy to live at Merigar. Tensions arise between people

in the Community, especially as the Community grows and more people come. I have often found it hard to deal with these tensions, and other people might also find it hard. If the physical environment can be made a softer more relaxing place, perhaps it might also help people to relax their tensions more easily, so here comes the garden. Rinpoche always says to consider the circumstances of any situation and act when they are favourable. I literally jumped at the opportunity given by the visit of His Holiness the Dalai Lama! Rinpoche wanted trees to be planted for the visit and so I have made sure that many trees have been planted. Some people have really helped a great deal. There has certainly been a lot of work but I think the natural environment of Merigar will benefit, let's hope so. "A bit of shade, this summer, and in a few summers we won't be able to sunbathe any more because the "bosco" will be all over Merigar. I couldn't keep Alix de Fermor from her work any longer, she said "Be quick, it might rain", and off she ran to plant more trees. Alix spends all her time on the garden. Although she does private gardening projects for a living, I know that until June all her time will be spent on Merigar. I also know that she has a special wish to go to the Conway retreat in July. Anyone who can help in any way to make this wish come true is welcome to contact "THE MIRROR".

An interview by
Jean Mackintosh

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A CONVERSATION WITH JOHN RENSHAW, CHAIRMAN OF THE U.K. GAKHYIL.

This discussion was recorded in London on the evening of 19th March 1990, at Marine Ices, a well-known Italian Ice-Cream parlour and Pizzeria near Camden Lock Market, over a bottle of red wine and a Pizza: nostalgia for Merigar and the hills of Tuscany, or integrating with local conditions? Interpret the location of the interview as you will, John Renshaw is a well-known member of the Dzogchen Community in Great Britain, who has served in many capacities on the U.K. Gakhyil. We were eager to give him the opportunity to share his experience of serving on a Gakhyil with the readers of THE MIRROR.

THE MIRROR: When did you first become the director of the Gakhyil of the Dzogchen Community of Great Britain, John?

JOHN RENSHAW: 1988.

THE MIRROR: In what capacities had you served on the Gakhyil before that?

JOHN RENSHAW: I had served on the red section of the Gakhyil twice, but the fact is that I'm generally quite active in the Community, and even in the years in which I was not on the Gakhyil I was doing a lot here and there.

THE MIRROR: You are, of course, very well known as a Yantra Yoga teacher, John, but could you please tell us what you do for a living?

JOHN RENSHAW: I trained as an acupuncturist a few years ago, and so I have clients in that capacity, and I also work with Shiatsu massage.

THE MIRROR: Before that you had a background in engineering, I believe?

JOHN RENSHAW: That's right, and that's been useful in my present interests. The mechanical aspects of engineering are of course very far from the way in which the human body works, but there are principles in common that are useful to understand.

THE MIRROR: When did you first meet Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche?

JOHN RENSHAW: At the Guild of Transcultural Studies in London in 1979. I had heard about Rinpoche when I was in India and I was very keen to meet him.

THE MIRROR: What is it that led you to go to India?

JOHN RENSHAW: I wanted to go there to see the places in which Buddhism had developed, and so it was a kind of pilgrimage for me. That was in 1978.

THE MIRROR: Have you since travelled a lot to receive teachings from Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche?

JOHN RENSHAW: I used to travel more in my early days in the Community. Join the Dzogchen Community and see the world! It was interesting to see how the Buddhist teachings were developing in different countries where different cultural traditions prevailed.

THE MIRROR: I know that you followed other Lamas before meeting Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. Can you tell me what it was that particularly attracted you to the Dzogchen Community?

JOHN RENSHAW: There is a kind of openness involved in the Dzogchen Community that definitely attracted me. This openness is connected to the principles of the Dzogchen teachings, and it has effected the way that the Community has developed. Many people, like me, when they first hear Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche teach, already have some knowledge of the teachings of Tibetan Buddhism, and of Tibetan culture and

politics, but they don't have any real understanding of the whole perspective of what they are studying. Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche provided me with that sense of perspective, showing me showing me the real sense of the teachings and then how cultural and political matters relate to the teachings. Many people find that in his teachings Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche really gets to the essence of things, and that was certainly true for me when I first met him, and is still true for me today.

THE MIRROR: As Chairman of the U.K. Gakhyil for this last year you have had to work through a fairly difficult period, with a number of problems dividing the Community. Could we talk a little about what you think are the causes of these difficulties?

