

THE MIRROR

Newspaper of the International Dzogchen Community

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H. E. 12th Tai Situpa will give teachings at Merigar December 12-17, 1995



The lineage of His Eminence Tai Situpa dates back to the bodhisattva Maitreya, one of the principle disciples of the Buddha. A later important Tibetan incarnation was Marpa Lotsawa (1020-1097), the great translator whose teachings constitute the essential nucleus of the Kagyupa tradition, and then Chokyi Gyaltsen (1377-1448), who was the first to bear the title of Tai Situ, conferred on him in 1407 by the Chinese emperor Yung Lo. The words "Tai Situ" are an abbreviation of a longer Chinese expression which means "far reaching, unshakeable, great master, holder of the command". From that time the title has passed through an uninterrupted line of reincarnations. The 11th Tai Situ (1886-1952) was the principle master of the 16th Karmapa who is the supreme authority of the Kagyupa school.

The present 12th Tai Situpa, born in 1954 in Derghe, east Tibet to a family of farmers, was recognised according to traditional methods and enthroned at Palpung monastery, the principle seat of the Tai Situpas, at the age of eighteen months. When he was six years old he fled from Tibet and finally joined the 16th Karmapa in Sikkim, taking up residence, after a few years, at the new Rumtek monastery, home of the Karmapa. In 1975 at the age of 22, he assumed his traditional responsibilities, founding his own monastery, Sherab Ling, in north India, which today is a very active monastic community.

In 1980, at the request of various Buddhist organisations, the 12th Tai Situ began his travels to Europe, America and south-east Asia and in 1984 he founded the Maitreya Institute, an organisation based on the principle of multi-discipline. In the same year he returned to Tibet for the first time where he tried to promote the preservation of Tibetan Buddhist culture. Strongly committed to fostering the well-being of the planet and its inhabitants, Tai Situpa often organises and participates in many projects related to these aims in different countries, attempting to make compassion and wisdom the common patrimony of humanity.

Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche in Australia

Retreat of Teachings at Namgyalgar
December 26 - January 1 1996

Rinpoche will give the *Santi Maha Sangha* Base Level exam and First Level Teachings in Australia
Exam of Base Level: February 2
Dates of training of the First Level not yet established.

See page 6

Spectacular Rainbow Appears as Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Resumes Teaching at Merigar



Rinpoche returns to Merigar.

MARCO MAGLIETTI

The Editors of The Mirror, on behalf of all the members of the Dzogchen Community all over the world, dedicate this issue of the newspaper to the celebration of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's recovery and return to teaching.

We have all been so filled with joy to see Rinpoche seated on his teaching seat once again in the Merigar gonpa, 'The Temple of the Great Liberation', which is now adorned with all the paintings of the Masters of the lineage, the divinities of the mandala, and with the text of the *Tagdrol* tantra which can place a cause of liberation in the mind stream of all who see it.

Indeed, at the retreat that has just ended here, Rinpoche very generously gave the initiation of the *Tagdrol* tantra and teachings on that tantra to all the many hundreds of people who filled the gonpa to capacity, spilling out onto the wooden deck that surrounds it.

Fortunately the weather remained fine throughout the whole retreat, and in fact on one of the days of the retreat a spectacular circular rainbow appeared high up in the sky where it remained serenely static for a whole hour when there was no rain anywhere in the area. The rainbow had a most unusual form, quite different from the usual kind, not descending to the earth at any point.

A transcription of part of the extraordinary teachings that Rinpoche gave on the *Tagdrol* tantra is included in these pages, and Rinpoche literally delighted all present once again by reminding us of the way in which he is able to bring any aspect of the teachings to life, using any one topic to illuminate the whole of the teachings.

When Rinpoche returned to Merigar, he had taken a long flight from New York to Rome, but even after such a tiring journey following his recent illness, he nevertheless

appeared in great form as he kindly posed for a group photograph with the large crowd of Community members who had gathered to welcome him at the entrance to the yellow house holding white scarves, flowers and burning sticks of incense.

He then went indoors and upstairs to drink tea in the veranda of the yellow house, where he received a few of the many Community members who wished to greet him. The Community's children were allowed upstairs first, and they all gathered round him to ask him questions about his health and his long absence. He lovingly and with great humor told them all about the ups and downs of the medical treatment he had received, laughing at the memories of the difficult months that had so recently ended. He then spent several days resting at his private residence, Gadeling, before he began to receive small groups of students who went there to visit him.

Prior to the beginning of the retreat of teachings on the *Tagdrol* tantra Rinpoche took time off for a short holiday in Sardinia, where he swam in the Mediterranean and relaxed in the warm sunshine.

On his return to Merigar, he spent some time reorganizing his house, which the Community has enlarged, making a new kitchen and reception room and two bedrooms on the ground floor that enable Rinpoche and his family to be more comfortable as well as giving him more space for his library and study. He also has a beautiful small meditation room in the house for his own and his family's use. Rinpoche and Rosa Tolli Namkhai, his wife, worked for several weeks to archive all the personal papers and writings in his study, where Rinpoche also sat at his desk to continue writing the Third level of the *Santi Maha Sangha* training, for which he is using a new portable

computer with a Tibetan language program installed. The amount of writing he has continued to do even during his illness is truly staggering. Among other things, he has been writing an autobiography, and has so far covered the time from his birth up to his arrival in Italy and the founding of Merigar.

During this last month Adriano Clemente has visited Rinpoche regularly to clarify points of the translation of the text of the Second level of the *Santi Maha Sangha* training which Adriano is now working on, and as the paper is prepared for press most of those who came for the recent retreat at Merigar have left, but students are arriving from all over the world for the exams of the Base and First Levels of *Santi Maha Sangha* training, and for the teachings of the First and Second levels which will follow the exams.

As the fervor of intense study once again grips those in the Community who have committed themselves to take the exams, The Mirror staff wish all the candidates good luck!

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An Oral Commentary by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu on 'The Essential Tantra of the Six Liberations', a term of Rigdzin Chanchub Dorje.

From the cycle of teachings called: 'The Self-Liberation of Sam-sara and Nirvana Through the Manifestation of the Peaceful and Wrathful Divinities.' Teaching from Friday September 29th, Merigar.

At the end of the empowerment which I gave yesterday connected to the transmission of the *Tagdrol* tantra whose verses are written on the ceiling of the *gonpa* here at Merigar where they can place a cause of liberation in the mind of all who see them, after the formal Vase initiation, I gave the *Rigpai Tsal Wang*.

In the Dzogchen teachings this is considered to be the most important part of the whole empowerment.

Rigpa means the state of instant presence, the knowledge of the primordial state of the individual; *tsal* means energy; and *wang* means empowerment. So a *Rigpai Tsal Wang* is a kind of Introduction given by the master by means of which the student is enabled to enter into knowledge of his or her own primordial state through empowerment of the characteristics of his or her own energy. *Rigpai Tsal Wang* is a fundamental method of Introduction in Dzogchen.

In Tantrism initiation is one of the most important factors. But in Dzogchen initiation is not indispensable. What is indispensable in Dzogchen is Introduction to one's own primordial state. There are many ways in which this Introduction can be done.

If we firstly examine our own condition, looking at our own real situation, we can see that the individual is made up of body, voice (or energy) and mind. Since the methods of the teachings must always correspond to our actual condition, they involve working at these three levels of our existence.

When we speak of the body, the body is the most material of the three aspects of our condition, so Introduction at that level has to be something you can see or hear, involving some concrete 'thing' that is used as a symbol. That's why in the teachings we talk about 'transmission by means of a symbol'. This is the principle behind the initiations given in the Tantric system, and in Tantric initiations, as you have just seen in the initiation I have just given, we use a vase as a ritual object. The vase is a symbol.

In the same way that the vase used in the initiation contains something inside it, our own body contains what we call its 'potentiality'. This doesn't mean, of course, that our body actually is a vase; the vase is simply a symbol of the relationship between our body and its potentiality for realization. Through the symbol used in the initiation one is enabled to understand many things. The symbol presents knowledge to us in a way we can understand. This is the way initiation is given in Tantrism. The symbol used in an initiation can relate more particularly either to body, to voice or to mind. So, Tantric initiations are also divided in that way.

This is the reason that the initiation of the body is called the 'Vase Initiation'. But the initiation of the voice is called the 'Secret Initiation'. Why is it secret? Because it is linked to our energy. The nature of our energy is more hidden than the material body and thus it is called secret.

But our minds are even less

material than our energy, and with regard to the mind aspect of our existence, the initiation given in Tantrism is called the 'Wisdom Initiation', or the initiation of *Prajña*. *Prajña* has two meanings: it can mean wisdom beyond concepts, as it does when referred to in the Wisdom Initiation, or it can mean the intellect, the discriminating aspect of the mind which studies and tries, through analysis and logic, to understand what is beyond the mind and logic. Thus the kind of wisdom knowledge referred to in the 'Wisdom Initiation'

studying the words of something like philosophy one can achieve real knowledge. One always has to know how to use the various methods for discovering the state. When we say that someone really knows how to work with the oral transmission of the teachings, what we mean is that they know how to use the various kinds of experiences of practice to be able to arrive at the primordial state.

If the oral transmission is followed in the correct manner I have just explained, it is also possible to enter the state of *rigpa* by means of words

the state is sufficient. Consider an example from the history of the lineage of the Dzogchen teachings: Manjushrimita was one of the most important disciples of Garab Dorje, the first master of Dzogchen in this present time cycle. But when Manjushrimita first went to see Garab Dorje he didn't go to receive teachings.

Manjushrimita heard that Garab Dorje was giving teachings, Dzogchen teachings in fact, that explained that the true state of knowledge is beyond cause and effect. Now

called *Rigpai Tsal Wang*.

But in a *wang* energy is always involved, and even in the case of an oral presentation of the teachings, the state of the individual is being introduced through explanations of the various ways that the energy of the individual manifest. Dzogchen masters know very well that it is not possible to introduce the state of knowledge directly in Dzogchen by means of words alone, but they also realize that words can be used to explain the primordial state. And words must be used to explain how to get into primordial state, and how the individual can experience his or her own energy as the manifestation of that state. A *Rigpai Tsal Wang* can include all these kinds of explanations as well as an Introduction that is beyond words.

In fact Introduction can be given in general in the Dzogchen teachings in three ways, in accordance with the individual's three levels of existence of body, voice and mind.

According to the system of the *Panditas*, or scholars, one can introduce an individual to the experience of his or her own *tsal* (one aspect of the individual's energy) by means of study and through quotations from the Tantras. This method of Introduction is called 'Oral Introduction'.

Then again, in the Tantric system, one can give an introduction to the *Tsal* through a formal initiation involving a ritual ceremony. This is called 'Symbolic Introduction' (But one must remember that the explanation aspect of the empowerment, called the Fourth Initiation, or the 'Initiation of the Word' is also a kind of Oral Introduction that is given within the system of symbolic ritual initiation).

But a master who is a highly developed practitioner who really has knowledge of the Dzogchen teachings doesn't need to depend on giving Introduction through initiation or through logical explanations or philosophical studies. Such a master is able to carry out an Introduction directly into the experience of the student him or herself. This is called 'Direct Introduction'.

So this is the third kind of Introduction. But to carry out that kind of Introduction the master must be perfect and have perfect knowledge. If the master is not very sure of himself, it is better he or she use the system of Introduction connected with initiation or the oral system.

Nowadays it seems that many people who are more developed as scholars than as practitioners have started to give Dzogchen initiations. How do they go about giving this initiation? Usually they do so by commenting on a text: the text says something and they try to comment on it, and they consider that to be giving Dzogchen teachings. But we don't know if their students reach a kind of knowledge or not. In any case that's one way of proceeding, according to the level of the one who is teaching.

So now I have explained the three kinds of ways of giving Introduction talked about in the Dzogchen teachings: Oral, Symbolic and Direct. The *Rigpai Tsal Wang* is a combination of all these three together.

You will remember that when we speak of the three dimensions, the three *kayas*, *Dharmakaya*, *Sambhogakaya*, and *Nirmanakaya*, which are the three realized states of our body, voice and mind, we understand that

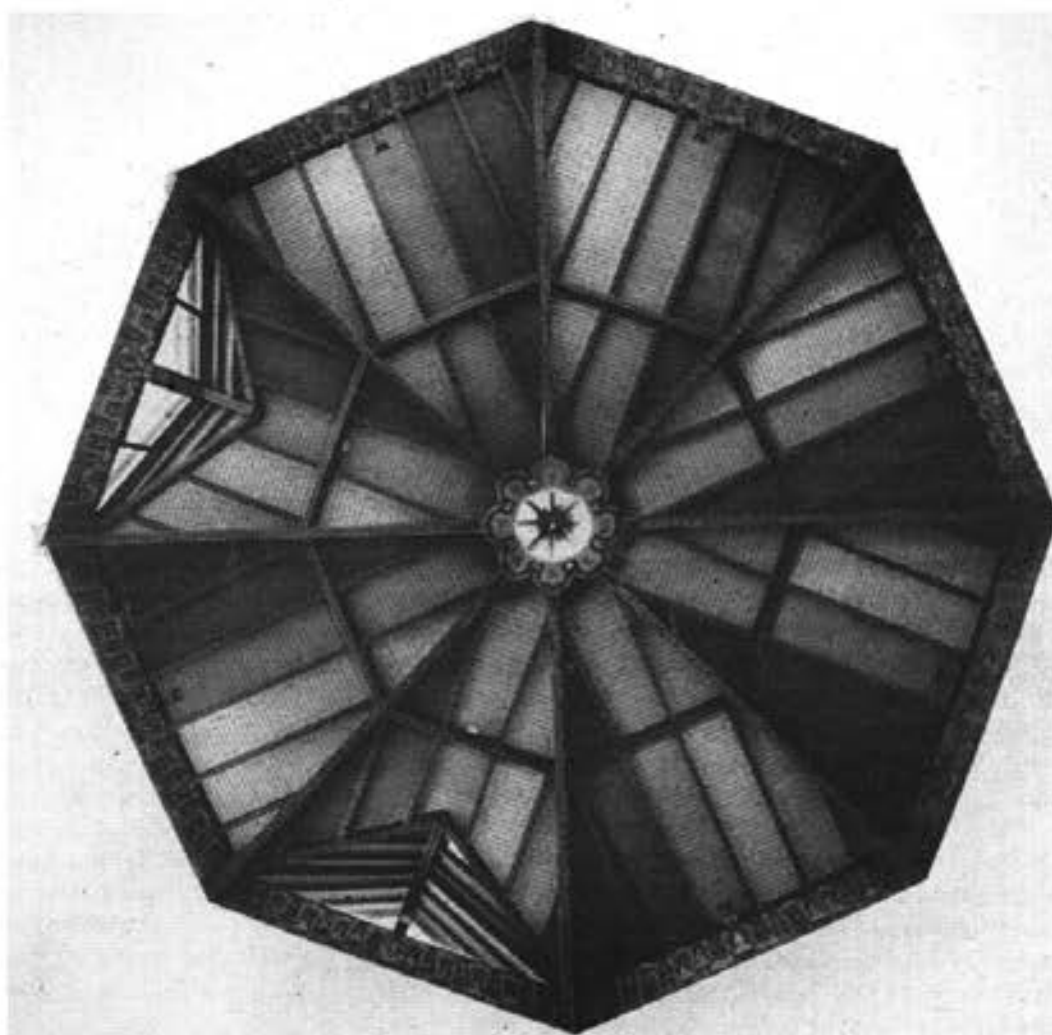
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The Essential Tantra of the Six Liberations

Part I

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Transcribed by Naomi Zeitz and edited by John Shane



Ceiling of the Temple of the Great Liberation, *gonpa* of Merigar

GIANNI BAGGI

is linked to the mind aspect of our three levels of existence.

But then there is something still more essential and less material than even the mind. The inherent condition, or 'state' of the three levels of existence of body, voice and mind, is beyond even the mind. In the Dzogchen teachings this condition, the state of pure instantaneous presence, is called the state of *rigpa*.

Introduction to this state of *rigpa* can be given by means of words and explanations. But that doesn't mean the words themselves are the state of *rigpa*, because the actual experience of knowledge of our primordial state is beyond words. Words in themselves can never explain the true state of *rigpa*, but they can be very important to help you to understand the methods to find the state. Explanations of this kind using words are generally called 'Oral Transmission'.

Oral explanations can also be used to introduce knowledge during formal empowerments or initiations as part of the method of such empowerments. But that is not to say that just by

and explanations without using formal initiations or empowerments at all, although those who are very conditioned by the Tantric system often say you cannot receive the state of knowledge without initiation.

In Tantrism the two terms *min* and *drol* are used. *Drol* means liberation; *min* means a kind of 'ripening' that gives you a possibility, after which, using the various methods one can achieve the state of liberation. This is the reason that in Tantrism initiation is considered indispensable. The initiation is what ripens the student. The method of Tantrism is transformation; if you haven't had the initiation that presents your own dimension to you as the deity and the *mandala*, then what would you have to transform into?

If you hear someone say that initiation is indispensable, what that means is that they are presenting the view according to Tantrism. But that is not the view of Dzogchen.

In Dzogchen the Introduction can be done in different ways. Any method that will bring experience of

Manjushrimita felt himself to be a very important Buddhist philosopher, and since the law of cause and effect, the law of karma, is a fundamental principle of Buddhism, he felt very strongly that Garab Dorje's teaching didn't correspond to the Buddhist teaching. So he decided to go and debate with Garab Dorje with the intention of defeating him and converting him to what he understood as correct Buddhism. But when Manjushrimita finally came face to face with Garab Dorje, the very words and arguments of the intellectual debate that he entered into with Garab Dorje were an introduction to knowledge of the state of Dzogchen.

We can see from this story that Garab Dorje didn't immediately pick up a vase and touch it to Manjushrimita's head to empower him with knowledge; even if Garab Dorje had attempted to do such a thing Manjushrimita would not have accepted it. He had gone there to debate, not to receive the teachings. But through words, Garab Dorje introduced him to knowledge, and that kind of introduction can also be

continued from page 2
these three states are not three separate things but three interdependent aspects of our primordial condition. It is the same with the *Rigpa Tsal Wang*: it represents the union of the three *kayas*, and is the union of the three ways of Introduction given in the Dzogchen teachings.