JOHN RENSHAW: In the Dzogchen Community, following Rinpoche's advice, we have always tried to avoid a hierarchical structure and a bureaucratic mentality. But nevertheless some structure is necessary to be able to accomplish anything. Many people who are attracted to the openness of the teachings, myself included, have come from a background of a certain rebellious attitude to authority, which is seen as a limitation to discovering one's real freedom. Organising a Community on the basis of awareness and not of authority, however, means that there must really be awareness in the members of the Community, or everything just becomes chaos. In the U.K. Community we have suffered from various conflicts arising from tensions between individual freedom and group responsibility that we are all still trying to work out.

THE MIRROR: I think these conflicts are generally present in the Community, not only in the U.K., as we all try to learn to collaborate together on the basis of awareness, rather than authority. There seems to me to be a conflict in the feelings of many individual members of the Community, who are devoted to trying to work with the teachings to free themselves from conditioning and have a tendency to rebel against authority, and yet who can see clearly at the same time that without some structure the Community cannot function. I feel that the tension within the individual between the desire for freedom and the understanding of the need for some structure tends to be projected out into conflicts in the relationships between individuals in carrying out the Community's activities. Do you find that to be true of your experience in your work with the U.K. Gakhyil?

JOHN RENSHAW: Yes; I think that's an interesting point. The conflict is within each individual, and must be resolved there first of all. Most of the individuals involved in the Community are very strong characters, who don't take easily to being subject to a traditional style of hierarchical authority structure. They are happier in a situation such as that in the Dzogchen Community where what is required of them is to be governed by awareness rather than by rules, on the basis of observing themselves. Everybody is not the same of course, but many of us are like that. But we all have to work together.

THE MIRROR: I gather that there were some serious disagreements over the way in which a publishing house should be set up in England to publish material related to the teachings. Kailash Editions will now, I understand be an independent



publishing house, run by some Community members, but not directly linked to the Community. Rinpoche has set out some very specific guide-lines for the way in which it will work: Since Kailash Editions wants to be able to publish material other than the teachings of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, it will not be considered as strictly being a publishing house of the Dzogchen Community. It will be able to publish material in the copyright of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche or of the Community, but will do so on the basis of detailed contracts made between the Community and Kailash Editions for each individual project of this kind that it undertakes. It will be free, of course, to publish whatever other material it chooses not in the copyright of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche or the Dzogchen Community, in whatever manner it chooses. Only publishing houses entirely dedicated to publishing the Dzogchen teachings of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche will be able to publish material in his or the Community's copyright without making contracts, but even such publishing houses as these latter ones must request permission from the new International Publishing Committee for their projects in advance, and must submit the manuscripts of their books for checking before publication. Do you think that now that the issue of publications has been sorted out this will relieve the tensions in the U.K. Gakhyil?

JOHN RENSHAW: I certainly do. The tensions that arose are perhaps to be expected when you put together a group of strong people with different backgrounds and opinions; but when you come down to it those tensions were a lot of fuss about nothing. We need more communication and less paranoia; more understanding and less ego; more trust and less distrust.

THE MIRROR: People who take on the commitment of being on the Gakhyil are seriously committed to the teaching, but sometimes this seriousness can lead to a kind of heavy-handed approach in the way that they relate to other members of the Community. Then everything becomes heavier than it need be, and people begin to argue over minor points to which they themselves become attached, and these things get blown up out of proportion.

JOHN RENSHAW: People need to relax with the responsibilities that they take, and not get wound up about their own particular position on any topic, or about any particular job they have to do for the Community. Gakhyil meetings should not become just like any other kind of meeting, with people forgetting that what they are doing is connected to the teachings. We

are now in the process of resolving the problems that emerged over the setting up of Kailash Editions. There are some details still to be clarified, but things are now working out. In a few weeks we will be meeting to form a new Gakhyil, and I hope that things will run smoothly in the future.

THE MIRROR: How would you like to see the Community develop in the U.K.?

JOHN RENSHAW: I hope there will be more sharing of responsibility by the Community as a whole. This particular Gakhyil had to do too much by itself. I hope the whole Community will collaborate more in the future. I would also like to see more practice, and more communication in every way. I hope that we will invite more teachers, and have more frequent small retreats, and that we will collaborate more with other Dharma groups outside the Community in the U.K., and with the Dzogchen Community internationally. I don't think we are yet collaborating as much as we should be at an international level, and I hope that the new newspaper, THE MIRROR, will encourage this kind of international collaboration. I hope that the Gakhyils of the various countries will be able to keep in touch more through THE MIRROR, and share resources and information.

THE MIRROR: How often does the Community meet in London?

JOHN RENSHAW: For a long time now we have met every Sunday, and we sometimes also meet on Wednesdays as well as on special days for practice. We meet at one of four different houses, which are announced in the newsletter, and the rotation between different locations is nice. But to have a central place for the Community would have obvious advantages. We would be able to keep a library of books and audio and video tapes there, as well as having on-going practice sessions, offices and so on. I'm talking about a place in the city, of course; but perhaps even more important would be to have a place in the country for retreats.

THE MIRROR: I gather that some money has been raised to buy land for the Community in Britain.

JOHN RENSHAW: At the Pendine retreat last year in Wales, Bill Palmer suggested that we should get a place for individual or small group retreats that was isolated but not inaccessible. The response to the idea was very strong and money was pledged for this purpose. We have enough to put down a deposit on a small place. An opportunity arose in Scotland to purchase a small cottage, but it fell through. We have now formed a land committee of four people who are looking into

An Interview with Michel Bricaire.

30th April, 1990.

Translated by Jo Shane



We were very happy to have the opportunity to interview Michel Bricaire for this second edition of THE MIRROR in which the first of his regular articles on Tibetan medicine appears.

THE MIRROR: Could you please tell us, Michel, how you first became interested in Tibetan medicine?

MICHEL BRICAIRE: I was never really completely satisfied with western medicine, and was always interested in the possibility of other approaches to healing. At a retreat with Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche in Austria in 1981 I had a kind of flash of insight that I should study Tibetan medicine, but at that time I didn't know where or how I would be able to do it.

THE MIRROR: Had you previously heard Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche speak about Tibetan medicine?

MICHEL BRICAIRE: Yes, I had attended some lectures he gave on the general theme of Tibetan medicine, and when I understood that it was connected with the teachings and the practice I really felt a strong desire to study it. So a few months later I came to Italy to Rinpoche's apartment in Formia for the Tibetan New Year. I asked Rinpoche if it was necessary to have a knowledge of the Tibetan language to study Tibetan medicine, and he replied that it was. So I decided to study Tibetan language at the University of Naples with him. I studied there for two years and gained a working knowledge of Tibetan, and then began to study Tibetan medicine. When we later founded Merigar, Rinpoche asked me to be responsible for the pharmacy there and I gradually learned more about Tibetan medicine from Rinpoche and from the other Tibetan doctors who visited Merigar, such as Dr. Trogawa Rinpoche. Then we held the world's first Conference on Tibetan Medicine in 1983 in Venice and Arcidosso, and I had the opportunity to learn from other Tibetan doctors such as Dr. Tenzin Chodrak, one of H.H. the Dalai Lama's personal physicians, and Dr. Ama Lobsang, as well as Dr. Trogawa Rinpoche who also taught at the Conference.

THE MIRROR: Could you tell us about the pharmacy at Merigar, please?

MICHEL BRICAIRE: The pharmacy is a room on the north side of the main house at Merigar. Being on the north side it is cool in summer, which is necessary for the conservation of the medicines. We have about 200 different types of Tibetan medicines already prepared stored there. We also have the basic ingredients of all types: vegetable, including plants and roots; mineral, including ground-up

precious stones. We are not equipped to treat a large number of people, but the pharmacy provides an excellent basis for the study of Tibetan medicines, both those that Rinpoche himself has prepared, and those that we receive from India or from Tibet itself. Although we cannot treat a large number of people, we can sometimes help certain people in cooperation with their western treatment. We can try a Tibetan medicine for a few days and see if it has a positive effect. Then people can order medicines by mail from India, although unfortunately that does tend to take a long time, and is more expensive than getting it from Tibet.

THE MIRROR: Can you please tell us what plans there are for developing these medical activities and the pharmacy at Merigar in the future?

MICHEL BRICAIRE: Rinpoche has already suggested that we begin to manufacture medicines, and we are looking for a mill where we could grind up the ingredients. If we could find one we would be able to produce more medicines here. There are plans to start a Tibetan medical institute at Genoa, which is very positive, and I hope that we will in future be able to continue to study Tibetan medicine also at Merigar with various Tibetan doctors.

THE MIRROR: You live in a beautiful farmhouse with Cicci, the secretary of Merigar, and your daughter Mandarava, not far from Merigar. Could you please tell us a little about your farm?

MICHEL BRICAIRE: It's called Montecatini, and it's quite a modest house. We don't yet have electricity there, but it is due to be connected in the Summer. This spring, that wonderful modern instrument called the telephone was finally connected. Our water comes from a spring on our land. I fixed the house up pretty much by myself with the help of a few friends.

THE MIRROR: What do you do for a living, Michel?

MICHEL BRICAIRE: At present I am working for the Ministry of Agriculture, on a project to take a census of the Italian countryside for the Common Market to establish how many olive groves, with how many olive trees, how many vineyards with how many vines, and so on, exist in Italy.

THE MIRROR: Well, Michel, we'd like to wish you every success with the development of the Tibetan medical aspects of Merigar's activities, and look forward to reading your column on Tibetan medicine in THE MIRROR.