Among the verses of the *Tagdrol tantra* there are some verses connected with the Introduction I gave yesterday. During the empowerment I simply read the verses, but today I will explain them. The text says:

"Whatever one sees, or hears, or feels is simply a manifestation of the mind."

You mustn't confuse the explanation in this verse with the kind of explanations found in the Sutra teachings. In the *Sutras* it says that all our *karmic* vision is an illusion created by the mind. Here the text does not speak of *karmic* vision being created by the mind, rather what it says is that *karmic* vision is a manifestation of the mind.

The essential difference here is that when we say something is created by something else, we are speaking as if there were two separate things with a dualistic, causal relationship; whereas when we speak of something manifesting itself in a particular form we are clearly describing a non-dual relationship in which the manifestation and that which manifests are simply different aspects of a single process.

To explain further the difference between these two ways of understanding the relationship between the mind and *karmic* vision we can consider the way reflections arise in a mirror.

In a mirror all kinds of reflections, good and bad, beautiful and ugly, can arise. But the reflections are not created by the mirror. In the same way, *karmic* vision is not created by the mind. If there is no object in front of a mirror to act as the secondary cause for the arising of reflections, reflections will not arise in it. We can see clearly that if the mirror were itself the creator of the reflections, the mirror wouldn't depend on there being an object to reflect. The mirror itself would be able to create reflections on its own.

The example I have just given is used to explain that *karmic* vision manifests in the same way that reflections arise in a mirror, but the analogy of the mirror is also used to remind us that all *dharma*s, all the infinite phenomena that can possibly manifest, are in reality no more real than reflections. All manifestations, all phenomena are void, empty.

But how should we understand their 'emptiness'? We can gain an understanding of it by looking again at the metaphor of the mirror.

Anything can be reflected in a mirror, because a mirror has, as its essential inherent quality, the capacity to reflect. A mirror, by definition, has this potentiality. But in order for a mirror to reflect there must be a secondary cause, an object in front of the mirror to be reflected. Then, through the interdependence of these two factors, the potentiality of the mirror and the secondary cause of the object, a reflection manifests.

The same is true for the mind; the manifestations of the mind occur in the same way. If we carefully examine and observe what is actually reflected in a mirror, we will find nothing concrete there, because a reflection is after all a reflection, it is not something material. Everyone knows, whether they study philosophy or not, that reflections are not real. When we

speak of phenomena and mental events as being 'empty' what we are talking about is exactly this fact that although they appear, just like reflections in a mirror, phenomena and mental events are not real. From this explanation one can understand what is really meant by this term 'emptiness' that is used so much in Buddhism in general.

What appears as *karmic* vision is manifested by the mind. The manifestations of the mind are like the colours of a rainbow manifesting in the space of the sky: the colours of the rainbow have no concrete existence. The rainbow manifests, and then it disappears back into the same sky from where it arose. In the same way, hundreds of thousands of thoughts appear and disappear in the mind.

When we look at a cloudless sky, we may observe clouds suddenly arising in it. Then, for a while, the sky is full of clouds. But after a while movement takes place in the clouds, they slowly disappear and the sky is clear again. Thoughts arise and disappear in the mind in the same way. The problem is that our conditioning makes us believe in the reality of what arises.

When we see a reflection in a mirror, we at least understand that it is not real. But when we look at the object itself that is reflected in the mirror, we do consider that actual object to be something concrete. Then again, someone who studies philosophy may come to understand, intellectually at least, that the nature of the material object itself is as empty and as unreal as the reflection of the object in the mirror.

But even if we have developed an intellectual philosophical understanding of the emptiness of objects at a material level, we nevertheless still have such a strong belief in the reality of the objective dimension that in the instant of perceiving what manifests to us as our own energy, we solidify this illusory *karmic* vision into something very concrete. As a result of this solidification, if, for example, we don't eat for two or three days we feel a very strong hunger. We may understand that the hunger is unreal, but it is not enough for us just to know superficially that it is not real. Because deep down we have a strong belief that it is real. We very much believe what our own stomachs tell us! When our stomach is empty we feel hunger. Even though the stomach is ultimately unreal, the feeling of hunger still nevertheless arises. And then we find we also need to eat unreal food pretty fast or our unreal hunger will cause us suffering. We ourselves have created this situation for ourselves, building up our belief in the reality of what is unreal in the way that I have just explained, and on top of that, as a result of our fundamental misperception of reality, day by day we develop great attachment. This attachment makes the belief we maintain in the reality of what is unreal grow stronger and stronger. That is how we create our dualistic vision. More than anything else our belief in the sense of a separate 'me', or self, becomes stronger, and we deepen and develop our attachments through our mistaken notions of 'I' and 'mine'. But through the teachings we can discover that this idea of a self is unreal, and through the practice, knowledge of the illusory nature of the ego can replace our previously mistaken view of reality.

Here in the text it says that even though all of our *karmic* vision is something unreal, nevertheless this *karmic* vision is connected with our

energy. Our *karmic* vision doesn't arise from nothing, in the same way that a reflection can't arise in a mirror without a secondary cause. The secondary cause for the arising of our vision is our *karma*. You know what *karma* means. When our intention produces a perfect *karmic* seed this potentiality in turn ripens into something concrete in accordance with secondary causes. The *karmic* potentiality or trace, in Tibetan called *bachag*, is connected with our energy, and our energy, considered in terms of the metaphor of the mirror, is like the potentiality of the mirror to reflect whatever is in front of it. So it is through the coming together of the *karmic* seed and the potentiality of our energy that our whole unreal vision manifests for us. Remember that the seed of our own *karma*, the potentiality of our own energy through which the *karmic* seed manifests, and the *karmic* vision that thus arises to us are part of one single process of manifestation. As I explained earlier, in Dzogchen, *karmic* vision is considered to be a manifestation of our mind rather than to be created by it as is taught in the *Sutras*.

The Tibetan term *lhagthong* is often translated as 'insight', but what it means is real understanding of the movement aspect of our condition, understanding of the alternation of calm and movement, emptiness and manifestation, which are actually inseparable. Movement is tied to our energy even at the level of pure vision, the level of realization, so knowledge of movement is not something to be understood only at the level of intellectual knowledge. Intellectual knowledge alone is not enough. We may know that what's reflected in a mirror is unreal, but as long as we have only an intellectual understanding of the unreal nature of phenomena, our knowledge doesn't actually function at the level of reality, because this intellectual knowledge always remains dependent on the objective dimension. The manifestation at the level of the object continues to remain something concrete for us as long as we have only intellectual knowledge, and as long as we remain at that level we can never reach true knowledge of the unreal nature of phenomena.

Through listening to and applying the teachings one can arrive at some real experiences, and through those experiences we can come to understand that all of what we have called 'movement' is actually part of our own energy, and that this energy itself is wisdom. That is the real meaning of *lhagthong*.

The terms *shine* and *lhagthong* are generally found together, and the *shine* aspect refers to finding a state of calm without thought. In the Sutra teachings it is said that after *shine* one develops *lhagthong*. The Tibetan word *lhagthong* is made up of two syllables: the *lha* part, which means 'something more', and the *long* part, which means 'to see'. What this really means is that one develops an experiential understanding of the movement of thought, rather than only remaining limited to the experience of a calm state without thought. While in *shine* you discover a calm state without thought, but this calm state does not represent the totality of our condition. Our real condition is not only the calm state; there is also the aspect of the manifestation and movement of energy. And knowledge and understanding of that movement is called *lhagthong*, according to conditions.

PART II NEXT ISSUE.

A letter to the Gakyils and Members of the Dzogchen Community

from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu



Gadeling, September 26th, 1995.

It is my firm belief that our newspaper, *The Mirror*, is of vital importance for our Community's future. Yet, although it serves the Dzogchen Community world-wide, *The Mirror* has not so far received the financial support it needs and deserves from the Community around the world. It is not fair that *The Mirror* should continue to receive financial support only from the Gar that is responsible for its production. This puts too great a burden on one local community. The Community as a whole really must make a more genuinely collective effort to support the newspaper that is our principal means of communication, and which in each issue contains a transcription of my teachings, practice dates, and news and articles of interest to all our members.

I am writing to ask the Community as a whole to participate in an interesting initiative which John Shane and his wife Jo have taken to benefit the Community and the *Mirror* in particular. They have produced a limited edition of a *thangka* that was painted for them a few years ago, according to my instructions, by the American painter Glen Eddy.

The *thangka* shows Garab Dorje, my uncle Togden Ogyen Tenzin and myself. The Shane family have generously offered posters reproducing this *thangka* to the Community, and the posters will be made available to the various Gakyils who may sell them for whatever price they decide is most appropriate according to the capacity of their local Community's members.

We will distribute the poster through the Gakyils, sending copies with people returning from the October retreats at Merigar, and each Gakyil can use one half of the money offered in payment for the posters for whatever purpose they choose to further their local projects.

But the other half of the money raised should be sent to *The Mirror* office at Tsegalgar as a contribution towards the newspaper's expenses.

There are two sizes of poster, and 1000 copies have been printed of the larger one. Taking into consideration the limited number of these larger posters, the price decided on by the Gakyils for them should be such that those receiving a copy of it will feel they have really made an effort in making a generous contribution to the Community. 2000 copies of a smaller reproduction have been made, and those who cannot make a larger offering should be able to have afford one of these. The price of the smaller poster should be such that no one who wishes to have a copy will be unable to afford one.

Continuing beyond the initiative of these posters, the Gakyils of the Dzogchen Community around the world should all feel responsible for the continuing publication of the *Mirror*, which benefits the whole Community, enabling practitioners in all the various countries to keep in touch with one another, and they should commit themselves to make regular contributions to the cost of producing *The Mirror* according to their capacity. Each yellow Gakyil should try to make a provision in its annual budget to offer some support for *The Mirror* which should be sent at regular intervals, no matter how small the contribution may be. Please do your best to fulfill this request.

With the whole-hearted support of the Dzogchen Community world-wide *The Mirror* can increasingly reflect our Community to itself and in addition will be able to further our aspirations that the Dzogchen teachings may arise and spread in all realms.

With my very Best Wishes.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

During his teaching visit to Merigar at the end of July, H.H. Penor Rinpoche kindly agreed to be interviewed by the Mirror.

The Mirror: Your Holiness, our newspaper is distributed to members of the Dzogchen Community worldwide; do you have any particular message or something to say of any kind to our community as a whole?

H.H. Penor Rinpoche: If I am to say something special to you as Dzogchen practitioners I would like to point out that Dzogchen is the highest of all the stages of the Buddhist Teachings, it is the pinnacle of the Teachings, and rather than jumping straight into the practice of Dzogchen one should enter gradually via the preliminary practices. Having passed through all the stages properly one advances gradually, rather than trying to jump right into the highest level.

Another thing is that with the teachings much depends upon the relationship between teacher and students, their connection and devotion. The Teachings are not something that you can just grab from a textbook by reading it, and assimilate in the same way as by reading a story. The understanding of Dzogchen comes by having faith and devotion to the Master, that's how you can reach the profound peak and realise the true meaning of Dzogchen.

Mirror: The state of Dzogchen is a state beyond effort - but in the path we must apply effort. Could you comment upon this, Your Holiness?

Penor Rinpoche: When it is said to be effortless, it is so in comparison with other *Yanas*, by means of which it can take many years or lifetimes to reach the goal. When it comes to Dzogchen, if one is practising genuine Dzogchen and if the practitioner is the most appropriate vessel, it is said that one can become liberated within a matter of months or years. We may not know exactly how worthy a vessel we are, but if we practise genuinely we should at least find ourselves liberated from the sufferings of *samsara* within a single lifetime.

So, you don't become enlightened just by receiving the Teachings. You have to put energy into the practice and in following the path - that's where you need the effort.

Mirror: Your Holiness, could you explain a little about how to apply morality and discipline according to the Dzogchen view?

Penor Rinpoche: Firstly it is important to see your Master as the Buddha himself. Then, you should have such total confidence, faith and devotion in your Master that you believe his every word. This faith should be totally stainless and free from any doubts.

All phenomena should be perceived as simply pure - if you don't realise this all sorts of difficulties and trouble will keep arising, because our minds are so full of thoughts.

In our land of Tibet, before taking someone as their teacher, one will first have thoroughly considered and examined whether he is an appropriate Master. In order to get more than just a rough idea about the prospective Lama, one makes a thorough examination by going around asking everyone who knows this Lama all about him, about the

Faith and Devotion in the Master

Interview with H.H. Penor Rinpoche



Penor Rinpoche at Merigar

MARIO MAGLIETTI

tradition to which he belongs and his lineage, his quality of realisation and knowledge - everything you can find out about him.

Once having decided that he is suitable after all this research, without further prevarication he is accepted as the guru and one becomes and remains steadfastly devoted to him regardless of how things turn out later. Your faith and devotion remains very firm and unwavering, whether it is your good fortune that he turns out to be an excellent Master or not. Even if he is not the greatest Lama, the combination of the Dzogchen teachings that he gives and your fervent faith and devotion to him will still be of great benefit.

So the important thing is that you should try to make sure beforehand about the suitability of a prospective master, but once you have already taken him as your Master it is not at all proper that you should examine or judge him in any way.

Mirror: If a person has accepted someone as their Lama with this kind of complete faith, and then later on, as sometimes happens, difficulties or problems arise with the Lama, what should a person do?

Penor Rinpoche: In such a situation, where you have already taken him as your Master, it is necessary to practise the pure view. The important thing is that although the Teaching is given by the Master, receiving its blessings is dependant upon our own capability of utilising them and proceeding on the path.

Mirror: Most of our practitioners are lay people - we have jobs, wives or husbands, children; and I wonder, Your Holiness, if you could say something about how to practise in a situation where we lead such busy lives.

Penor Rinpoche: In general, being Buddhists, we have to accept the law of cause and effect, death and rebirth. The *Dharma* is something that actually exists, it's not just a subject for conversation, something that is invented in the scriptures. So please don't have any doubts, have faith and devotion regarding the Three Jewels and your Master, and try to practise as much as possible whenever you have time.

And the main thing is to have the right attitude of wanting to benefit others - that's *bodhicitta*. Then it just depends on yourself, how much time you can find for your practice.

Mirror: Many of us have children. These children go to schools which are not Buddhist-oriented, we are living in our local culture. So we are doing our best to educate our children. Can you give us some advice regarding this?

Penor Rinpoche: In fact this is a matter with which you may have a lot of difficulty. What you can do, when you are with your children, is to talk to them about and give them an idea of your own special background, and when you have the chance take them with you to a temple or centre and to visit Masters etc., then it should be less of a problem.

Then there are the many interesting historical stories and biographies of Masters which you can recount to your children, and this should have a positive effect on their outlook and motivation. You don't have to invent anything or try to fool them, just tell it the way it is.

Mirror: Your Holiness, could you tell us something about your lineage, your monasteries in Tibet and in India, anything else you think may interest us?

Penor Rinpoche: In Tibet we have the four different sects of Tibetan Buddhism. But in India, where there are only the two vehicles or *yanas*, the *Hinayana* and the *Mahayana*, there were never these four sects, they arose from the four different occasions on which the teachings were taken to Tibet and translated. I belong to the oldest of the Tibetan sects, the *Nyingmapa*, which arose from the first time that the Teachings of *Buddha Dharma* were taken to Tibet, about 1,300 years ago.

This original Buddhist tradition in Tibet was not actually known as the *Nyingmapa* until the other sects arose when the teachings were again brought to Tibet about 900, 700 and 500 years ago respectively. Although the *Nyingma* tradition was well established throughout Tibet it was rather pushed aside by the arrival of these newer sects. The Old Sect, the *Nyingmapa*, has become predominant mainly in eastern Tibet, the Kham region, where I come from, during the last 400-500 years.

Palyul Monastery, to which I belong, is approximately 400 years old. It is one of the six main or "mother" monasteries, two in each region of Tibet, in which the *Nyingmapa* lineages have been maintained.

Throughout Kham there were about a thousand smaller "branch" monasteries of the Palyul lineage. To this day there are about three hundred such monasteries of our lineage, of varying size, having from thirty or forty monks up to a thousand or so.

There have been thirteen lineage holders of the Palyul seat. I was recognised as the incarnation when I was just two years old. On being brought to the monastery I studied and practised for about fifteen years, until the situation in Tibet became difficult for us, when I left the country to take refuge in India.

When I arrived in India, as a reincarnate Lama or Tulku I felt it my duty to propagate and preserve the Teachings by starting a monastery. At first we had no means or assistance, then we were given some land by the Indian Government and we began in a small way, with twenty to thirty monks. Gradually, with many difficulties we have developed over the years to where we now have 1,200 monks. The Monastic College was established fifteen years ago with fifteen students and now we have just over 300. In this way I am upholding and propagating the lineage.

Since 1981 the Chinese government has opened Tibet to visitors, and as so many of our people are still there I could not resist the opportunity to visit them. Our mother monastery of Palyul used to be extremely large, but when I returned there I found that nothing remained of it except for one small house, and fruit trees were growing where the foundations had been.

It became possible to re-establish the monastery, so I rebuilt it on its original site. Now it looks externally the way it was originally, although the interior is empty because all our countless precious statues, *thangkas* and volumes of scriptures had been lost. But at least, outwardly, the monastery looks in good shape!

So far I have been back to Tibet now four times, not only visiting the main Palyul monastery but also the hundred or so of our branch monasteries, trying to help and sponsor their rebuilding programmes. This is my special task as part of practising and propagating the *Dharma*. I feel that all the people of the Kham region are like my own people, my own family.

Mirror: Could you tell us a little about the programme of your monastery in India, Your Holiness?

Penor Rinpoche: Starting with the young monks, from an early age until about twenty years, they learn to read and write, grammar and so on. Then there is the intermediate stage when monks learn all the rituals and scriptures, and the elder monks mostly concentrate on their meditation and recitation practices.