MICHEL BRICAIRE: Thank you.

Some Lessons of Cazadero

by Dr. Kennard Lipman Ph.D., President of the California Gakyil.



At the Avery Ranch retreat in California during the summer 1989, the Master told us that it was best to sell the land at Cazadero which the Community bought in 1987, because there were so many problems with it. Basically Rinpoche said that we were struggling with effects, rather than working on the causes, a sure indication of a perspective other than Dzogchen. Further, point blank, he told us the principal cause: "No base of collaboration". I would like to explore what I think this means, but before that I'd like to say a bit (in a perhaps consoling way) about why collaboration seems so difficult in the Dzogchen communities.

The most obvious reason is that we are not governed by 'rules'. We can't be organized by hierarchies telling us what to do. We don't subscribe to the community discipline that a karma-yoga or sutra-altruistic ethic provides. But we need to look at this a bit more closely. 'Behavior' in Dzogchen is not just governed by the absence of rules. There is a very high standard of individual responsibility set by the Dzogchen teaching, and let's face it, such high standards make it very difficult to develop community. Dzogchen definitely has its ethics, that of individual autonomy.

I am only beginning to see what this means for community. We are not a conventional group that can really be motivated by the conventional things groups do: fund-raise, proselytize, mobilize the faithful, etc. In fact, we get into trouble when we try to do things like a conventional group. Nobody's heart is in it. Where then is our collective heart? I think the answer is this: people will be motivated to participate in community activity when they perceive it to be something which promotes individual autonomy as understood in the Dzogchen teaching. I think that this has been a problem until now because it has

been unconscious. If we recognize that this really is our motivation for participating then it becomes a strength of our community and not a weakness, for it is a 'higher' motivation than those of the rule-oriented paths. For example, people will participate in group practice because they perceive that it is crucial to their appropriating the practices as their own, and will not when they perceive that it does not aid in this process of becoming autonomous in relation to the teaching and thus to life.

Further, how can we learn group collaboration if we haven't learned to collaborate with ourselves through skilful self-observation? Self-observation seems straightforward, but often we need compassionate support and assistance until we can truly learn that we are our own best teachers.

With these 'consolations' spoken, we can proceed to the meaning of collaboration through the lessons of the Cazadero land. I'd like to present four interdependent 'lessons':

1. The Gakyil is not a work group for the Community.

The function of the Gakyil is to take responsibility for the overall welfare of the community, which anyone individual cannot assume. It is also not a work group since its function is to co-ordinate the energies of the community through its knowledge of what is going on in the community.

2. This is related to the second lesson, which is about how energy is co-ordinated. The lesson is, to paraphrase Rinpoche: "People make procedures, procedures don't make people". By setting up simple, flexible procedures the Gakyil can help community energy flow harmoniously, by avoiding such classic problems as 'reinventing the wheel', 'paving the road to hell through good intentions', 'or-

ganization through winging it', getting things done through burnout', etc. 'Procedures' are not the same as the bogeyman, 'bureaucracy', which involves a hierarchy where information flows up and decisions flow down. We are free to create procedures and free to dissolve them.

3. This leads to the next point: communication, not the top-down dissemination of directives and technical knowledge, is the life of community. Communication is not just the dispensing of information or bureaucratic 'doing business'. Even talk about the teaching can be such technocratic stuff. It is trite to say that we should communicate with each other based on living knowledge of the teaching, whether it's about business matters (how much to charge for tapes, etc.) or not. It is not trite when we realize that communication involves the development of shared knowledge in regard to the teaching. It seems to me that it is this understanding of the dimension of shared knowledge developed through community, which has been lacking.

4. What, then, is this shared knowledge?

It is the knowledge, based on our own experience, that we can present to the culture as a whole, it is the knowledge which gives us an identity as the Dzogchen Community. It is this which we didn't have in Cazadero. How could we present a 'public face' without a 'private identity'? This leads to a further question: what knowledge do we have to present to the wider culture? I personally believe that Dzogchen has a vast amount of valuable and useful knowledge to contribute to the modern world. Until we as a community have some sense of this, projects such as land, 'cultural centre', etc., will be difficult. And then we are back in the old struggle again.

The Beginnings of the Conway Dzogchen Community as a Gurdjieff Group.

Barbara Paparazzo.