The brighter pupils are accepted into the institute, where they learn the *Sutras* for the first six years and then study *Tantra* for three years, in all a nine-year programme. This is run in the same way as a normal school, with examinations every year that the students must pass in order to continue. At the end of the nine years, those qualifying students who are most intelligent, who have a very disciplined and good-natured mind, who are really good in their *Dharma* practice and behaviour according to

their special path - they will be enthroned as Khenpo. So far we have had about fifteen Khenpos from our institute. It is quite infrequent that students qualify as Khenpo, only one or two among a hundred students do so, because they must have all the qualities of being very learned, with the high morality and excellent nature of such a special practitioner. It is not something that I alone can decide; candidates for Khenpo are considered by all the Khenpos and senior monks, taking into account their whole nine years of training and examinations. That's the general situation at present.

Mirror: Your Holiness, do you know our Master Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche; have you met him personally?

Penor Rinpoche: I have met him twice briefly in Nepal. There was not much chance to sit together and talk but we discussed a few things. My monastery is in the south of India so I am only visited by Lamas if they come here on purpose, not dropping by on their way elsewhere.

Mirror: Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche's health has much improved.

Penor Rinpoche: Yes, I'm aware of his situation and activities. Our home places in Tibet are quite close, although what would have been a long horse ride in the old days now takes only about three hours by car!

Mirror: It's been a difficult year for us because of our Master's illness...

Penor Rinpoche: Yes, it's sure to have been a problem, but I hope there will be no further misfortune. What is most important is for his disciples to continue their practice both, on their own behalf and his, and in this way they will serve him well.

Mirror: Your Holiness, we are very fortunate that you have come to the West to give us Teachings, and that you came to Merigar - we thank you very much indeed.

Penor Rinpoche: When I have time I will surely visit the West again, but I have so much to do there is not much opportunity. I have been to America twice but now it's seven years since my last visit, having been so busy with my visits to Tibet. I wish to visit the West again but I'm not sure when.

Mirror: I wonder how it looks to Your Holiness here at Merigar, a Tibetan Gompa in the middle of Italy?

Penor Rinpoche: It seems to be a very good place, and I am very happy to find the people here practising like this in the West.

Previously in Tibet the *Dharma* was well established but has not been so widely practiced more recently. My intention in Southern India was to build up and conserve the traditions in case they died out completely in Tibet and the Teachings would need to be re-introduced. But when I came to visit Tibet I found that in a certain way the situation was good, that the *Dharma* has not completely disappeared and what remains of our traditions really shines out, so there is a very good potential to revive and spread the doctrine in Tibet. Here in the West people are receiving the Teachings and really practise them, so I foresee that in the future you could really be great protectors and propagators of the *Dharma*.

Kindly translated by Ngodup Dorji

Lives of the Great Masters



The Story of Jomo Memo (1248-83)

by Tzultrim Allione

(reprinted from *Women of Wisdom* with permission of the author)

Prologue

This is a very abbreviated version of the life of one of the best-known women tertons. It is an example of a *terton* Namthar (liberation story). It differs from other kinds of Namthar in that it is not so much the story of an ordinary person who reaches enlightenment through her own efforts, but rather the story of a destined woman who receives knowledge through revelation. After her experience in the cave of Padma Sambhava, she is transformed so completely that she frightens those who knew her before and they accuse her of being a demoness. The story is oriented around this revelation and the Teachings which are revealed to her by Vajra Yögin, as is the case with all *terton* Namthar.

This biography also has elements of the descent motif found in that of Nangsa Obum. Jomo Memo's descent, however, is into a cave where she receives initiation. It is not a voluntary choice, nor is it a negative experience, as in the case of a depression. However, because of the suddenness of the realization gained, she has to leave where she has been living and go to find someone who can help her to use the knowledge she has received. In her teacher Guru Chowang not only does she find someone who can guide her, but he finds in her a *dakini* who helps him to reveal a *terma* which he has been unable to decipher previously. Through his sexual contact with her, a block in his subtle energy is released, enabling him to decipher the *terma*.

Jomo Memo is famous less for the *terma* she received, which was a "yang ter" than for her "death," when both she and two companion yoginis entered the body of light after doing a feast offering. Her "death day" is still celebrated, as we see in the life of A-Yu Khadro. She was still very young and must have known that her mission was completed, therefore she returned to the land of the *dakinis*.

Yeshe Tsogyel mentions Jomo Memo in her biography thus:

"An activity emanation of my speech will appear in Tsang. And known as Jomo she will found Phakmo Meditation Center. And the Rites of the Pig-face will embrace the world. Phakmo refers to Vajra Varahi, the *dakini* with a sow's head coming out of her head."

The Liberation story of Jomo Memo

Among the 108 tertons, there were two *dakinis*. Jomo Memo was one of them, she was considered to be an emanation of Padma Sambhava's consort, Yeshe Tsogyel. She was born in Dagpo, in a place called E, where there was a cave made sacred by Padma Sambhava called Zarmo Lung cave.

Her father was an accomplished Tantric practitioner by the name of Dorje Gyalpo. Her mother was a *dakini* called Padma Paltsun. Jomo Memo was born in the fourth Rabjung, in the Year of the Monkey. Her parents called her Padma Tsokye, "Joyful Lotus Lake."

Until she was four her parents kept her at home in quiet, comfortable surroundings. Then her mother died and her father remarried. Her stepmother forced her to do a great deal of heavy work, such as taking care of the animals.

When she was thirteen years old, one day, at noon, she was minding the cattle near the sacred cave, when she slipped and fell. Then she heard

a sweet voice calling her from a cave. She was awakened by this very pleasing voice and she looked into the cave and saw a door at the back. She opened the door and saw a heavenly cremation ground, with Vajra Varahi in the center, surrounded by many other *dakinis*. They were making a feast offering.

Vajra Varahi said to her: "So, my girl, you have arrived?" She took a text and placed it on Jomo Memo's head, blessing her with it. Then she gave her the text. She said: "This is the Teachings of the *dakinis*, 'Sangwa Kundu'; if you do this meditation you will reach liberation." As soon as she received the book she knew immediately all that it contained.

After she had feasted with the *dakinis* and eaten the feast offerings, she awoke and found herself in the place where she had fallen asleep and a demoness (*sMan.mo*) came to bless her. This is how she got her name, which means "Demoness Nun." Because local people, suspicious of her powers, considered her a demoness, she moved to a place about twenty-five days' journey away. The place was called Lodrak. In Lodrak was a famous *terton* called Guru Chowang. In his prophecies there were to be five *dakinis* in his life, and he recognized Jomo Memo as one of them. When Jomo Memo and Guru Chowang were united, he was able to reveal a *terma* that he could not decipher previously. Whatever she knew she told him, and he told her everything that he knew. After some time he said to her: "The book given to you by Vajra Varahi is a teaching from Yeshe Tsogyel. Go and meditate on it very secretly. Do not tell anyone that you are going. Then go to Central Tibet, with your two women disciples."

At one point, she met a *siddha* called Lingje Repa. Through his contact with her he was able to open the channel of profound cognition. He gained the highest realization of anyone between the River Ganges in India, and Tibet.

From the age of fourteen to the age of thirty-six she traveled around, never staying anywhere very long. When she was thirty-six, on the tenth day of the eighth month, she went up to the top of Lhari Mountain in Central Tibet with her two disciples and they made a big feast offering. At the end of the feast she and two attendants flew away to Guru Rinpoche's Copper-Colored Mountain and left no bodies behind.

The leftover food, blessed from the feast offering, had the power to bring realization as vast as the sky; the herdsman that ate what was left gained instant realization.

MAPPA MUNDI



Elemental Edge Music

CD Sale Benefits A.S.I.A.

John Renshaw and Kevin de Las Casas are pleased to offer the CD *Mappa Mundi*, a journey of sound and music across the five elements. Inspired by Rinpoche's Zer Nga and Bardo teachings, the ten tracks

reflect the Peaceful as well as the Wrathful power of the Elements. Available on CD (£11 including postage) from MC Rex, 7 Northington St., London WC1N 2JF, GB or The Mirror, PO Box 277, Conway MA 01341 USA (\$20US including postage). 25% of sales is a donation to A.S.I.A.

Reviews

Minding Mind

A Course in Basic Meditation.

Translated and Explained by Thomas Cleary

Shambhala, Boston and London, 1995. 129 pp. ISBN 1-57062-004-0. US\$10

I had a wonderful time reading this little book. It contains a diverse range of texts written by various great Zen masters giving a perspective of this tradition over one thousand years. Cleary, a Buddhist Studies scholar from the United States, has chosen for this selection, several pieces that offer a practical and informative guide to the techniques and methods of this meditative tradition.

The first of seven texts was written by Hongren, who is known as the fifth patriarch of Chan Buddhism in China. It concerns instructions in basic sitting. The subsequent texts provide windows into practical aspects of the tradition, tracing the development of Zen via Korea to end up in seventeenth century Japan.

I found the translation into English very lucid, precise and readable and the texts sparkle with life. Those studying *Santi Maha Sangha* might find it interesting, too, as one of the texts, "Secrets of Cultivating the Mind" by Son Master Chinul, founder of Korean Zen (12th C.) looks very directly at the difference between gradual and instant paths, saying in effect that in the gradual path one meditates first hoping for Enlightenment later, but in the instantaneous path of Zen one gets Enlightened first and then practices subsequently to stabilise and deepen what one has understood, but always beyond hope of any future attainment.

My other favorite piece, "Absorption in the Treasury of Light", is a text by Zen Master Ejo, spiritual successor of Master Dogen (13th C) of Japan. This text is written in the tradition of Sanzen and focuses on the Dharmakaya or "reality body" teaching of Buddhism. It uses a great variety of symbolic expressions drawing on scriptural extracts, poetry, koans, Zen stories, and results in a very beautiful treatise. It is profound yet accessible, complex yet simple and immensely enjoyable and clarifying.

As I said, I enjoyed this book, and found some very welcome insights into this ancient and so refreshingly direct tradition. The energy of the insights into meditative techniques that it offers is almost palpable and jumps out at you from the book - a true Zen hit!

Franz Joseph Heim

Mappa Mundi: Elemental Edge Music

by John Renshaw and Kevin de las Casas, London 1995

Mappa Mundi sets out to chart new territories in musical composition. The group is John Renshaw and Kevin de las Casas, who have taken the principle of elemental evolution and dissolution and given it expression in sound! This wonderfully ambitious project which has married mythology and music is entitled *Elemental Edge Music*.

New Age music has concentrated by and large on sound as a calming relaxant doing little to challenge the listener to step beyond the soporific and into the realm of movement and energy in all its forms. *Elemental Edge Music* begins with a calm and spacious state and takes the listener on a trip through every aspect of the elements of space, air, fire, and earth from the soothing to the destructive and into final dissolution and return to peace.

The first five tracks trace the evolution from the subtlest to the grossest elements and are composed of pure sound with no reliance on a rhythmic matrix. We are in calmness and expansiveness of space, and float into movement. From space we sense the seed of the air element that takes life in birdsong and the movement of wind through whorls and caverns of light. It undermines the listener's sense of stability, challenges us to let go of our grip on preconceived notions of reality.

Fire arises out of the movement of air. At first the gentle sound of sparks crackles out of the silence and then builds into the rage of an inferno that slowly subsides and falls toward silence. Now peaceful rills of streams mix with riffs of birdsong, thunder roars and the rains cascade to overwhelm our senses. We are tumbled down under the fluid surface where the currents draw us past echoes of whalesong, into peace again and we are thrown onto the shores of the earth. The music begins to ally a foundation of rhythm and melody as pebbles knock against each other, and cascade over us. The groans of primordial animals mix with the tumble of avalanche and hoofbeat. The earth solidifies securely beneath us to let us find our voice in moans of love and birth.

The second cycle begins and the earth shifts and splits, releases rhythm and chant and we are driven along toward a conscious understanding of the whole process that began in pure abstracted form. A shantylike rhythm takes us to the sea shore and we are afloat and following celestial sirens along currents of sound to a crackling explosion into flame and we tumble along like salamanders riding and twisting through lightening flash and conflagration. Lighter and subtler now, we are released into currents of air as we hear the final breath leave our body and the heartbeat stops. Our return to space is through the frightening gate of death, clutched by demons, whispered at by seductive enticements toward distraction, but driven on by the rhythmic accompaniment that underpins the surface sounds that assault our senses: projections of our own inner demons. And we rise into the ultimate space of the dragon's last flight, claiming all manifestation as the unified expression of our own musical energy.

Elemental Edge Music is not music to leave on as background ambience nor a catchy little commercial jingle with which to distract ourselves, but rather it draws us into a musical experience that is a ritual reenactment of our own evolution. Sit down in your armchair and get out the headphones.

Des Barry

Vairocana Project

Project to translate principal Dzogchen tantras

by Enrico dell'Angelo

The Vairocana project, named after the great Tibetan translator and Dzogchen master, is a joint initiative between the Italian and American seats of the Shang-Shung Institute. It was conceived from the need to render available the fundamental literature of the Dzogchen teachings.

Direct studies of the original texts are necessary to deepen the knowledge of these teachings and is also indispensable for the continuation of the transmission and integrity of Dzogchen itself.

The complexity of Tibetan language and the obscurity of many passages of the tantras make comprehension difficult not only for westerners but also for the majority of Tibetans who don't have a profound understanding of the practice and theory of the teachings.

The great amount of work and the particular problems involved in translating the tantras necessitate the collaboration of a group of qualified translators rather than the individual effort of a single scholar. This labor would be supervised by a committee under the direction of Choegyal Namkhai Norbu. This structure will guarantee the homogeneous quality of the translations from the point of view of choice of terminology and interpretation.

The Vairocana project will develop in parallel with the *Santi Maha Sangha* Training with the immediate object of making available the original texts necessary for the various levels of training.

The project foresees the translation of nearly three thousand Tibetan pages by the year 2001. The first phase involves the translation of such main texts of Dzogchen as for example the *Kun byed rgyal po*, the *sem sde bco brgyad*, the *mDo bcu*, the *rMad byung*.

The annual cost of the project (excluding printing costs) is estimated to be around sixty-six million lire, in consideration of the following expenses:

*the labor of a single translator working full-time for at least six months a year—approximately ten million lire each (the project involves at least six translators);

*estimated travel and organizational expenses of six million lire a year.

If you have an interest in participation in this project, either as a translator or as a sponsor of one or more tantras, you may contact the respective secretaries of the Italian or American Shang-Shung Institutes.

Secretary of the Italian Shang-Shung Institute, c/o Podere Nuovissimo, 58031 Arcidosso (GR). Telephone: 0564-966941. Fax: 0564-966846
E-Mail Internet: 10043.1433@COMPUSERVE.COM

Secretary of the American Shang-Shung Institute, P.O. Box 277, Conway MA 01341 USA. Telephone: 413-369-4153. Fax: 413-369-4165.

TRANSLATORS NEEDED

for Rinpoche's History of Tibet, The Light of Kailash (see Mirror #32). Qualified translators from Tibetan to English who are students of Rinpoche are invited to offer their services and subsidies will be paid. Please contact Lauri Marder, Shang-Shung Institute, Box 277 Conway MA 01341 USA for further information.

CORRECTIONS

In the last issue of The Mirror, no.32, there were mistakes in the page 1 article entitled "The Light of Kailash". The author of the article, Adriano Clemente pointed out that "The Necklace of Zi" has been translated into English rather than "The Necklace of Jewels" and that the entire three volume history of Zhang-Zhung is entitled "The Light of Kailash", not only the first volume.

* In the page 1 article on H.H. Penor Rinpoche's visit to Merigar, he gave the oral transmission of only the essential text, not the entire text, of the Konchok Jidus.

* Shang Shung Editions

1st level text is available only to people who have passed the exam.

* Stephen Goodman's article on Jigme Lingpa: Do Grubchen Rinpoche was a "noted Golok master" not Geluk master. Our apologies.

From the depth of my heart to my mother



Written for his mother in Lhasa by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu at the age of 19, this text is a real direct introduction to the state of Dzogchen: it contains fundamental instructions which are indispensable for whoever wishes to approach the essence of his or her own mind.

Contains a photo of the Master with his family in the late 50s.

Available from Shang Shung Edizioni, 58031 Arcidosso for 25.000 It. Lire or from Shang Shung Editions, Conway, Mass., USA for US \$ 20.

Shang-Shung Institute

Merigar's Multimedia Archives

by Mauro Nascari and Alex Siedlecki

The Multimedia Archives at Merigar which contains almost 20,000 documents including books and audio, video and photographic material was created from the collection of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and personal donations from the international Dzogchen Community, and the Shang-Shung Institute.

Many of these documents are the only copies of the teaching of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and other masters (the teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu were first recorded in 1976). Besides these documents there are many others related to various aspects of Tibetan culture such as history, art, medicine, astrology etc., which belong to the Shang-Shung Institute. During the passage of time this material has been conserved in different places by Community people or members of the Institute who have guaranteed its conservation. However, the increase in the number of documents now makes it necessary to create some order to this material of which neither a catalogue or an inventory has been made (with the exception of a partial video inventory). For this reason, the Dzogchen Community and in particular the Gakyil of Merigar and the Shang-Shung Institute have decided to create the Multimedia Archives of Merigar consisting of the: text library, tape library, video archive and photographic archive. It will be our goal to create a unified digital catalogue of these archives.

The general aims of the Archives are:

1) to preserve the documents in order to guarantee their use for future generations. At least one copy of each document will be made since the library and the tapes are subject to the law of impermanence. Ideally copies would be sent to the other Community Gars in order to prevent any final loss due to unexpected events such as fire or theft. There remains to be resolved the means to be used. From our research over the last six months we have determined that CD and CD-ROM offer the best medium archiving these various collections based on factors such as: cost, accessibility, flexibility, multimediality (the possibility to transfer various types of documents) and durability.

2) to make documents available to international Community practitioners, Tibetologists and scholars. This means that documents must be easily traceable for which purpose an inventory first must be made of each document so that they are numbered and then catalogued by author, title and subject according to international library norms (ISBD) and by means of international systems (Dewey, Library of Congress etc.). Besides this a consultation service will be set up to include loans (where possible), photocopies, duplication etc.

3) to increase the wealth of documents regarding the Dzogchen teaching and Tibetan culture in general in order to give greater prestige to the Archives (with the

aim of receiving external funding). This is to be implemented through acquisition, donations or exchanges with other libraries.