There were twelve of us on a hot day in July 1970, when we first knocked on Paul and Naomi Anderson's door in Brooklyn, New York, asking for a Teacher. Mr Paul Anderson and his wife had been direct students of the Russian spiritual teacher, Mr. Gurdjieff, himself. We were all very young, newly emerged from the drug era, and full of ideas about spirituality and mystery and magic. The Gurdjieff 'work', as spiritual practice in the Gurdjieff tradition is known, offered a spiritual path for ordinary people who did not want to withdraw from the world, the 'Fourth Way', based on self-observation and self-remembering. When we walked through Mr. Anderson's door we began a long journey that eventually brought us to the Conway house in 1974 and, later, to meetings with many different lamas, one of whom was Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. At our first meeting with Mr. Anderson, Mr. A. told us that we would be "... the nucleus of a group that would grow and expand." He said that there was no reason to look any further, that for whatever reason - maybe what our parents had done, or maybe because of what we ourselves had done - this was the answer we had been looking for.

We spent twelve years following Mr. A. and our group eventually numbered about forty. Every weekend we worked at the Conway house, shovelling, digging, painting, scraping, baby-sitting, planting, doing the Gurdjieff movements, cooking and so on. The purpose of all this physical work was really a means to confront and observe our own selves. The heartbeat of weekends were our meetings on Saturday nights in which we spoke of our own self obser-

vations in relation to whatever theme Mr. Anderson had given us for the day. We were never allowed to comment on another person's observations nor did we ever mention what was said in the room once we left. The insights and self-revelations from those meetings live with me still.

During these years we also performed demonstrations of the Gurdjieff movements three times a year. These demonstrations were followed by an elaborate feast, at which we would 'Toast the Idiots' with Armagnac, following a Gurdjieff tradition in which each individual present at the feast must pick one of twenty-seven types of idiot, based on our own observations of ourselves, to be his or her own, and then drink a toast to that type of idiot. We never got beyond fourteen types of idiot. Many years passed following this kind of pattern; we had children, went to college, got jobs, went broke or broke even and, very gradually, grew up. During all this time we struggled to try to find the right relationship with our Teacher. Then, in 1981, Mr. A. had a stroke, and in 1982 he had a second one. The group was thrown into chaos. Most fortunately, before his second stroke, Mr. A. had come into contact with a transcript of one of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche's retreats and he invited Rinpoche to come to Conway. By the time Rinpoche arrived in July 1982, we were a group in crisis. We had come from a background of very strict rules and discipline and had existed in a kind of isolation. Then along came Rinpoche, accompanied by many of his disciples, giving Dzogchen teachings, eating his meals with us, talking with us, doing the Chod at night with damarus and bells, playing baseball with the children and just



generally in all ways going beyond limitations. For many, but not all of us, this was what we had been waiting for but had not known existed.

Slowly, for those who stayed and became part of the Dzogchen Community, the wounds from the rifts in the old group healed and we were able to heal our relationship with Mr. Anderson. He died in 1983, surrounded by his pupils.

We formed our first Gakyil in 1983 and slowly learned to collaborate and work together in a new way, without someone directing our every move. It was very difficult at first and we had many Gakyil meetings that were really more melees than meetings. It was important that we learn to work on our own in a collaborative way because in July 1984 we had the groundbreaking ceremony for the Dark Retreat Cabin with Rinpoche. We worked all through the next year trying to build something that had never been done before in the West, and which involved such difficult questions as how does one provide enough ventilation in a building that doesn't allow any light in, and how can one create an indoor toilet without windows, that still doesn't smell. Everyone in the Community knows by now what happened: in July 1985 we had our first Dark Retreat experiences, and the cabin worked as intended!

The new land at Tseggyelgar, Buckland, Massachusetts, USA. Woody Paparazzo.



Sarah Renner

Secretary of Tseggyelgar

During the past two years the Community here has struggled to resolve the sometimes difficult issues surrounding the purchase of the Conway property from the former partners, the purchase of the new land at Buckland, and the re-sale of the Conway property. In addition it was necessary to plan and accomplish the myriad tasks presented by the prospect of providing facilities for a retreat on totally unimproved and rugged

land.

But, with unseen help and guidance from the protectors of the teachings, along with the diligence of many mere mortals, these seemingly impossible objectives were accomplished.

Special thanks are due to Joe Zurylo and Jim Smith who made extraordinary efforts in the months before last year's retreat, the first to be held on this land, to improve the road, make a parking area, and dig a well. Also to Ernie Renner, who took on the responsibility of coordinating work in the final weeks of preparation. Many others, too numerous to mention, devoted many weekends to these efforts. Some 150 or so people attended the retreat with Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche last summer, that was held between July 3rd -14th. Most camped on the land and some stayed in nearby homes or motels. Food was partly catered, and partly pre-

pared in a nearby house which was offered for the Community's use.

The land itself is an expansive tract of forest with several high rocky peaks. It seems to have a strange feature in that everywhere you choose to go seems to be uphill! There is an enchanting wilderness energy about the place. A lovely brook-fed pond (now bordered with colorful prayer flags) lies near the lower end. Near this pond a very large tent was erected at last year's retreat to cover a platform with picnic tables that served as a dining area. This became the central gathering place between teachings. Tables were set up at which supplies, snacks, books, and crafts were sold by the Community. Nearby a smaller tent was erected for the children. Several people were hired to help with child care. With thoughtful planning, and the tireless use of the pond, the younger folks

seemed quite content.

Some quarter mile or so from the pond, another tent was set up on the knoll where we had the first picnic on the land and shared Rinpoche's vision of the future of this land two years before. Here Rinpoche gave teachings. He explained and gave transmission of many practices, and his talks also gave an overview of the Dzogchen teachings and how they related to the Sutric and Tantric paths. Rinpoche emphasized the importance of gaining a concrete experience of contemplation which could be developed and maintained in our daily life. During the retreat people were able to experience the preliminary Yantig practice with 24 hours in the dark cabin if they so wished. Rinpoche met with small groups to give further Yantig teachings in accordance with the individual's levels of experience with this practice.

In view of the Community's plans to make further use of the land, including the construction of retreat cabins, Norbu Rinpoche again guided us in a Sang ritual to seek the aid and permission of the local guardians. Rinpoche also met with the local Community members to discuss plans for the use of the land and to establish a new Gakyil. Large scale development on the land, such as a smaller version of the Merigar Gumpa, will be slow to evolve due to the difficulties presented by the rugged terrain and the local zoning and building requirements. But in the meantime, Rinpoche suggested that some small cabins be built on the land soon to allow for a variety of practices and individual retreats. The blue group of the Gakyil also met with Rinpoche to coordinate plans for future translations, publications, transcriptions, newsletters and journals.

Altogether, last summer's retreat seemed remarkable in its harmonious tone, and in the sense of collaboration and focused purpose shared by the members of the Community. (Excerpted from the Tseggyelgar Newsbrief)

THE NEXT RETREAT WITH NAMKHA NORBU RINPOCHE ON THIS NEW LAND AT BUCKLAND WILL TAKE PLACE IN THE TEN DAYS AFTER JULY 20th 1990. FOR DETAILS, CONTACT: Sarah Renner, The Secretary of Tseggyelgar Dzogchen Community, PO Box 277 Conway, MA 01341, USA. Phone: (413) 369 4466. There is a fax number for the Tseggyelgar Community at the private business address of some Community members: (413) 665 1142. (Thayer Street Associates) In most cases it is best to contact the Secretary.



THE MIRROR NEWS

THE INTERNATIONAL NEWSPAPER OF THE DZOGCHEN COMMUNITY
INSPIRED BY THE TEACHINGS OF AN UNDER THE SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE OF
NAMKHAI NORBU RINPOCHE



FAX MESSAGE FROM TURIN. TORINO, 7.4.90.

Dear Vajra Brothers and sisters,
On the twelfth day of the second month of the Tibetan calendar, the 7th of April 1990, the Dzogchen Community of Turin, Italy, celebrated the anniversary of the Great Master Dragpa Gyaltsen with a day of practice in a beautiful country house in the hills not far from Turin, meeting as we regularly do at least once a month.
We began our practice in the morning with the Guru Yoga of the White A, then after the lunch break, when everyone had arrived, we started the afternoon practice, beginning with an explanation by one of the older students of the meaning of the practice and the way to do it.
After a short reading from Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche's book "The Cycle of the Day and Night", we practised Namkha Artad (after developing concentration through fixation with object, letting go of the object of fixation and allowing the mind settle into its natural condition as one gazes in empty space, then remaining in contemplation), and at the end we finished our day with the Tungyas including the practice of Chod. During the break we talked about the new newspaper "THE MIRROR". Knowing as we do the importance of exchanging ideas, experiences and "faces" among the practitioners of the Community, we took a picture of our group near a wisteria tree to send to the newspaper. We consider that to meet together regularly, as Rinpoche has suggested, is of great benefit to new practitioners as it enables them to enter into the practice more easily. We also feel that such meetings create an opportunity for all of us to make progress in integrating our practice with all the aspects of our lives as human beings. All this is very important because it helps both beginners and old students to enhance their individual practice and to develop harmony among the Vajra brothers and sisters of the Community. Moreover, since we bring our children with us, they too become familiar with the practice, in due course discovering its value. Their presence also provides us adults with an opportunity to integrate our contemplation with the noise that the children make! Meeting each other on these special days in this way means that we live with a real sense of Community even though we are miles away from Merigar and from the physical presence of our precious Master. Best Wishes to all,