4) to encourage exchange of



documents with other Gars, Tibetan libraries or media libraries using new technology such as INTERNET and limited distribution of digital disks (CD-ROM). Since the Archives in Merigar are situated in an isolated area, the use of modern technology will make teaching documents more easily available to distant practitioners and permit Tibetologists around the world to consult texts that are not found in other places, to act as a "bridge" between the various seats of the international Dzogchen Community and be a means to acquire new documents rapidly and relatively economically.

The work of the library, still in the "embryonic" stage, consists of creating an inventory of the documents in the library and the tape library and working on the various projects with the aim of receiving essential financial help from local authorities, private sponsors, and from international institutions such as the EEC and UNESCO.

The Shang-Shung Institute is drawing up a programme of general development for the Archives called "Tibetan Digital Archive" (T.D.A.) which consists of the following projects:

- a) conserving audio tapes at risk (audio library)
- b) digital inventory (library)
- c) scanning Tibetan texts (library)
- d) thanka on CD-ROM (photographic archive of Tibetan art collections)
- e) video duplication (video archive)

Tape library - project for conserving tapes at risk

The whole tape library at Merigar is, without doubt, of inestimable value for practitioners of the international Dzogchen Community. It contains about 4,000 audio tapes made from 1976 up to today, most of which are live recordings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu made during retreats, practices, talks and conferences around the world. A smaller but also important section of the tapes are recordings of teachings given by other masters, such as H. H. the Dalai Lama at Merigar and other places. Other tapes are recordings of Conferences on Tibetan medicine, Yantra Yoga, rituals and music from Tibet, etc.

A few months ago the tape library moved from its former space in the Yellow House to its new office at the "Capannone". At the moment,

besides the work of making an inventory and catalogue of the archives, recording retreats and conferences and operating sales of recordings to people of the Community, the most urgent problem is that of preserving the tapes, in many cases the only copies of the live voice of Rinpoche giving teachings. Our consideration is not only to preserve the tapes for ten or twenty years but as long as possible for the benefit of future generations of practitioners. This means protecting the recordings (usually made on C90 magnetic tapes), in order to prevent normal deterioration by preserving them in a correct environment and making copies before the period of demagnetisation arrives, 5 years from the date of registration. All the tapes recorded between 1976 and 1990 (around 500 tapes) are at risk. However to make copies of about 2,500 master tapes every five years involves a great deal of work and high costs and with this in mind we have chosen to use CD's (compact discs) which will give greater durability (40 to 50 years) to the recordings, save labor, maintain the quality of the recording even after many copies and give resistance to magnetic fields, temperature changes and humidity. The tapes that are at risk (those recorded between 1976-1990) will be put on CD's after which the operation will be extended to the entire collection. Tapes whose sound quality have been particularly damaged will be put on DAT tapes for the time being so that in future the sound can be cleaned with the appropriate software. The tape library needs also appropriate equipment to keep the temperature and humidity constant. In the near future the digitalization of the documents will be extended to manuscripts and rare texts in the library as well as video and photographic documents. In order to implement this project the Institute has recently bought a Macintosh "Power PC" 7100 AV which will enable the Institute to carry out all the above mentioned projects. We are now beginning a fund raising drive for the purchase of a CD-R (CD Recordable drive).

The work of dubbing the tapes for preservation purposes is extremely urgent. This, of course, involves a great deal of working and financial commitment for which we ask collaboration of everybody. Whoever is interested in the project can contact the following for more details and budget information:

Telephone: 0039 564 966940
Merigar Archives 0039 564 966941
Shang-Shung Institute Secretary
Fax: 564 966846, EMAIL
10043.1433@COMPUSERVE.COM

If you would like to collaborate financially, please use a postal money order paid to the order of:

Istituto Shang-Shung, Via degli Olmi 1, 58031 Arcidosso GR, Italy
OR for an International Bank Wire
Swift to Istituto Shang-Shung acct. #
412296 Monte di Paschi di Siena,
Arcidosso Branch, Swift#: PASCITMM

An Australian's Pilgrimage to Merigar

by Elisabeth Stutchbury

Mid-Summer at Merigar - and things are cooking...

The afternoon is hot. I am sitting at a computer which has been set up at one end of the pleasant but warm veranda on the top floor of the Yellow House. At the other end of the room two women are sewing *lung ta* (prayer flags) - blue, white, yellow, red, and green - onto rope. Downstairs others are cleaning the toilets and the children's room. Some of the children, including my daughter Erin Tara, are helping by washing the tables which have been taken outside. One woman would like to paint lotuses on the walls of the children's room and is searching for the stencils which were used in the gonpa. I have tidied the room where many of these things are stored and I can show her the whereabouts of the tracings, but we do not know where the cardboard stencils are.

One or two people continue to work in the office which is not so busy today. There are phone calls, faxes, and visitors to be shown around. Earlier in the week the notices about Penor Rinpoche's forthcoming retreat had to be put in envelopes, addressed, stamped, and mailed, a few extra people came to help. Outside, there is the never-ending task of the garden - weeding, pruning and watering, and also many other projects to be completed before the forthcoming retreat.

A number of people have been involved for many months in painting the Gonpa, the principal building at Merigar. It has a copper dome roof and glass walls, built precisely according to the Master's vision. Now the paintings of the lineage masters from all the traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, which adorn the walls, are being photographed.

This is Sunday afternoon, karma yoga at Merigar. At 19.00 there is a practice in the Capannone, a few minutes walk down the hill. About a dozen people gather to do the *Tun Drin* and *Jod*. Afterward, four of us dance on the beautiful mandala painted on the floor. On the previous evening about forty or fifty members of International Dzogchen Community had gathered together for a *Gana Puja*, and at 3.30 that morning several practitioners were celebrating Guru Rinpoche's birthday with a practice coordinated internationally to coincide with 8.00 in Oddiyana, the birthplace of Padmasambhava.

The ebb and flow of life at Merigar. I have been here now for eleven days. I am at home. It has taken me ten years to make this journey. Italy is really a long way from Australia, and the opportunity and means for travel did not arise before. Now I am here to offer my services to the Shang-Shung Institute and to ASIA. I hope the skills I have learned in my academic training as an anthropologist may be of some assistance. Although contact has been

made by letters over the years, time in Merigar - actually meeting and talking with people - may enhance the potentiality and possibility of future collaboration. This time at Shang Shung Institute is part of my research project (studying Dzogchen philosophy and social processes) in a three year Post-Doctoral Fellowship from the Australian National University in Canberra, Australia, where I live with my six year old daughter. At least this is the outer manifestation of the journey to Merigar.



An ocean view from Namgyalgar

I also involve myself with other activities, for I can sweep and wash floors just as well (perhaps even better!) as I can write and carry out intellectual activities. I feel I am learning and experiencing in quite an intense way these days. I am aware of the process we have just begun in Australia with the recent purchase of a very wild and natural piece of land on the south coast of New South Wales - Namgyalgar, the Victorious Gar.

The inner meaning of my travels and this sojourn to Merigar is that of a pilgrimage. I have come to a very special place to experience, to be transformed, and to integrate my learning. I have come to a place inspired and created by my Master, Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. This story is about some of my experiences with the Dzogchen transmission and teachings coming to Australia, brought by our Master, and about the Gars, particularly Merigar. I hope it will be of some interest to others in our Community.

The Dzogchen Transmission Comes to Australia

Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche came to Australia for the first time, early in 1985 I met him then. Several days of teaching in Sydney's Chinatown were followed by a retreat on the north coast of New South Wales, at Mullumbimby. It was a wonderful time with many hours of teaching, transmission and practice, as well as talking and laughing with Rinpoche.

There were only twenty-five or so people at the retreat, and the teachings were interspersed with swimming in the beautiful, blue Pacific Ocean. It was very hot, and we integrated with the elements, diving under the water and listening to the messages that Rinpoche communicated to us. A couple had offered their place for this

retreat, and accommodated Rinpoche in their house. Everyone else camped, and between us we organized our meals, shopped and cooked. In fact, we manifested everything we needed to be there with Rinpoche, for there was little provision for our needs apart from the land itself - which was beautiful and quiet - and the presence of the master.

Rinpoche spoke to us of Merigar, which he had begun to establish with the assistance of the International Dzogchen Community - people from Italy and other parts of Europe, and also the United States. Rinpoche's vision, and Merigar - the Fire Mountain Gar - became a strong inspiration. We understood that in order to do the retreats both in a group receiving teachings from Rinpoche, or together with our Vajra brothers and sisters, or individually - in order to gain stability in our practice

that we could be greatly benefited if we created a place dedicated to the Dzogchen teachings. Such a place could be modelled on Merigar, which in turn is inspired by the gars (sgar), the communities of lay spiritual practitioners that had gathered around masters in Tibet.

Rinpoche talked about his master Changchub Dorje, the practitioners who lived near him in East Tibet and the auspicious and beneficial environment they created for integrating the teachings into their daily lives. He also told us how for a long time he had taught in people's houses, and how the community members practised together, moving between people's houses. This way the problems associated with a center (where people lived, somewhat like a commune) could be lessened, and with awareness avoided by putting the transmission and teaching of Dzogchen into practice.

Retreat in Namgyalgar with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

From December 26 to January 1

Because the retreat is being held in the peak holiday season accommodation other than camping will be extremely limited. If at all possible please plan to camp, either on Namgyalgar itself or in a camping ground in the neighborhood. For the period of the retreat we have booked a very limited amount of accommodation in cabins at Wallaga Lake. Houses are virtually unavailable at this time.

The cost of the retreat, very roughly, will be about \$55-\$80/day, inclusive of accommodation, varying according to whether you are camping or in a cabin and whether catered or not. In the weeks before Christmas accommodation is not so limited. From the last week of January and at the time of *Santi Maha Sangha* exam (February 2nd) and training, there will be plenty of accommodation of all kinds. If you need a cabin contact either Lynne Geary in Australia Tel. 06 2825176 or fax 06 2827117, Helen Williams, tel. 02 5646306, or Jean MacKintosh fax 044 737139.

After the retreat there will be Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance courses.

Rinpoche's Retreat House on Namgyalgar

A report from the Australians at Merigar

by Catherine Simmonds and Elisabeth Stutchbury

After the long winter, and well into the northern summer, Rinpoche returned to Merigar with the news of his schedule preceeding him. For those of us visiting Merigar from Australia, this news was a delightful shock!

Rinpoche will be in Australia in December, and after the first teaching retreat (December 26 to January 1), Rinpoche will enter a personal retreat which is part of his process of healing. Early in February, the Base level exam for *Santi Maha Sangha* will be conducted, followed by a First Level Training Retreat. Rinpoche will then continue his personal retreat, staying "until the weather changes." In 1994, when Rinpoche was last in Australia, the retreat was held near Namgyalgar over the Easter period. At that time the weather was pleasant, and people were swimming in the lake and the ocean. Circumstances change, particularly the weather, and autumn may come early next year. We must now create the auspicious circumstances for Rinpoche to remain in retreat on Namgyalgar for as long as he wishes, maybe a few months.

Namgyalgar is a very special place, on the slopes of the mountain Gulaga, which is recognised by the Aboriginal people as an important 'sacred site' on the east coast of Australia. The land is very wild and natural, and some of the trees higher up are pristine. They have never been cut. Other parts are regrowth forest and some area is cleared. The water in the creek is not polluted. Such a place can really provide a wonderful environment for Rinpoche to heal and recover. In order to create the necessary auspicious circumstances and conditions, the most important project that faces the Community is the building of a small retreat house for Rinpoche. Since the news of Rinpoche's request reached us, we have been busy making plans, holding meetings, sending faxes to Australia and to Tsegvalgar, and international phone calls. In Australia everyone is engaged with discussions and practice. Regular Gana Pujas are being held to create the cause that will manifest a miracle on Namgyalgar. In a very short period of time we will design, obtain the necessary permits and build a small retreat house for Rinpoche.

Rinpoche has been very encouraging, and in the two meetings we have had with him we have been able to clarify many issues. Before he left the United States, Rinpoche asked two members of the Tsegvalgar Community, Jim Smith and Joe Zurylo, (both of whom have extensive experience in building for the community) if they would come to Australia to assist us. Both have graciously accepted. We are delighted at the enthusiasm and co-operation which helps us build the confidence that we need to move ahead. Jim and Verena Smith recently visited Merigar and we were able to discuss many aspects of this project together. We communicated back and forth with Australia where the plans for the retreat house are nearing completion, ready for submission to the local council.

Rinpoche has precisely located the place where we are to build this cabin. It is a few minutes walk above the coral tree, with flaming red flowers and a hollow trunk - "a good place for meditation" (see photograph). We held a communal picnic and performed sang purification there in 1994. On Rinpoche's first visit to the land with Fabio and Jean, a small offering was made near the large rock at this site. It is here the cabin will be built so that from his room Rinpoche can look out, over the land, to Wallaga Lake and the Pacific Ocean.

This retreat house for Rinpoche is important not only for the growth and development of Namgyalgar, but in general for the International Dzogchen Community. Rinpoche's health and Long Life are essential for all of us in order that we may receive the transmission and precious teachings, a gift beyond value which Rinpoche continually offers to us.

The support from the international community has been wonderful, and we offer thanks and appreciation to the Gakyil of Merigar for their kind donation, and to the Gakyil of Tsegvalgar for their loan. We anticipate that the cost of the house will be in the vicinity of A\$50,000. Already about a half of this has been pledged. We call now for collaboration - either in the form of donations

or in labor, - in order that we can ensure the completion of this house in time for Rinpoche's arrival in December.

Donations can be made by International draft/cheque to The Dzogchen Community of Australia (Rinpoche's house), and posted to:

Alathea Vavasour, The Treasurer
The Dzogchen Community of Australia, 170 Albion St. ANNANDALE, NSW, 2038, AUSTRALIA.

Anyone wishing to come to Australia to assist with building Rinpoche's house (and the numerous other forms of Karma Yoga that will be necessary to prepare for the retreat) can contact Lynne Geary, 21 Pope St. Hughes, ACT, 2605, AUSTRALIA. Phone: +61 6 2825176 FAX: +61 6 2827117.

THE WINNER OF THE NAMGYALGAR LOTTERY IS SHIVANI FROM KANAGAWA-KEN, JAPAN.

The retreat with Ontul Rinpoche

This summer at Merigar we were happy to have Ontul Rinpoche and his wife with us once again after their visit of a year ago. They arrived the very same day in which Chögyal Namkhai Norbu returned, making August 17 an even more happy and auspicious day.

Ontul Rinpoche who is from the *Drigung Kagyud* lineage led a retreat of five days during which he gave explanations based on a text of Jamgon Kongtrul's called "The fundamental points in the generation and completion stages" (*Lam zhugs kyi gang zag las dang po pa la phan pa'i bskyed rdzogs kyi gnad bsdu*), instructions on the key points of the tantric practices of *kyedrim* and *dzogrim*. The teachings were given in a joyful and relaxed atmosphere and went deeply into some of the theoretical aspects of tantric practice as well as fundamental points of the meaning of the natural state of illumination according to the vision of Mahamudra and of Dzogchen.

The most intense moment was the afternoon during which Ontul Rinpoche gave an initiation of Milarepa (*rJe btsun bzhad pa rdo rje'i dbang*) which he himself had received from Kalu Rinpoche. Divided in two parts the first 'common' and the second 'not common', this initiation gave an opportunity to observe the particular characteristics of the four potentialities of the *anuttaratantra* as they have been transmitted within the *Kagyudpa* lineage since the time of Naropa and Marpa up to today.

The retreat was brief but intense, enlivened by the warmth and congeniality of Ontul Rinpoche and his wife, Tashi Drolma, who with great modesty helped to explain several difficult points during the translation of the teachings.

When they left, all those present said their goodbyes with the wish that Ontul Rinpoche's visit to Merigar would not be overlooked during his annual tour of Europe.

A heartfelt thanks for your kindness and generosity and may we meet again soon.



MARIO MAGLIETTI

Dance of the Vajra Course

by Renata Chiesa

More than ten days on the Mandala of the Dance of the Vajra with teachers Prima Mai and Adriana dal Borgo. This wonderful opportunity was offered to two crowded groups of beginners and "advanced" students at Merigar who alternated on the portable Mandala in the Gonpa and the Mandala in the Capannone.

We asked some questions to the two teachers who followed both groups. "Do you have any suggestions for organising future courses?"

Prima Mai replies that it would be opportune, especially for the "advanced" students many of whom are learning the part of the Dance for the opposite sex, to organise a week of retreat next summer at the various Gars, alternating various Tuns of Dance practices with other practices to be suggested by Rinpoche.

Regarding the courses for beginners Adriana dal Borgo suggests that it would be a good idea to separate the two courses dedicated to the first and second halves of the Dance by fifteen days or a month with a commitment on the part of the practitioners to follow both parts of the course so that the groups would be at the same level.

Adriana recalls that the study of the Dance requires sacrifice, patience, space and time to practice and to learn the steps. There is no need to learn it in a hurry, but to repeat it frequently and even to simply observe the teachers and other practitioners when they dance. She underlined the importance of learning to relate to and harmonise with one's Vajra brothers and sisters on the Mandala.

On this topic Prima Mai observed that because of distraction, we often forget that the Dance of the Vajra is a practice like any other, governed by the Three Sacred Fundamentals and that the Mandala is a truly sacred space. It is better not to joke, chat or walk on the Mandala without having the presence that we are in a sacred place.

Prima Mai confirmed how, from the beginning, this practice has been of great benefit both at the personal level for individual practitioners and for the entire Community.

We would like to thank the teachers for dedicating much of their time to this long course and, of course, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu for transmitting, with great kindness, this practice of rare beauty and infinite benefit for all of us.

"... the Dance becomes the cause for radiating the light of wisdom. Practitioners of Atiyoga, applying in particular the Dance of the Vajra, purify the impurities of the material elements of their bodies and bring the Dimension of the Body of Pure Light to maturity..." from *The Precious Light - The symbolic manifestation of the Dance of the Vajra which liberates the six classes of beings in the six pure dimensions*. by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

Yantra Yoga course

by Renata Chiesa

The two weeks of the Yantra Yoga retreat had principally three functions:

- to co-ordinate those who already teach Yantra Yoga;
- to give the possibility to those who already have basic knowledge of Yantra but who live in countries where there are no teachers to deepen their knowledge so that they can guide Yantra practice in their area;
- to develop the practice for all those who wish to continue to follow Yantra Yoga.

Fabio Andrico and Laura Evangelisti worked patiently and devotedly to realize these three objectives.

The sixty participants who came from all over the world deepened their knowledge of the *ngondro*: the 9 breathings, the *tsijong*, the *lungsang* and *tsadul*, the 25 positions of the five groups with some variations, the breathing of the first three groups, the 7 lotuses and the wave of the vajra.

Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo gave some explanations from a commentary on the text of the four medical tantra pointing out the way *lung* functions in relationship to one's health and in the arising of illnesses and hence its importance in Yantra Yoga in order to cure disturbances. Laura Evangelisti read about the benefits of all the movements, positions and breathings from a text by Vairocana which contains an accurate explanation of how the movements of Yantra Yoga function in a medical context.

During the retreat the need for collaboration in the economic field was discussed in order that Vairocana's text on *pranayama* and yantra with Rinpoche's commentary

could finally be published in Western languages. Adriano Clemente, who has almost finished translation of the text, gave some explanations and clarifications on the relationship between Yantra Yoga and tantra and in particular on the value of the Yantra Yoga transmitted by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and on its particularities in respect to the various tantric traditions of yoga. It was transmitted orally by the practitioners of the "vajra bridge" of the Dzogchen *longde* and has reached us due to the clarity and precision with which the Master has practiced it and with the help of notes collected during his youth when he received the teaching mainly from his uncle Orgyen Tenzin, a great yogi and disciple of Adzam Drugpa, who realised the Body of Light.

For this reason Yantra Yoga is of fundamental importance to the practitioners of the Dzogchen Community and since it is a complete teaching in itself, it can bring

one to real knowledge of one's state. Because it is a profound and secret teaching Fabio and Laura strongly underlined the importance of applying it precisely and correctly and the necessity not to confuse it with other types of yoga or practice. Above all the person who co-ordinates and guides the practice in their own country and city has the responsibility to safeguard the completeness of this teaching and this is why it is indispensable for them to receive authorization and the Teaching Diploma directly from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

Based on their experience the teachers made it clear that to teach is a service for the Community and not a privilege and that a limited and co-ordinated number of teachers is necessary for the accuracy and the continuation of the transmission.

We hope that this way of spreading the teaching will benefit many people around the world.

MERIGAR PROGRAM AUTUMN-WINTER 1995-96

November 24-26
Yantra Yoga Course
for beginners
Laura Evangelisti

December 12-17
**Teaching retreat with
Tai Situ Rinpoche**
Enrollment fee 250.000 It. Lire
Discounts for members.

December 28-January 4
Practice retreat

SHANG-SHUNG INSTITUTE
Tibetan Course for beginners
begins Nov. 25-26

December 8-10
**Conference with Buriat
Shaman Nadia Stepanova**

December 2-8
Tibetan Medicine Course
Dr. Pasang Yonten
The 6th course in an ongoing
training in Tibetan Medicine

Santi Maha Sangha - October 1995

by Igor Legati

During the warm days of August enriched by the sun and blue sky, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu conferred the first and second levels of the *Santi Maha Sangha*, preceded by their respective exams of the base and first levels. Twice the Yellow House at Merigar was invaded by anxious candidates excitedly waiting their turn. However Rinpoche and his tireless assistants, Adriano Clemente and Jim Valby, eased the atmosphere turning the exam into a short serene interview which was often enlivened with merry laughter.

This time about seventy practitioners took the base level exam although participants in the first level course were more numerous because a group of people who had taken the exam the year before attended. About eighty practitioners passed the first level exam and in the days that followed met in the gonpa to receive transmission and empowerment of the second level. Participants in this course strongly showed the international nature of our Community and in fact the Italians present were in a minority. Besides representation from numerous European countries, this time there was also a large group of Americans.

At the beginning of both courses



Second Level training participants

CHEN GON

Rinpoche said with surprise but also a touch of irony, "How many people there are! I didn't expect so many people." Following this he strongly confirmed on more than one occasion that the *Santi Maha Sangha* is not intended to be an intellectual course of study in which it is enough to commit a book to memory but it is similar to a school of Dzogchen practice in which study is an additional element and in which the criteria of checking is not only the exam but above all the capacity of the practitioner to integrate.

In fact at a certain point when he was commenting on the various signs

of the practice which can arise following meditation, Rinpoche said that one should not fix on the appearance of strange phenomena because the most important sign of the practice is the absence of tensions and attachment and that without these signs all the particular meditative experiences have little value. As long as a practitioner continues to find conflicts with people and with his Vajra brothers and sisters, even if he thinks he is following *Santi Maha Sangha*, in reality he is only fooling himself.

We can never say that the Master hasn't repeated this enough to us!

Overturing samsara

An excerpt from an article by Raimondo Bultrini

September 1995 Retreat with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in Merigar

Overturing samsara, or emptying it. Drying up the great sea of suffering. We begin by turning our gaze towards ourselves, toward our true original nature. For one who is following the path knows the meaning of the symbol of the mirror. The advice of the Master was not to take things too easy. We can give space to ourselves to relax, but always with the increasingly clear awareness of the imminent passing of time and of the impermanence of this illusory body.

This was the message that Chögyal Namkhai Norbu chose to directly communicate to his disciples in the Gonpa of Merigar on his return a year after the onset of the sickness. Five days were concentrated on the profound meaning of the Path of Self-Liberation through the transmission of one of the most important terma received from Changchub Dorje, his root master, belonging to the precious cycle of the *Shitro*, the *Drolwa Drugden Gyüdkyi Nyungpo* (The Essential Tantra of the Six Liberations).

Rinpoche's introduction was an extreme synthesis of method and intelligence beyond any type of intellectual vision, like a perfect

instruction of how to swim in the water of our own state, a plunge into the "dimension of the Nirmanakaya" (to use one of the Master's examples). At the end of one of the more intense days of the retreat a rainbow in the form of a thigle remained suspended, immobile, a semicircle above the Gonpa for a seemingly interminable time. Rinpoche gave the essential information about the tantra, the purity of the lineage of this transmission, from Samantabhadra to Vajrapani, Vajrasattva, Garab Dorje, King Mutritsempo who received it from Padmasambhava right up to Changchub Dorje in our time. Then he explained the meaning of the six liberations through the organs of the senses and the mind and empowered each and every practitioner with the vase initiation. Then he returned again to the meaning of this transmission: the vase is a symbol of the body because, like the vase contains substance, the body contains our potentiality.

For hours while hundreds of people passed in front of him, Rinpoche recited the sacred formula of the empowerment. He clearly wanted to touch the heart of each student so that the meaning of the initiation could directly and simply enter into

the condition of each one. The son of the king discovers to be such only when he is crowned - said the Master. Initiation, like a coronation, opens the potentiality of the practitioner. Now that you are a king, govern yourself. Long, powerful, and direct was the teaching linked to this special tantra whose characteristic is the practice of the 25 thigle, explained one at a time with great simplicity and clarity by Adriano Clemente each afternoon of the retreat and then practised together. The retreat finished with one of the largest ganapujas in the history of Merigar. Rinpoche once again reminded us of the principle of the Teaching. And it was enough to refer to his illness, to the consequences that breaking *samaya* can bring to the Master, to dissolve everything else, problems and paranoia linked to our limited way of seeing the "mandala" of our own condition.

The way in which Rinpoche has faced this year, what other teaching do we need to see with our own eyes the essence of this retreat and of Dzogchen itself? Regarding the Path we should consider ourselves to be like sick people, explain the Masters. The cure is practice. How long this will take depends on the strength of our desire to be cured.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Honored by the Municipality of Arcidosso, Italy

October 23rd, 1995



ARS FOTOGRAFIA

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu was honored during a ceremony at the Comune of Arcidosso on the evening of October 23rd, 1995. Arcidosso, a town in the Tuscan hills, is the home of Merigar, the oldest Gar of the International Dzogchen Community. Rinpoche was honored for his humanitarian commitment and contributions to society and his important function as a bridge between east and west and ongoing activities for the preservation of Tibetan culture.

The Great Stupa at Merigar



On the morning of the third day of the eighth month in the current year of the Wood Boar (October 26, 1995), after a short search in the selected area, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu chose the exact place on which the new stupa of Merigar will be built. Rinpoche led a short ritual of purification and offering on the spot in which several practitioners took part. Afterwards Rinpoche spoke about the project for the stupa, dwelling on some of the details about the structure and the meaning linked to it, the materials to be used for construction and everything that the stupa will contain. In regard to this Rinpoche said that "those who wish to acquire merit can collaborate", and can offer part of their time for preparing *tsa tsa* and other things to be placed within the stupa such as precious stones and other materials and so on.

In the near future another article will be published discussing the exact design which is being prepared on the basis of various sources, more details on the meaning and information about the time period involved and work methods. Rinpoche received a message from the business community of Arcidosso declaring that they are happy to contribute to the creation of the stupa.

In Tibet, a stupa brings prosperity, good health and benefits to all the inhabitants of the area, and in particular to the person to whom it is dedicated. We dedicate this Great Stupa to the long life of our Master, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

Santi Maha Sangha for Children



Rinpoche and the children after the exam

NAOMI ZEITZ

About twenty children participated and passed the exam in the base level *Santi Maha Sangha* for children at Merigar on October 24, 1995. After the exams the Yellow House and surrounding area were filled with laughter and happiness. Each child entered the exam room on the veranda with varying degrees of anticipation and descended the staircase radiant with joy and relief, (just like the adults). Waiting at the bottom were expectant parents, members of the Community and other children cheering and applauding all the participants success and courage.

New Merigar Gakyil Elected

On Sunday October 22nd, a Gakyil meeting was held with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu to elect the new Gakyil. Many people had shown their willingness to serve on the new Gakyil and Rinpoche suggested that the choice of the new Gakyil should be based on three factors: patience, the capacity to communicate and collaborate and the amount of time available. Following his suggestion a type of self-evaluation took place among the candidates which turned out to be quite amusing and, at length, the new Gakyil was formed:

Blue: Francoise Van den Berg, Elisa Copello, Igor Legati (Vice President)
Yellow: Giovanni Boni (President), Pia Bramezza, Renata Chiesa
Red: Franco Branca, Felice Storgato, Michele Mastromauro
Gekos: Giorgio Dall'Orto.

During the meeting Rinpoche took the opportunity to clarify his ideas on activities at Merigar, on the Gakyil and the various organisations linked

to it. First of all, he underlined the importance of Merigar as the centre of the mandala on the European continent because it is here at Merigar that he has dedicated so much time, energy and concrete work for the entire Community. He expressed his concern about losing the real meaning of the principle of the Teaching which is to unify and collaborate (the function of the centre of the mandala), giving space, instead, to bureaucracy, hierarchy and control. In particular these risks can become concrete if one considers A.S.I.A., the Shang-Shung Institute, The Mirror, etc. to be something separate from Merigar or the Community. He also suggested, as a general policy, to manage everything in the simplest way, reducing costs as much as possible, and to reinvest our income in our priority activities such as translation of the teachings etc.

Later in the meeting Rinpoche spoke about the continuing problem

of internal communication in the Community. Since any person who has received teaching is "the Community", all the different working groups of people are internal and should collaborate and communicate. The real reason that we do not communicate in this age of the telephone, fax etc., is our egoism and arrogance. Without meeting and speaking together it is impossible to know what others are doing and to explain what we are doing or thinking.

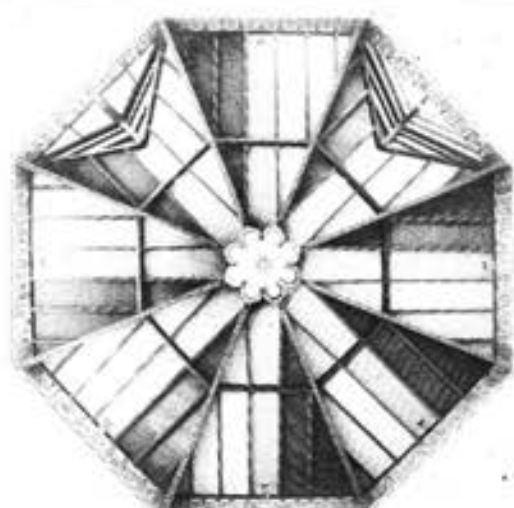
Rinpoche then addressed the new members of the Gakyil saying that working on the Gakyil was a type of offering which one dedicates because there is a lot of work to do even though the work is unpaid. Since they are representatives of the Community they should be present about what they do or say and have a great deal of patience, time and ability to communicate. If one is lacking in these qualities they should work in order to improve them.

Conference on Early Terma

Tsegyalgar

by Steven Goodman

On October 13-15, 1995 under the auspices of Amherst College and the Religion Department, Professor Janet Gyatso organized a small conference on "Issues in the Study of Early Terma", which was held in the Conway School facilities, graciously overseen by Ernie Renner, the gekos, with the generous help and good cheer of Patricia Shahan. The participants were: Janet Gyatso, Amherst College; Matthew Kapstein, Columbia University; Anne Klein, Rice University; David Germano, University of Virginia; Ronald Davidson, Fairfield University; Steven Goodman, Institute of Buddhist Studies Berkeley, and Jake Dalton, a graduate student at University of Michigan. The primary focus of discussions was the quintessential teachings (*snying-thig*) of the upadesha division (*man ngag sde*) of rDzogs-chen as found in the "*Snying thig ya bzhi*" collected by Klong chen pa (1308-1363). The participants were housed and fed at the School in such a low-key and supportive way, that maximal time could be spent undistractedly on discussions-doctrinal, historical, and methodological. Thank you Ernie for providing such a good space.



TEMPLE OF THE GREAT LIBERATION

The gonpa at Merigar, calligraphy by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. This poster is available from Merigar. Please send International money order in It. Lira or Eurocheque for 15.000 It. Lira to Merigar, 58031 Arcidosso, GR.

The Hawaiian Island Lottery

For a new Dance mandala

First Prize: A trip from anywhere in the world to the Kona coast of the Island of Hawaii for the Dzogchen retreat of your choice. Meals, lodging, a flower lei greeting and limo' pick up at the airport included. Possible retreats the winner may attend include:

- A Mandarava retreat with Tsaltrum Allione in March, 1996.
- The inauguration of the new dance mandala with Prima Mai. A Vajra Dance retreat during the last two weeks of February, 1996.
- A retreat or visit of your choice in Hawaii.

Both retreats will be held at Paleaku Gardens on the Kona coast of the Big Island of Hawaii. A swimming excursion with the dolphins, whales and/or turtles is also part of the package.

Second Prize: An exquisite Chinese jade carving.

Third Prize: 10 pounds of organic, sun dried, high mountain, estate packaged Kona coffee.

Fourth Prize: A large bouquet of Tropical Hawaiian flowers.

Fifth Prize: A large Hawaiian grown coconut.

Tickets \$50 each. The winner will be drawn at the 1996 Australian Dzogchen retreat. Winners need not be present to guarantee their prize.

Contact: Susan Indich, 129 Kaelepulu Drive, Kailua, Kau. HI 96734-3, Hawaii 96734 USA. Telephone: 001 808 2613496

Courses in Hawaii

Vajra Dance with Prima Mai: March 1 to 7

Tsaltrum Allione leading a Mandarava retreat: March 8 to 10

The retreats will be held at Paleaku Peace Garden, 83-5401 Painted Church Rd., Captain Cook, HI 96704. Call for reservation (808) 328 8084 or (808) 328 9533.

At the end of August, a Yantra Yoga retreat was held in Merigar. The primary purpose of this course was to help those who have had long experience doing Yantra to update their understanding of the movements according to the original text by Vairocana and the commentary by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and to permit those who teach or aspire to teach Yantra to present the movements in a uniform manner.

During that period, two important issues were discussed. The first was related to the way to maintain the pure transmission of the Yantra Yoga teaching, and the second concerned the publication of the long awaited Yantra Yoga book.

The concern about the transmission of Yantra Yoga arises from recent developments in several countries, in which many self-proclaimed Yantra Yoga teachers have been giving courses. For example, in the United States, a person who has only been to one teaching retreat course organized by the Community is allegedly offering "an advanced course for teachers of Yantra Yoga". In France, a few people have held public Yantra Yoga courses after learning it second or third hand from some members of the Dzogchen Community.

In order to make sure that this precious teaching will not be easily corrupted by opportunists who have no regard for the principle of transmission, it has been proposed that an international Yantra Yoga Association be set up so that only teachers approved by the Association are considered properly authorized.

To make sure that this type of association can work correctly in all countries where members of the Community live, a volunteer from each country has been asked to investigate and report back on how this idea can be carried out.

Early indications show that the

Yantra Yoga

by Cheh Goh

best way to continue is probably to establish a national association under the umbrella of the local Dzogchen Community, whereby the international Yantra Yoga Association's rules and code of conduct will be adopted where necessary to make it legal in the country of operation.

With regard to the publication of the book, a general consensus has been reached. There should initially be a "complete version", comprising the original Tibetan text with commentary, detailed line drawings and photographs, medical benefits and complete references to scriptures. Once it is available, we can publish other variations of the book targeted at different types of consumers: a "coffee table" version, a concise version, etc.

Due to the complex nature of this publication, it has been decided that we will need a steering group of a few permanent people who will be responsible for very specific aspects of the project. Each of them will be responsible for a working group which carries out the tasks. The steering group, limited to three to five people to ensure efficiency, must meet regularly and communicate with all the necessary people. They will be expected to see all necessary administration through to the completion of the "complete version".

The work areas identified so far include:

- (1) co-ordination of translation from Italian into English as well as other languages;
- (2) photographs and line drawings;

(3) general layout and overall editorial;

(4) publisher/distributor administration;

(5) fund raising.

One of the main tasks is the line drawings, which is the key to illustrate the principles of Yantra Yoga. As a first step, we call upon all artists in the Community who are interested in participating in this project to enter a "competition", both to design a layout based on Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's idea and to present appropriate drawings. The successful entries will lead to the artists being contracted to provide appropriate illustrations. Ideally the line drawing artist should know Yantra, or work very closely with a practitioner who knows Yantra well. In this way, we hope to tap the resources of the Community for their valuable collaboration.