Francesco Capovilla
Giorgio Dallorto

DARK RETREAT HOUSE PROJECT IN FRANCE

The French Dzogchen Community has initiated a project to build the first dark retreat house in Europe for the practice of the Dzogchen Yantig. The house will be sited in Brittany, Northern France. The idea gathered momentum in the period between the two retreats with Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche at Marcevol, near Perpignan on the French/Spanish border last year. When the project was presented to him at the second Marcevol retreat, Rinpoche encouraged the idea, and the French Community evolved their plan consulting with the Tsegvelgar Dzogchen Community of Massachusetts, USA, who have built a dark retreat cabin which has now been in use successfully for several years.
As can be seen from the illustrations, the dark retreat house in France will be built in the form of a geodesic dome with seven rooms that will enable seven individual practitioners to practice at any one time. When the necessary funds are available it is planned that another similar geodesic dome will be built that will serve as a reception area and a space for general collective practice.
On Easter Sunday, THE MIRROR telephoned to receive a progress report on the project. The land for the Dark Retreat house has been purchased. It is in open country with no buildings near it, except for one house which belongs to a member of the Dzogchen Community. Several other Community members live a few kilometres away. The proximity of the houses of these Community members was one of the main reasons for choosing this particular piece of land. The local authorities are in the process of issuing the necessary permits, which the Mayor, who is the person on whom such decisions depend, has promised will be granted. The building work has begun, and the foundations are already complete. The dome could be completed very quickly when the dryer weather begins, which will be very soon, but everything depends on the necessary funds being available.
Anyone who wishes to contribute to the project is asked to send a cheque or postal order to: Association Dzogchen, La Fontaine Neuve, 56700 Plouray, France. For information contact: Association Dzogchen at the above address, tel: 97 34 81 13. Correspondence concerning the French Dzogchen Community's newsletter "Le Chant du Coucou" can be obtained from Alain Vigurie and Isabelle Bienfait, 50 Bd J. Bourrat, 6600 Perpignan, France, tel: 68 34 08 66.

NEWS FROM CALIFORNIA

Received by fax from Des Barry in San Diego

Welcomed to California by the Healing Light Center and the California Dzogchen Community, Tenzin Wangyal arrived at L.A. airport in early February. His plan was to stay for some days with the Healing Light people and then to continue his California visit with teachings for the Dzogchen Community.
Has long-standing connections with the Bon Monastery of Dolanji, where Tenzin Wangyal received his education. For many of the Dzogchen Community, the visit to the Healing Light Center was a unique opportunity to see "channeling", first hand. The Healing Light people also use healing techniques which have been very effective in curing patients who have had little help from conventional medicine.
While in Los Angeles, Geshe Tenzin taught from the A-Khrid system of meditation, a Bon Dzogchen teaching. Between the two week-end retreats in L.A., he visited San Diego, giving teachings on the Ngondro of the A-khrid, visiting the famous zoo and experiencing a small earthquake.
The Bay Area was fortunate enough to host him for two weeks. He taught from 20 to 30 people, using both A-khrid and Shang-Shung Nyan Gyud texts. He also gave a public talk in Berkeley and visited Stanford University as a guest of the Faculty.
His relentless tour took him on to Oregon, where he taught for five days, mostly he concentrated on explaining the correct view of Dzogchen with explanations from the Shang-Shung Nyan Gyud. He joked that while many people in the Community talk about integration, it is important to know what they are integrating with; which is why it is essential to have a good understanding of the view found in Dzogchen texts. Finally, he left the West Coast, heading for New Mexico and Washington D.C.
One of the most awakening aspects of having a Dzogchen master visit is the possibility of experiencing the practice in everyday life, as well as working with texts in great depth.
Other recent events in California have been a weekend retreat based on Norbu Rinpoche's program prepared for the collective practice retreat of Easter 1983. Monthly practices continue for the Bay Area and also in Southern California. Weekly practices are held in Marin and Berkeley. The land in Cazadero is still up for sale. The California Community Newsletter is in a transition phase, looking at producing a collaborative Journal for the whole of North America.
(Information from Kennard Lipman, Clyde Crawford, Des Barry)

NEW MEXICO RINPOCHE RETREAT

Last July Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche visited New Mexico for the first time through the invitation and energetic initiative of Cynthia Jurs Hotchkiss. A seven-day retreat was organised and took place at Synergia Ranch near Santa Fe. The large domed tent we met in was well filled with old and new students, as well as those who came just out of curiosity. Immediately following the final ganapuja, approximately fifty people from New Mexico and Colorado gathered and discussed with Rinpoche the possibility of forming a Dzogchen Community in this area. Rinpoche encouraged us to begin regular practices in our homes and indicated he was interested in returning to New Mexico although he did not know when this would be. Those of us in Santa Fe met several times during the following week taking advantage of the opportunity to ask questions, practice and learn more about the Chod and other practices from long-time student Jim Casilio who remained visiting in the area.
Throughout the Fall, weekly Chod and other practices took place as well as a weekend retreat during October at Crestone Mountain Zen Centre in Baca Grande, Colorado. About fifteen members from the two states met together. Kennard Lipman was invited from California to lead the retreat, while Jim Casilio from New York also assisted. Since that time the weekly Chod and other practices continue at the home of Cynthia Jurs. A small group met soon after the Tibetan New Year to celebrate with an all-day practice session together, followed by Ganapuja. Although the number of people actively involved is small, our core group is very strong and committed. We look forward to continued meetings together as well as a future visit from Rinpoche.
New Mexico, Lidian Watson

Rinpoche's visit to Lombardy

He pointed out that a culture cannot survive without an adequate educational system. Most Tibetans live in the country and many are nomads. For these people there are no schools. During his recent visit to Tibet Rinpoche began to do all he could to promote the building of schools and hospitals for people living in remote areas, to try to ensure the survival of the people as well as the cultural heritage of Tibet. Nowadays most Tibetans are illiterate, and until a few years ago, Tibetan wasn't even taught in schools. Rinpoche then spoke about the Shang-Shung Institute and his reasons for founding it: the preservation and diffusion of Tibetan culture in all its aspects. He then announced the arrival of His Holiness the Dalai Lama who will inaugurate the Institute during his visit to the Dzogchen Community in Arcidosso. Rinpoche concluded his talk by introducing the other speakers. Fabio Andrico elaborated on the enterprises undertaken by the Shang-Shung Institute; and Andrea Dell'Angelo spoke about the Project for Tibetan Village in India.
A long heartfelt applause greeted the end of these speeches. It was an event that was very well planned by Rocco Vassallo and other Brescia practitioners. Quite a few of the outstanding professionals of the town were so moved as to volunteer to co-operate with various enterprises.
Rinpoche's very full schedule in Milan started at eleven o'clock on Saturday morning with a press conference organized by The Mirror with the help of community members in Milan. During the press conference Rinpoche again stressed his

personal commitment to the preservation of Tibetan civilization, and his cultural and spiritual support of the Tibetan people whose rich culture must be saved for the benefit of all mankind.
At 3.30 p.m. there was an interview with the T.V. journalist Romano Battaglia, the editor of a popular weekly T.V. programme. At 5.00 p.m. Rinpoche gave Dzogchen teachings in the auditorium of the 'Leone XIII' Institute to a group of about three hundred people.
The outcome of the television interview was a 30 minute programme which was broadcast on April 10th at 3.30 on Italian national television, during which Rinpoche replied to questions asked by journalists about Tibetan medicine. Young people invited to the interview also asked him about Tibetan life and spirituality. Replying to these questions Norbu Rinpoche was at his usual best, smiling radiant and humorous. After the interview he went straight to another hall where about three hundred people were eagerly awaiting him. There he taught for two hours, giving an introduction to Dzogchen and stressing the importance of integrating practice into daily life. Many newcomers showed great interest and deep gratitude for having been introduced to such profound teaching. The two day trip to Lombardy was undoubtedly strenuous for our Master, but surely beneficial for the Tibetan 'Cause' and all the enterprises inspired by Rinpoche for the survival of Tibetan Culture.

Elisa Copello
Milano

FIRST GAKYIL FORMED IN BUENOS AIRES

A Gakyil has been formed in Buenos Aires, consisting of:
RED: Irene Wunschenmeyer (Londarco 2664 C; 1419 Tel. 501-4702)
BLUE: Nelida Saporiti (Virrey Loreto 3616 Tel. 551-8844)
YELLOW: Maria del Carmen Diana (Ramallo 2343 PB "D" C. 1429. Tel. 70-8345 70-0948)
Provisionally we are meeting in the homes of one or the other of us. This Thursday 29th March we are meeting in the house of Maria del Carmen at 7.30 p.m. We want to find our own place for practices, meetings, and study groups and we are making the first steps to rent such a place.
We always try to be present in this phrase from "The Voice of the Bee": "And remember that the Guardians who protect us from outer and inner hindrances follow us like our shadow".

CONGRATULATIONS

Warmest congratulations from the whole Community to the new arrivals:
Angelica Kunsel, a daughter for Jacobella and Alex Siedleki.
Marc Yeshe, a son for Louisa Vattucci and Tynis Promet.
Martina Mathilde, a daughter for Maria Berica and Marco Lazzeri.

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