If you would like to take part, please use the "Camel" of the first group of Yantra as an example, and suggest concretely how best to present the Tibetan text, the translation of the text, the commentary by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, benefits associated with Yantra, drawing/photographic presentation of the movements, as well as the association of the rhythm in the breathing.

Send the entries to Merigar, attention: Laura Evangelisti (Yantra Yoga book).

If you feel that you can contribute to the publication financially, you can send money directly to the following account:

Raiffeisen bank of Ilz, Austria
Name: Oster. Dzogchen-gemeinschaft, Number: 30387, Bank code: 38151

The person responsible for the account is Oliver F. Leick.

If you would like to help in any way, please contact either Laura Evangelisti c/o Merigar or Cheh Goh by e-mail (cng@hplb.hpl.hp.com).

A Practice Retreat of the Dance of the Vajra

by Julia Ann Donoho

"One sounds slowly the A: the sound begins very low, like it is coming from far away, then slowly, slowly one augments the intensity. One brings the hands to the navel and then slowly, with the palms turned inward, one opens the arms up to the height of the shoulders, extending and rotating the palms upwards.

This movement symbolizes that all vision manifests as an ornament of the state of rigpa and whether it is the vision or the state of rigpa, in the non-dual state, it is all integrated in the state of total contemplation." from *La Luce Preziosa*

I have a picture of myself from the summer of 1992, standing at twilight at Merigar. Tsaltrum Allione was leading us in a retreat at the Villa Gaia and we came over to Merigar to learn a little about the Dance of the Vajra. Adriana showed us some of the steps of the Dance of the Three Vajras. We were quite impressed and some of us did not want to leave. I keep this photo in my practice book still because in it I see my heart open and radiating joy. This is an experience I continue to have as I learn and practice the Dance of the Vajra.

Since that summer of 1992, I have had many occasions to learn and practice the Dance of the Vajra so that this summer, after Prima Mai came to Tara Mandala to teach us, I had the idea that I would like to do a retreat where I just practice. Like one might do a retreat of Tara or Vajrapani, I decided to do a retreat of

the Dance of the Vajra. In June, I sent a message to Lidian King that I would like to do an eight day retreat and inquired if the yurt in Santa Fe might be available. She replied in the affirmative and I set a date for late September.

I structured my retreat simply. In the mornings I began with a Tun practice and then I did the three dances in the part of the *pamo* (female). During the day I did about 20 repetitions of each of the steps of the Dance of the Song of the Vajra, doing the steps of the *pamo* before lunch and the steps of the *pavo* (male) after lunch. As I did the repetitions, I reviewed the instructions for each step from my notes, from Prima Mai's graphic indications of where to point the feet and from the instructions in *La Luce Preziosa*. I ended each day by doing the three dances in the part of the *pavo*, some Protector practices, the Long Life prayer for Rinpoche and the Dedications.

What I garnered from this retreat was a real sense of the effects of the various movements on the body. When we do the steps correctly there is no thought involved, the dance very precisely leads us from one step to the next just as the Song of the Vajra does. If we try to think what is the next step we lose our place. The more precisely we learn the dance, the more respect we have for its precision and the more we understand how imprecise we are.

The dance takes us out of our intellectual mind and brings us into

our body. In a sense one can feel the cells of the body entering the state of rigpa as one dances and sings the Song of the Vajra and the mind lets go of concepts. As our body becomes aware, it also liberates from concepts and releases emotions in a very powerful way. By the time I arrived at my last day of retreat, doing repetitions of RA RA RA, I was experiencing profound joy and compassion in body, speech and mind. Truly, I was in a state of bliss.

What I would like to leave you with is a sense of the importance of doing the Dance of the Vajra as a practice, for both men and women. It is not something that we only need to do when one of the teachers come to give us a retreat. As we trust ourselves and our bodies to do the dance without a teacher around, we enter into the dance as a practice for ourselves. The more that we practice, the more we secure this terma on the earth in this time. Also, if there is benefit to the earth, it only comes if we do the practice.

I am just a beginner in the Dzogchen practices and very humbled by the awesomeness of these teachings. I feel showered with a rain of blessings to have been able to receive these teachings in this lifetime, and for me the Dance of the Vajra is clearly a path. Doing a retreat such as this has only increased my respect for Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. He is truly a treasure.

May the glorious feet of this guru remain firm upon the earth!

Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo in the Black Forest, Germany

by Matthias Winter



MATTHIAS WINTER

During her stay in the Black Forest area in Germany, Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo gave a talk on Tibetan medicine in Freiburg. The event was organized by Martha Heinen under the patronage of the Shang-Shung Institute. The subject of Dr. Phuntsog's talk was "Mental and karmic diseases in Tibetan medicine". About eighty people attended and showed great interest. They were not only

interested in the talk, but also in the person and life history of Dr. Phuntsog. Dr. Phuntsog not only spoke about medicine, but made clear that the Tibetan medical system cannot be considered separately from the Buddhist teaching. Particularly in respect to mental disease she said, "The mind causes mental disease which means that it cannot be cured only by medicine. Mind can only be cured by mind."

All of those who attended the talk were touched by the calm, kind and concise manner of Dr. Phuntsog. Since the Tibetan translator was unable to participate in translating the talk, Dr. Phuntsog spoke in Italian with Martha Heinen translating.

The following three days Dr. Phuntsog gave consultations in Freiburg where interest in Tibetan medicine is strong. At a later date, while she was giving an introduction to Tibetan medicine to a study group, Dr. Phuntsog made clear how necessary it is for a general diagnosis that the doctor ask many questions of the patient.

During her stay, Dr. Phuntsog was the embodiment of a doctor who acts for the benefit of her patients rather than with the motivation to make money or to become famous. All those who consulted her were satisfied and one of the most frequently questions was, "When are you coming back?"

During her stay at Saifli in the Black Forest, Dr. Phuntsog was also invited to Furtwangen to give a talk about her work situation as a doctor near Derge, which was once the capital of east Tibet. She recounted how she was the only doctor in a huge area populated by about five thousand people, some of whom live in villages, while the rest are nomads. Home visits to patients who are severely ill must be undertaken on foot, by horse, or even hitch-hiking to remote areas which can take a half a day or longer. While she is gone her patients wait at her clinic until she returns.

Derge is about 80km away, about two days travel. There is a hospital there, but it is difficult for patients to get there and they must wait about four days if they send to the hospital for medical assistance, in which case help often arrives too late.

At the clinic she usually sees between 50-100 patients every day. In general they are not able to pay for the treatment as they are poor farmers or nomads with little money. For this reason Dr. Phuntsog returns to Lhasa each winter to work there to sustain herself for the rest of the year, and to get money to buy medicine for her patients. The 1,800km journey takes 8-10 days on the back of a truck. Since there is no school in the Derge area Dr. Phuntsog also works as a teacher, teaching about 50 children, some of whom live at her house.

Dr. Phuntsog's listeners were deeply moved by her description of the situation and had a lot of questions such as what is happening now in her village since she is not there. She replied, "There is no doctor." There was a question about medical help during childbirth. "These things don't exist", she explained. Women who already have some experience help out and there is also some medicine to make the birth more easy. The infant mortality rate at birth in Tibet is quite low. After the talk there was a spontaneous collection to buy a jeep for Dr. Phuntsog to support her in her work in Tibet.

Fundraising for A.S.I.A. in Nuremberg, Germany

by Helmut Smrcek

As part of our wedding festivities, which took place from Friday, August 4th until Sunday, August 6th, 1995, my wife Nane and I held an auction to benefit A.S.I.A. In the invitation to our wedding we asked every guest to bring a special object to be auctioned. Many things arrived, from a beautiful piece of crystal to a pair of Bavarian leather trousers.

On Saturday afternoon three of our guests, at our request, started the auction and were very skillful at the art of auctioneering. They were even able to procure more than 100 marks (around 65 US dollars) for three rusty and empty tins of famous German cookies called *Lebkuchen*. Finally, after more than 2 hours, everything was sold and we had about 1200 marks, which is around 900 US Dollars. All in all, it was a joyful and profitable event.

Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche in Tashigar

by Analia Falcon and Laura Yoffe

It was late in April of 1995 when Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche (a Dzogchen Master of the *Nyingmapa* lineage) came to Argentina for the first time. A group of practitioners, who had met him at his Teachings in Buenos Aires, had invited him to Tashigar on his next visit to Argentina. Later, it was arranged that he would come to Argentina in late August, 1995. The newly elected gakyil of June found itself with the big responsibility of organizing a retreat! With several meetings we discussed our worries and concerns about having many people in Tashigar in the middle of the week, in the middle of the cold and rainy season, and in the middle of the mountains without the comforts to which we are accustomed.

We began to find the answers to the problems of lodging, heat, food, and cheap methods of travel to Tashigar which would allow people to afford prices that seemed very high, since we are experiencing a serious economic crisis in Argentina and all of South America.

The obstacles began to be removed due to the work and practice done to develop more patience to deal with our circumstances. Many of us live very far away from the Gar, and have neither a telephone, fax or computer. In order to organize this retreat, we had to discover cheaper and yet efficient ways of communicating with each other.

We then learned that Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche was moving his dates up to visit us in Argentina, in order to go to Tibet immediately afterward.

Our worries reappeared. Rinpo-

che was going to give a Teaching of Red Tara and Healing with Crystals, and we would not be able to obtain enough crystals for everyone in such a short period of time. It was then that Beatriz Rossi, our new secretary, together with Hugo Bervotto, our accountant from the yellow gakyil, and Horacio Toledo, from the red gakyil, went all through Cordoba city, (as well as Adriana Real in Buenos Aires), all setting out in search of smoky and transparent crystals of many kinds.

Thanks to the collaboration between the groups of Buenos Aires, Cordoba and the few people living in the Gar (our geko, Maria Grazia Pelayo and Mirta Meza and Eduardo Reynoso), we were able to prepare a place where we could receive 70 people from many different provinces of Argentina.

Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche arrived with his wife Jane Tromge, who also translated for Rinpoche. We all received the Initiation of Red Tara, and the practice of Healing with Crystals, which was prepared by Jane Tromge and a group of us. While this preparation was taking place, it seemed very chaotic as we put together a special shrine of crystals for about 70 people. As soon as the Initiation of Red Tara began, everything went smoothly and the energy of the whole group became organized again. By that time we were inside the living room of the big house in Tashigar, as the Gumpa had proved to be a little cold for everyone. The fire in the fireplace was kept burning during the Teaching, and this warmth was present in the

atmosphere of the whole retreat.

On the second evening, Rinpoche went to Cordoba, leaving us with homework to do at night. We were to practice together in a group that which he had taught us during the day. We went to party first, which is our usual style, celebrating the birthday of one of our vajra brothers who delighted us by playing his saxophone while we ate and drank. Then we went to the living room of the house, and sitting beside the fireplace, practiced together until late at night.

The retreat was held in a very nice atmosphere of collaboration that arose thanks to the wisdom of Rinpoche, whose stories made us all feel like small children listening to an old and wise grandfather with grand humor, loving kindness and compassion.

We had a great lesson of how to deal with impermanence and changes, since this Dzogchen Master kept changing his plans and dates. Only the weather remained stable and we had sunny days which were not so cold. These days are rare in Tashigar at this time of year.

When the director of Tashigar - Martin Bortagaray - gave thanks to Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche for the valuable teachings he gave us, the Lama said to us "Follow your Master and keep on practising the Teachings that he gave you."

Before the end of the retreat we had a Gakyil meeting (as we were used to having after the retreats with Rinpoche) and nearly everybody felt that we had been able to enjoy this retreat and that our new Gakyil had been able to pass its first test!

Letters to the Community

From Barbara and Nina Paparazzo

Nina Paparazzo, the 22 year old daughter of Barbara and Woody Paparazzo of Tsegialgar, was diagnosed with a serious form of cancer in May, 1995. Following are two letters in response, from both Barbara and Nina, to the kind and generous support of the international Community.

From Barbara:

In recent weeks many members of our local Tsegialgar community have left for Italy to take the *Santi Maha Sangha* exams. I sit here at my kitchen table on the golden October afternoon and remember these people and many others in the Dzogchen community worldwide.

I want to thank each of you for your practices, prayers, thoughts and generosity which has sustained me and my family for the past five months. Rinpoche, especially, has been both an extraordinary example of how to overcome cancer as well as most generous and kind in his concern for our daughter, Nina.

When Nina first became ill last May it was like suddenly being caught by a great churning machine that just whirled us around and around with no way to get out. Experiencing the

crushing weight of the wheel of samsara from a different perspective, I have a new and deep regard for those suffering from illness.

Recently we received the wonderful news that Nina is in remission. I want to thank all of you for your love and support on what has been a long and difficult journey.

From Nina:

Since childhood you have been my family. In fact, you are beyond the simple definition of "family". You have all been my uncles and aunts, my babysitters, my friends, my missing siblings.

The love and support I received this summer and fall has been overwhelming. You were there for me and I want to THANK YOU. In the madness that has been my life in recent months, the glimpses I had of many of you who came to see me or called or wrote is what sustained me. Your thoughts and prayers, your gifts and smiles are as responsible for my recovery as the awful things the doctors did to me.

Now we can finally celebrate because I have been getting nothing but good reports from the doctors and I am feeling like myself again. My love to you all.

PASSAGES

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS

Born to Helmut Smrcek and Nane Eisfeld of Nuremberg, Germany. We are happy to announce the birth of our third child, Tara Olivia, on the 10th of October, 1995.

Born to Cristiana de Falco and Antonio Assini. Emanuele Norbu Jigme Assini. August 19th, 1995 in Poggibonsi, Italy.

DEATH

Carlo Policreti, a longstanding member of the Community, died on October 5th. He was born on 5/9/41.

A.S.I.A. Travelling to Damche

by Giacomella Orofino

Xining is a large Chinese city bordering what was once the Tibetan region of Amdo. A 'modern' city, squalid, chaotic, filled with recently constructed buildings already falling into decay, all the facades unfailingly tiled with rectangular bricks of shiny white glaze.

It is the final stop before entering Tibetan territory. I am travelling with Tsering Thar, Andrea dell'Angelo and Tony Laurent in the direction of Damche, the village where A.S.I.A. is building a school for 500 Tibetan children. We stop to fill the petrol tank of the jeep made available to us by the regional government and Tony says to me, "Now you'll see the road will get much better. We're going into Tibetan territory."

I can hardly believe his words but as soon as we leave the city behind, a climbing road begins cutting across a wooded valley. At the bottom of the valley a river runs among the great white rocks. This is the Yellow River. Many tents on its banks, the gold seekers. Clouds of smoke rise from the rocks and in the distance crowded groups of people can be seen. Tsering Thar explains to me that there are some hot springs there. In this valley there are a great number of them.

As we climb the vision continues to change.

On the tops of the mountains we see yak and many dark octagonal tents of the Tibetan nomads. An area of lush green vegetation alternates with fields of intensely yellow rape. In the background high rocky mountains stand out against a clear blue sky. The air is very pure and has a particular light. I feel that I have never seen a place so beautiful before.

Continuing to climb the vision changes again. The cultivated fields change and everything becomes rocky. Red and very dark. The mountain peaks are very sharp. They look like enormous stalagmites hanging over a river. Everything is red. The river water, the houses of beaten earth, the trees, the road.

I hardly have time to admire the fantastic spectacle when everything changes once again.

Now we meet green forests of high birches and the earth is once again grey and brown. The road continues to climb. At a certain point we see two jeeps. Sounding their horns they wave at us to stop: it is the village chiefs come to welcome us. They have been waiting for several hours. About ten people get out of the cars with traditional welcoming scarves and a tray of glasses filled with liquor. "We have come to meet Andrea's wife. *Lha gyall lo!*" They come to me and put an enormous white silk scarf around my neck and offer me some arak. "Welcome to Tibet!" This is a short description of the first part of the trip which finally gave me the opportunity to see the village of Damche where the famous school for Tibetan children is being built.

We arrived in Damche early in August where, according to the agreement between A.S.I.A. and the construction company, we should have found two buildings practically finished: one of two floors for the classrooms and the other a single floor for the teachers' lodgings.

During the last mission only the

between witty replies. With others it is better to be firm and stern. Without stopping, in continuation, always finding new solutions and different strategies to resolve the numerous obstacles.

Nothing is easy. For each thing, even the smallest, infinite problems of a technical nature and mostly



outer wall that surrounds the entire area was built. The area will include the two buildings that have already been started and a dormitory, kitchen and bathrooms for the children.

As soon as we arrived, we went to the building site. Work was proceeding fast and furiously. Construction was taking place on a very extensive piece of land surrounded by fields of wheat and barley in a fertile valley in the middle of high rocky mountains. However the building company was behind schedule. They should have completed the two storey building for the classrooms and all the teachers' lodgings before August 15th, but only half the work had been done. The delay was due to the fact that the county government hadn't supplied the building site with water and electricity as they had promised. Furthermore during that period the entire region had been hit by a serious drought that had made work extremely difficult.

We embarked on series of exhausting encounters and meetings: with county representatives (to complain about the lack of help given to the work site); with the heads of the prefecture (to report the lack of help from the county and cause pressure to be put on them from above); with the owners of the company (to complain about the lateness of the work); with the village heads (to speak about the construction of the inlaid wooden verandas, and above all, to speak about how the school is to be run in the future).

Checking the work starts and the shilly shallying about payments. Everything is weighed up, examined, discussed. Nothing is overlooked. With some people it is better to joke and talk about important things

political nature arose. I greatly admired the capacity of Tsering Thar and Andrea to manage the various relationships. More than anything their strength and their incredible, obstinate unflinching determination. "This school will be built whatever the cost and nothing, in any way whatsoever, will stop it!"

In order to be clear about the situation one has to know the complicated and difficult state of Chinese politics, and, within this, the more complex state of the so-called ethnic minorities. Chinese society is based on a bureaucratic system which is very hierarchical and, as always, when bureaucracy is strong, everything is quite difficult. A.S.I.A.'s policy is to work directly at the base of the pyramid, being very present on the field, working hand in hand with the village people, in a few words applying concretely the so-called "bottom up" approach. A real revolution. The only people to receive benefits are the inhabitants of the village.

Gradually the Tibetans have understood the value of it and the great difference in method. They often said, "We find it difficult to believe that there are people like you who seem to believe much more in our people and our culture than we do ourselves. We are very surprised about your capacity to adapt yourselves to living simply in our poor houses, eating our poor food, giving up any type of comfort. Up to now the Western experts who have come here on missions have always stayed in the large county hotels, not giving up anything, spending and earning a great deal of money!"

This is the crucial point. The real work of A.S.I.A. isn't only

construction material for the school but encouraging the Tibetans. To help them once again find their cultural identity, the dignity of a people of a great and antique tradition. To help them have the strength to hope for a future.

It is for this reason that the construction of the Tibetan school of Damche is so important. It is a real experimental project in which a positive or negative outcome could be very meaningful to all the Tibetans of Amdo.

News of this project has spread very rapidly. Not only among the Tibetans but also among the organs of international co-operation. L'IFAD, the Institute for Agriculture Development of the United Nations heard about the Italian enterprise and immediately got in touch with A.S.I.A. Since they too are working on a development project in the province of Qinghai for the construction of different schools for the Tibetans, they were very interested in the Damche school and the work philosophy of A.S.I.A. They suggested collaborating with A.S.I.A. and if the results are positive, to assign the construction of another five schools in the region to them.

It serves no purpose to dwell upon the extreme importance of this and of its possible repercussions.

And in this way time passed very quickly.

Tony had to stay longer than us in order to check the completion of the second phase of work and make the estimated payments. (Of course it is better not to pay until the work is finished.) Then another mission will be necessary which had not been foreseen earlier in order to check the roof before carrying out the final work and to make the final payment which will take place when the buildings are completely finished in every detail (which should happen if everything proceeds regularly before the end of November). Then once the winter is over when the earth freezes and work isn't possible, the last part of the project to construct the kitchens, the bathrooms, the dormitories of the children, the main wooden gate and the meeting hall for the village will begin.

The payments in August were made due to the help of many people of the Community and a few loans. Before the end of November another \$40,000 must be found. Then during the winter 1995-96 another \$50,000 must be collected for completing the work, foreseen for September 1996.

The moment of our departure was very emotional. Everyone came to say good-bye. There were many children, those marvellous Tibetan children for whom all this is being done, there were their mothers, the villages representatives, relatives, friends, in short, everyone.

Tsering Thar's mother, well over eighty with long black plaits, wrinkled face and lively eyes, was crying. Tsering Thar and his daughter, Dechen Wangmo, were crying, her uncle, one of the most influential men of the village was crying. In the end we all had wet eyes.

They bid us farewell as though we were one of their people, with a warmth and affection difficult to describe.

On the way back to Xining we parted from the mountains and valleys

with a lump in our throats. It was as if a part of me remained there, in that fantastic land, with those kind people.

The difficulties that the Tibetans have met with are still many and evident. Their situation is even more critical. But the fact that there are projects such as this in which numerous people in countries far from Tibet unite their forces to make construction of a school for 500 children possible, has a value great enough to be able to counterbalance these difficulties and kindle a tiny light of hope for the future of us all.

Contributions for A.S.I.A. can be sent to the following accounts:

in Italian lire:

Monte dei Paschi di Siena
Arcidosso, GR, Italy
Account no. 3893,50

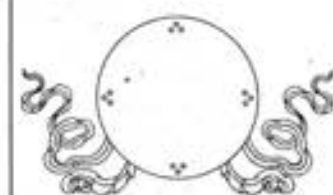
in dollars:

Monte dei Paschi di Siena
Arcidosso, GR, Italy
Account no. 5621

A.S.I.A. Via della Noceta 65, 00164 Roma

Tel fax 0039-6-66161749

e-mail Internet: mc8125@mcLink.it



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The original of Glen's thanka of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu hangs in a place of honour in my house, and after living with it for many years now, the image has many associations for me. Looking up at the poster of the thanka that I have just had printed here in Italy, gazing at it in meditation, so many thoughts pass through my mind, the web of thought, endless in its multiple ramifications expanding in the same way that the raindrops of a light summer shower cause ripples to spread out in ever-expanding concentric circles on the mirror-like surface of a calm lake.

The thinking mind is infinitely complex, and every memory prompts another. When it comes to telling a story, one must choose, select, embroidering here, simplifying there, allowing a satisfying shape to emerge from the multitude of details that arise in the moment. But where to begin?

When Queen Victoria was asked this question by a nervous courtier who brought her news, she testily instructed him to 'begin at the beginning, go on to the end and then stop'. And that certainly seems good advice. But sometimes a momentary pause in the flow of a narrative is justified to bring a certain extra something to its meaning, and before we begin our journey together into the rather humorous story of Glen's thanka, I would like to take a moment to reflect on just how great a support the original painting, hanging on the wall at my home - much bigger than the poster which we have now published - was for my family during the long months when we feared we might lose our precious master. It was in those dark days of his terrible illness that the idea came to us that we should publish the painting as a poster, and on one of our visits to him in New York we asked his permission to do so. But, although he gave his consent to the poster right away, we waited until he was on the road to recovery before beginning the process of its publication. It is our hope that in the years to come the posters of the thanka that we have made will be as inspiring and supportive to the practice of those who have devotion for our master as the thanka itself has been for us.

But how did the thanka come to be painted? It all began with a chance meeting with the painter and my persistence in pestering Rinpoche to let me commission a painting of him.

It is always strange when you meet someone for the first time and have the feeling that you have met or seen them before. But when I met Glen Eddy, the distinguished painter of Tibetan sacred art, it was doubly strange. I had a strong feeling that I already knew him, and as I was told who he was by the friend introducing us, I realized why.

Looking into Glen's smiling bespectacled face, I realized that I had seen this very face on each of the many severed heads that formed a necklace adorning the body of a wrathful divinity that had appeared in a line drawing in a book I had studied for years. Glen had produced illustrations for a number of books by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, the first Tibetan lama from whom I received teachings. So I knew Glen's work well, even though I had never actually met him before.

Our meeting, when it finally took place, happened at a retreat of teachings given by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in the summer of 1989, high up in the sun-scorched mountains of California, at Avery Ranch.

The dirt road that led to the remote ranch twisted and turned around the

mountainside, crossing steep river gorges, winding as it rose, and the wheels of the cars that took us up and down to swim in the river with Rinpoche after lunch each day threw up clouds of dust in the extreme heat.

The first day I was there I found an eagle's feather in the brown parched grass that I tucked into the leather band of the black Akubra cowboy-style hat that I had bought at another retreat in Australia.

For a few years before our daughters began school and we then



Togden Ogyen Tenzin

began to lead a more settled life, my wife Jo and I traveled with Rinpoche for a good part of each year participating in the retreats at which he taught all over the world, and as one retreat led to another, often on different continents, I delighted in discovering the way in which, although all the external circumstances changed, the space we entered together in contemplation at each retreat remained exactly the same. The whole 'external' dimension at each retreat came to really seem like a manifestation of our own state of *rigpa*, a manifestation that dissolved and was replaced by another as we traveled. Our nomadic life-style brought us continual reminders of impermanence and of the ultimately illusory nature of the waking vision that we usually take to be so much more real than our dreams.

At Avery Ranch the karmic vision that arose as an ornament of the primordial state appeared to an ordinary being like myself in the following way: we lived in close daily contact with the five elements and the wilder aspects of nature in the Californian summer. Rinpoche stayed in a little cabin, the students slept in tents dotted around a big open field surrounded by trees, and meals were taken on a wooden deck porch around the main house of the ranch, a large low building in log cabin style. The vast dome of the cloudless sky was filled with a blazing sun in the day time and with an endless array of stars at night. The teachings Rinpoche gave were as expansive as that night sky, each point he made as clear as one of those thousands of stars.

I was introduced to Glen as I waited in line to get my lunch one day. Gazing into the face I had seen before on the severed heads in his drawing, I heard him say: "Would you like to look at some photos of a thanka I just finished?"

He pulled a packet of pictures out

of his pocket and handed them to me. I took out a photograph of a thanka and looked at it in the bright sunlight. The thanka was extremely beautiful and there was no mistaking its subject.

"That's Chögyam Trungpa!" I exclaimed, laughing aloud in immediate recognition of the central figure. Glen laughed too, and pointed out a small figure in the thanka supplicating the much larger figure of the master.

"That's Samuel Burkholz," he said. "The founder and President of Shambhala Publications. He commissioned the thanka."

I had met Trungpa Rinpoche in Scotland in the spring of 1970 and he became my first master. Glen and I talked for a few minutes about our relationships with Trungpa Rinpoche, glad to find we had something in common, but I admit I was not giving him my full attention. The instant Glen had explained his thanka of Trungpa Rinpoche to me the idea of asking him to paint a thanka of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu had immediately arisen in my mind. And so, as we continued our conversation, I was already wondering to myself how on earth I could make such a thing actually happen.

Then it was my turn to help myself from the bowls of food laid out for our lunch, and I filled my plate and went to look for a place to sit. I noticed an empty chair next to Rinpoche at the large circular wooden garden table at which he was seated, and I went and sat there. Glen did not yet know Rinpoche very well and he went off to sit with some friends.

Rinpoche didn't say anything when I sat down next to him. He went on eating his salad, concentrating on his plate. I too began eating without saying a word, but I was turning over various possibilities in my mind of how I could bring up the subject with Rinpoche of my commissioning Glen

to paint a thanka of him.

After a few minutes, a small crowd of people who had already finished eating began to gather around Rinpoche's table, and two young men who had just arrived at the retreat elbowed their way to the front, greeting Rinpoche loudly. One of them was a good friend of mine, a handsome blonde young man who had been following Rinpoche for many years.

"Rinpoche, I want you to meet my brother," he said. "I managed to persuade him to come to the retreat to meet you after he's heard so much about you from me all these years."

"Hello," Rinpoche said simply, as with a little smile he shook the hand of both of the brothers in turn.

The brother who had not met Rinpoche before was very agitated, and he began talking at great speed, words just tumbling out of his mouth in a totally chaotic way, full of irony and self-mocking.

"Hello, Rinpoche, I've heard all about you, but you don't know me. I'm totally screwed up!! Totally! You see it's my girlfriend! Well, she's gone off with this other guy! Just gone off! Just like that! And I'm screwed up! Totally screwed up! Absolutely screwed up! What am I going to do?"

He continued in this way, while Rinpoche just smiled gently at him. The language he used was a good deal more colourful than I can possibly convey here (making considerable use of the familiar f-word) and in other circumstances it might have been really offensive to talk in that way when meeting anyone at all for the first time, never mind at a first meeting with a great master. But somehow the way the young man behaved was authentic. He didn't present a falsified image of himself as something other than what he was right then and there: a human being

suffering very deeply, openly acknowledging his real condition in his first encounter with the master.

A good number of more polite people really show less respect than this young man did. He didn't put on a false mask of constructed politeness or reverence, and Rinpoche acknowledged this. He accepted what would have been extremely bad manners in another person in other circumstances, almost encouraging the young man to go on blurring out his story. There was something almost refreshing about the way the young man cut through all the usual polite formalities we use when meeting, and although he presented the crux of his acute dilemma to Rinpoche in a very raw way, Rinpoche respected his approach even though it was far from being the usual way one would address a Lama.

There may, of course, be people in the Dzogchen Community who have never ever been 'screwed up' or disturbed, but I have never met such a person, so I am certainly not judging this young man's condition - simply trying to record what happened. I have personally found it true that sometimes it is in moments when we can no longer maintain our comfortable grip on Samsaric so-called 'reality' that we can really open up to something new as we are finally forced to let go of a limited mind-set that has become quite impossible for us to maintain any longer.

Contrary to appearances, a 'break down' can actually sometimes surprisingly lead to 'break through', in my own experience, and it is well known that the Chinese sign for 'crisis' also means 'opportunity'. It seems to me that the members of a spiritual community need to develop the broadest kind of tolerance and understanding for the foibles and 'failings' of the individuals who are part of it, or a community risks becoming a crystal cage in which no one dares to admit what they are really going through, having to maintain a 'spiritual persona', a mask of spirituality, or of calm, at all costs, or risk losing the respect of their colleagues. We need to honour all the seasons of our being, without denial. But perhaps this is the theme for another article.

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TARA MANDALA

completes second season and plans pilgrimage

by Tsultrim Allione

Our 1995 summer season brought 150 people to Tara Mandala. We held two Mandarava retreats, a Vajra Dance retreat, an Integration with the Elements Retreat, *Zer Nga* retreat, Semdzin Retreat for *Santi Maha Sangha*, a Tara Dance Retreat, a lecture on Tibetan and Navajo connections, a Yantra Yoga Retreat, a gathering where the cave was excavated, a sweat lodge with Ute Indian elders, Bertha and Vincent Grove, a Dzogchen retreat with Tso Nyi Rinpoche (the son of Tulku Urgyen, discovered by Karmapa as a Drupa Kargyu tulku, close friend of Choegyal Rinpoche) and several permaculture weekends. Several people also did personal retreats on the land in tents. Fifty people attended several retreats.

Many of those here for the first time commented that their experience on the land provided them with a quality of inner and outer silence that they had never known before. People saw elk, wild turkeys, hawks, eagles, rabbits, owls, even a bear and a mountain lion.

One retreatant was practicing thinking about how practitioners in Tibet must have lived in similar wild places surrounded by snow lions, and that if they saw one they would just integrate it with their practice. Just then she opened her eyes to see a large mountain lion walk into view. It sat down and looked at her, twitching its tail. Then she remembered that this was what her cat did before pouncing on a mouse. So she decided she was not yet like the practitioners of old and got up and backed down the hill with her eye on the lion. It was the day of Guru Sengye Dragpo in the Tibetan calendar.

But don't worry, there is much life around us and nothing has ever happened. In fact we have an outdoor kitchen and this year the bears were starving because the cold Spring stopped acorns from falling on the oak trees. But our kitchen was undisturbed all spring, summer and fall! We had only chipmunks and wild turkeys.

Nearby one person left their kitchen window open with a blueberry pie cooling on the kitchen table and went to town. A bear came in the window, ate the pie, lay down on the bed, and then moved to a large leather armchair. When they came home they found the bear in the chair. The bear ran out the window.

In July we hosted the largest retreat yet on the land. Sixty people came to receive one week of teachings from Tso Nyi Rinpoche on "The Nature of Mind". Our facilities and staff were stretched to capacity at this large surge of people. This retreat made us aware that we will probably be hosting large retreats in the future and must prepare for that. The retreat participants donated over \$12,000 to put in a well and septic system. So we brought a water "witch" to the land which marked several places water is abundant and not more than twenty

feet down. We will be digging a well in the Spring and hope to build a bath house as well.

In mid-August a group of adults and children joined for a two week retreat. Three days of Mandarava explanation were followed by ten days of practice four "tuns" a day.

Every day we hiked to a beautiful meadow to watch the sunrise as we did Mandarava practice. Then Mandarava and Chod were practiced the rest of the day with time for a swim in the river at mid day. Sunset brought Chod practice in a different place each evening such as the cave, on "Prayer Flag Point", and watching the full moon rise from the lower meadow.

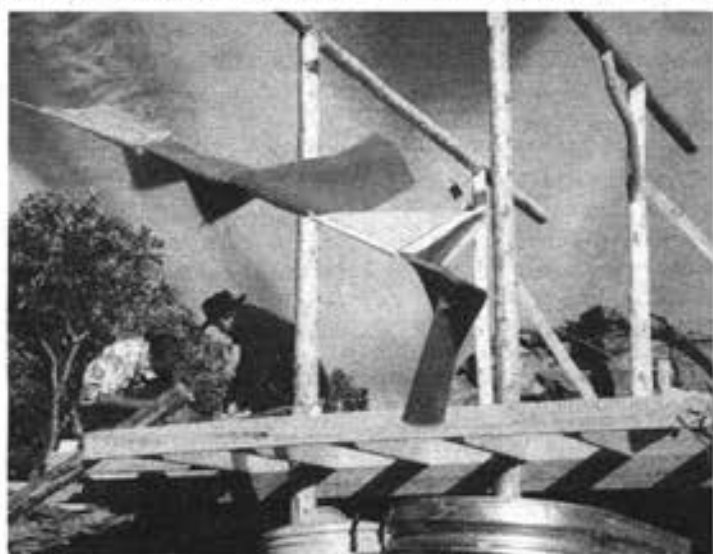
During that retreat the children took field trips away from the land

and a piece of the stone wall is part of the cabin.

In connection to our permaculture work on the land, we have planted 300 trees, begun excavating a series of fresh water ponds, and created swales and gabbions to slow the water down. Most of the trees have survived and have already grown considerably.

We begin our planning for next year with the satisfaction that we are fulfilling our purpose as a place for in-depth meditation and retreat for Dzogchen practitioners. As we move into our third year of operations, our 1996 program promises to be diverse and rich.

Our year will begin with Tsultrim leading a three-week pilgrimage to caves in India and Nepal. The focus will be on the practices of "The Sphere



New cabin at Tara Mandala

DIETMAR EMMERT

and spent time at our favorite swimming hole, while the adults were developing and deepening their practices. The children had the idea to set up a "Mini-Store" at which they sold hand crafted items ranging from bows and arrows to "Buddha family" necklaces.

In the summer of 1996 we will have our first 10 day "Family Retreat". This program is being developed by trustee, Dr. Carol Fitzpatrick and stems from the success we had in integrating the needs of both adults and children at our Mandarava retreat. It will offer both parents and children a chance to be in a practice environment. There will be the creation of a play, art projects, meditation and feast offerings for the children, while parents will have an opportunity to spend extensive time in daily practice together. There will be *Santi Maha Sangha* study for the older children as well as a short meditation. Single parent families are welcome. Joint activities between children and parents will also be integrated into the program.

This fall and summer a retreat hut has been constructed on Dragon's Back Ridge. The design and construction has been done by David Petit and Randy Graves with help from Kim Secunda. It is a beautiful cabin made with logs and poles as well as mud and clay from the land. It has views for hundreds of miles

of the Vital Essence Of The Vajra or The Long Life Practice Of The Immortal Dakini" a terma revealed at the cave of Maratika in 1984 by Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. The pilgrimage will be dedicated to Rinpoche's long life as were the Mandarava practice retreats last year. An audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama is planned for the early days of the pilgrimage followed by attendance at the Lama Dances at Tashi Jong with Choegyal Rinpoche. At Tso Pema we hope to have teachings with Ontul Rinpoche and Lama Wangdor. We will also be doing a Mandarava retreat there. The pilgrimage then heads to Nepal for teachings with Dzogchen masters Tsok Nyi Rinpoche and his father Urgyen Tulku. Then we will trek to the cave of Maratika for a Mandarava retreat. Please contact Dineah Wanicek at Insight Travel (telephone 800 6889851, fax 513 7676469, or Internet: dwanicek@college.antioc.edu) soon if you are interested in the pilgrimage. Enrollment will be limited to twenty-five.

We gratefully await the arrival of Dugu Choegyal Rinpoche in mid-May 1996 to guide us through the building of our Dharmakaya Stupa in the style indicated by Chang Chub Dorje. We invite help from all of our Sangha to bring this project into being.

You can participate by working on the building of the stupa on the land, or you can send some of the

many Dharma items needed to fill the stupa. We need any Dharma books, Tibetan and Sanskrit texts, *tsatsas*, crystals, medicine, statues, jewels or sacred stones. All contributions will be greatly appreciated. The dedication is planned for the full moon of July 30th. Contributing to a stupa which symbolizes "Enlightened Mind" causes great accumulation of merit.

During the summer Tsultrim will lead practice retreats of Chod, Mandarava and Simhamukha. They will provide wonderful access to extended periods of practice on the land and in the yurt.

This coming year we will be offering work/practice opportunities for Sangha members who want to come to Tara Mandala to be part of running Tara Mandala. Staff will have to be on the land between May 1 and September 15. Contact us if you are interested in being on staff.

We have recently hired a new Program and Development director, Lynn Bishop from the Santa Fe Dzogchen Community. She will be

organizing retreats, our calendar and handling teachers' visits. Richard Denner has taken over the bookstore management. Our '96 goals on the land include refinement of the kitchen facility, digging a well and creation of a bathhouse, continuation of our permaculture efforts, and hosting retreats are also high priorities. Permaculture work weekends will continue to open and complete our retreat season. We also hope to offer an extended permaculture retreat focusing on a specific aspect of restoring the land.

We hope you will visit Tara Mandala next year! If you are visiting our area remember to stop by the Tara Mandala Bookstore. Our store also mail orders Chod drums, bells, dadars, practice materials, and a wide selection of books and seasonal gifts. Call (970) 264-6098 for a catalogue or more information. To be on our mailing contact: Tara Mandala, P.O. Box 3040, Pagosa Springs, Colorado, U.S.A. 81147, phone-(970) 264-6177, FAX-(970) 264-6169 E-mail-75402.1127@compuserve.com.



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The potential for politics between residents (insiders) and non-residents (outsiders) is a limitation to the teachings, as is the idea that the centre itself is the most important thing. For it is the practitioners and the way in which they embody the teachings of Dzogchen which is of paramount importance. The administration of a centre can become very politicised and bureaucratic. On the other hand, the administrative model of the Gakyil, which Rinpoche explained in great detail, potentially allows for shared responsibility and co-operation so that the gar operates and manifests as an expression of the embodiment of the practitioners' realisation and manifestation of Dzogchen.

Rinpoche's vision inspired us deeply and engendered amongst us a desire to create such a place in Australia. The owner's of this land at Mullumbimbi offered their place to Rinpoche, but Rinpoche talked at length about how important it is for such a place to begin in a collaborative way, in order that it can develop without hindrances. He said that it can become an obstacle if one or a few people feel they 'own' a place for retreat. They might try to limit and govern who can participate depending upon their personal likes and dislikes, rather than the fundamental bond of the shared transmission of the teachings, the samaya which is between the disciple and the Teacher, and between the students.

The retreat was very powerful, and of course all sorts of difficulties manifested very quickly, in order that we might clarify them. This very special place where we first practised together in Australia did not develop into a Gar. Most of us lived at a considerable distance from Mullumbimbi and so few continued to visit the land. Sometime later the marriage between the couple who owned the land disintegrated, and the land was subdivided and sold. But the inspiration and devotion to Rinpoche remained strong.

An Outward Journey to Other Gars and Rinpoche's Return to the big Southern Land

A friend offered to pay my way to the United States, for the northern summer of 1987. This became an opportunity to again see Rinpoche and to receive teachings and transmission, as well as to extend my connection with Vajra kin. During the retreat in Conway, the community visited the land at Buckland together, purifying with Sang and picnicking. Tseggyalgar began to manifest, born from the devotion Rinpoche inspired, and from the clarity of his vision. I also received the teachings and transmission at Khyungding Gar, Cazadero, California, although later obstacles developed which led to the dissolution of this Gar.

Then, on the 27th of December, 1987, Rinpoche came to Australia for the second time. Teachings were held in Sydney and we celebrated the New Year in a friend's house by the harbor, watching a spectacular fireworks display. A retreat attended by sixty or so people was held on a

small property near Blackheath, in the Blue Mountains, a couple of hours drive west from Sydney. Our community was slowly growing. Although we were quite comfortable in our tents, and in the larger teaching marquee, we realized that we could create a greater possibility for Rinpoche's return if we also created a Gar. We were inspired by Rinpoche's stories of Merigar, and also Tseggyalgar. And again we talked about the possibility of an Australian Gar.

Australia is a country of vast distances, open spaces, and relatively few people-most of whom live in the



Elise and daughter with H.H. Penor Rinpoche and friends

capital cities. Actually, if you think of a place that is about four times the size of Europe, then you will understand how vast the Australian island continent is. Of Australia's seventeen million live in people, about six million in Sydney and another five in Melbourne, you will understand what I mean by spacious. Much of the continent is desert, about 60%, and most of the people live in the thin, fertile strip of land bordering the oceans, while the Center, with the marvellous big red rock, Uluru - the sacred centre - is a place of extremes and intense color. The vegetation and inhabitants, particularly the indigenous animals, are truly unique, and with a "western" history of only 207 years white settlement, the indigenous traditions, which are imbued with the energy of the land itself, although tragically and seriously damaged through colonial exploitation, are again emerging as an unmistakable voice in the vast Australian landscape.

Where, in a country of such vast distances, should we locate our Gar? Near Sydney, or near Melbourne? In either case it would be a good twelve hours drive for those from the city not favored. The idea began to emerge that on the coast about halfway between these two main cities might be a suitable. Rinpoche travelled down the coast from Sydney with a few people from the community and an Aboriginal tribal elder from that area, and rested after the retreat. It seemed Rinpoche made good contact with the land, but as a community we were still debating many possibilities. Some of our members still favored the far north coast of New South Wales, near where we had our first retreat with Rinpoche, and others thought that they wanted the land to be close to where they lived - either Sydney or Melbourne. Groups of people began to search for a suitable place, slowly feeling their way.

The Picnic at Hanging Rock and the flirtation at Wiseman's Ferry

In September, 1989, Rinpoche visited again and another retreat was held at Kyneton, near Melbourne. My daughter was just one year old, and my life of practice and retreats and gypsy travels with teachers had been replaced by the wondrous experiences and demands of motherhood. I slipped very much into the organizational background and rejoiced in the way the community had slowly grown and matured.

The Australian bush is filled with many stories, both from within the indigenous traditions and from the white settlers who came to transform and tame the land. Last century, a group of teenage schoolgirls, wearing flowing Victorian dresses and wide brimmed straw hats, went on a summer picnic to a place where there is a spectacular group of rocks, with maze-like passages and small caves. It is called Hanging Rock, near Kyneton, and is about an hour's drive from Melbourne. That day, one or two of the girls disappeared without trace. The wild beauty and eerie presence or absence of this place, as well as the stories and speculations about these young girls who simply vanished, draws many people. An Australian film was made about this event. We took the opportunity while on retreat to hold a picnic with Rinpoche there, climbing all over the rocks and exploring the energy of Hanging Rock.

The idea of a Gar continued to brew slowly on the back burner of the community's activities. We were still not many people, and most of us had met Rinpoche only once or twice. We began to travel more extensively, some to Merigar, some to Tseggyalgar, and some in South East Asia when Rinpoche was teaching there. We met in different people's houses and practiced together, and we did workshops in which we went through the different practices in detail. We developed a newsletter and communications, and sometimes we talked about a Gar, always checking for possible places. I entered more intensely into a writing retreat, a hundred thousand words of a doctoral dissertation.

Then, an extraordinary man, a long term resident of Australia, who was originally from the UK via Thailand, met Rinpoche in the U.S.. The power of the meeting transformed this man's life. He was the Venerable Phra Khantipala formerly Laurence Mills. During this process, Wat Buddha Dharma, a truly inspiring retreat place set in the middle of the bush at Wiseman's Ferry, a couple of hours' drive out of Sydney, became the focus of the community's aspirations to form a Gar. Phra Khantipala had been the resident monk there for 20 years. The story was told in the pages of The Mirror. We learned a lot from this process, particularly about the responsibility of owning, as a community, a beautiful piece of Australian bush. Wat Buddha Dharma continues to flourish as a retreat centre for many Buddhist practitioners near Sydney, particularly those from the Theravadin traditions. This flirtation with the possibility of a Gar in Au-

stralia added new impetus to the community's search for a suitable place.

A place between the Ocean and a Lake, New Community Structures and the search in earnest

By December, 1992, when Rinpoche arrived in Australia for the fourth retreat, we had grown and matured significantly. We held the retreat about four or five hours north of Sydney at a holiday camp called Tiona Park, which had been used previously by Rigpa. The camp is built between a large freshwater lake complex separated by thin strips of land from the sea. This unique environment had been the focus of demonstrations in the early seventies against sand mining in the area. We greatly enjoyed the natural beauty of the place while we again entered into the transmission of the teachings and received instructions on the Base Level of the Santi Maha Sangha training.

We talked very seriously about making a Gar, and about the system of membership which was now operating in the other Gars. We raised money for our Land Fund in an entertaining auction, and we determined to find a place with real potential and possibility to fulfil Rinpoche's vision of a Gar in the great Southern continent. We discussed the possibilities among ourselves, and people from the different regional groups undertook to search for a suitable place in their respective regions. We acknowledged that in the long term we would probably make several retreat places, because Australia is such a vast land, but that we needed to begin with one place and thus form a Gar.

The following Christmas of 1993, Jean and Jane (then Patty) asked me to visit a piece of land on the south coast of New South Wales, near the heritage village of Tilba Tilba. As part of the Land Committee formed at the last retreat, these two determined women had focused their attention on the coast about halfway between Sydney and Melbourne. This particular property, Woodlands, which had been on the market for some time, drew them both very strongly and compared very favourably with other properties on the market in the area. It lies on the slopes of Gulaga, which is also called Mt. Dromedary, a place of sacred significance to the aboriginal people of the area. The top of the mountain is a flora and fauna reserve, and this property borders with that reserve. The forests in these top reaches are uncut, and the regrowth forests are strong. The creek which runs through the property is unpolluted. As one climbs higher magnificent views of Wallaga Lake and the ocean beyond spread below. A large rock outcrop, understood in the local tradition to belong to the guardians of the mountain, stand out starkly from the surrounding vegetation. After a drive of seven minutes, one reaches the ocean.

Erin Tara and I spent the day there with them, exploring the terrain and the energy of the place, on our way north to join my family for Christmas. We returned to spend New Years Eve with a group of about a dozen community members who had come

to investigate, camping on an adjoining property. The practice was good and our contact with the land was strong. Over the subsequent months several others came to visit and we decided that we would like Rinpoche to see the place. Our ideas varied: was it too wild, too far from the big cities, and so on. But this land seemed to draw us.

The retreat at Wallaga Lake and the birth of Namgyalgar

Although we were tempted to hold the Easter Retreat in 1994 at Tiona Park, we decided that if we were really serious then we should use the opportunity for everyone in the community, as well as Rinpoche, to make contact with this piece of land and investigate the possibilities. I remembered the experience of the retreat at Conway in 1987, and that first memorable picnic at the land at Buckland - the birth of Tseggyalgar. So we held our retreat, Rinpoche's fifth in Australia, near Wallaga Lake, close to the southern Pacific Ocean.

In many ways the focus of the retreat was the land, and over time the energy moved, gathering momentum. We visited the land as a large group and held a picnic there, joined by one of the local aboriginal elders, and many smaller groups also went to explore its wild beauty. Some others continued their search for other possible places in the region, considering how this land compared with the other places on the market. We talked and we practiced, we received transmission and teachings offered with great clarity and insight by our Master.

By retreat end, we had-as a community-decided to move forward with the process of negotiating the purchase of Woodlands with the owner, a gentlemanly dairy farmer who owns several properties around Tilba and who greatly respects the land. Five months later, the Australian Dzogchen Community was an incorporated body, legally owning a very beautiful piece of land, the Gar in the great Southern land, which Rinpoche has named Namgyalgar - the Victorious Gar.

Surveying this journey that the Australian community has made over a ten-year period, I remember the words of advice Rinpoche gave to us when he first brought the transmission to Australia, and tears of gratitude splash onto the keyboard as I write.

Mid-Summer in Merigar, and what's cooked is cooked....

My story finishes just before I begin my journey away from this wondrous Gar of the Fire Mountain. I leave deeply changed, through the empowerments, the teachings, and the practice that have occurred here over the last two months. At times I felt as if I sat in the hot seat, the energy intensely clarifying and purifying my confusion. I am deeply inspired as I reflect on the past ten years, and marvel at what has manifested here at Merigar. I sense the challenge of the next ten years, not only for myself, and the Australian Community as we develop the potentiality of Namgyalgar, but for all of us who have received the precious transmission from our Master, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche.

I know that I will draw deeply on the fiery brilliance of my pilgrimage to Merigar.

Who's Responsible Now?

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At any event, I felt that day at Avery Ranch that our Community does have an atmosphere of some such tolerance, because when the agitated young man eventually lapsed into silence, seeming to feel satisfied at having made contact with Rinpoche, the crowd around the table all laughed heartily with him, not at him, aware, I think, of the absurdity of some of the predicaments with which life can present us.

As the laughter subsided and the two brothers wandered off to find somewhere to pitch their tents, I saw Glen walk by taking his dishes back to the food serving area. I remembered that when I had first met Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche nineteen years before, although I had not been as disturbed as the young man who had just been introduced to Rinpoche, I had been just as fresh and informal amidst the rather daunting atmosphere of the environment around the master, and I had said to Trungpa Rinpoche as part of our discussion of relationships: "We can all learn something from each other, and all teach something to each other." This had seemed to some of the older students present at that conversation to show lack of respect to the Master, but Trungpa Rinpoche had commented firmly that he agreed with me, slapping me on the back and laughing.

Recalling that conversation long ago with Trungpa Rinpoche as I sat next to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu at Avery Ranch, I decided that I could do worse than learn something from the directness my friend's brother had displayed. So I summoned up my courage and called Glen over to where we were sitting. Then, after introducing him and explaining who he was, I said to Rinpoche:

"Glen's just finished painting a thanka. You'll never guess who the subject of it is."

But when Glen took the photos out and showed them to Rinpoche, Rinpoche recognized the central figure right away.

"That's Chögyam Trungpa," he said immediately.

"Of course," I said. "Isn't it a great likeness?"

Then I plunged right in and asked the question I had been dying to ask: "How would it be if Glen painted a thanka of you, Rinpoche?"

Rinpoche looked me in the eye and said just one word: "Ridiculous!"

I was stilled for a moment; but I was not to be so easily put off. I imagined myself like the tiny figure supplicating the master in Glen's thanka of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. "Yes, I know it would be ridiculous for you, Rinpoche," I persevered. "You have no need of a thanka of yourself. But for your students it would be extremely useful, important, a great blessing even."

I felt ridiculous myself, trying to persuade him, knowing I must have seemed absurd to the watching crowd, perhaps even more absurd than the young man who honestly just opened up and told Rinpoche how screwed up he was. But then, when I thought about it in the instant, I decided I didn't care how I looked to anyone else. I really believed a thanka of Rinpoche would be of great value, and so I continued to try to convince Rinpoche to let me commission Glen to paint one.

"I'm sure that one day someone will produce a thanka of you, Rinpoche," I said. "I'm certain that it will

happen. So it would be much better if a really good painter like Glen were to paint the picture following your own instructions. Please let me ask Glen to make a painting of you."

Rinpoche didn't seem impressed by my remarks, and as we all got up to go swimming, I let the subject drop, feeling a little foolish, but glad at least that I had had the courage of my convictions. I thought Rinpoche would never agree to the project, so I didn't ask him again as that afternoon we enjoyed ourselves diving for stones and playing hilarious games of sea monsters and pirates as we battled to spill each other into the cool water from inflatable air mattresses bobbing on the crystal clear river and relaxed sitting talking in the sun on the hot rocks of the riverbank.



Garab Dorje, detail from the thanka by Glen Eddy

But the next day, after the morning teachings, Rinpoche came up to me in the shade of a big tree and he said: "There's only one way that a thanka of me can be painted."

My heart leaped. "Yes, Rinpoche," I said. "Just tell me how it should be!"

"Naked," he said.

"Uh-oh," I thought to myself. "Well, I guess I really let myself in for that one! Now he's going to make fun of me for the whole retreat!"

I knew how Rinpoche could make a running joke out of something like this that would last a week. If I got defensive about it the teasing could even last a month.

"Naked?" I stammered. But then I saw that he was serious.

"Yes; naked, with a meditation belt and wearing yantra yoga costume. Like a Heruka in the Mahasiddha tradition," he said.

"Oh, I see!" I said, greatly relieved. "Let me get Glen, Rinpoche, and you can tell him how you would like the painting to be done."

So that afternoon Glen and I went to Rinpoche's cabin, where Rinpoche posed for photographs showing the positions for all the figures in the thanka, giving Glen instructions for how he wanted the picture to be painted. As sponsor of the painting I gave Glen a completely free hand in its design, though I did request that he might include the Gonpa and yellow house at Merigar in the painting as well as the figures Rinpoche had detailed.

It took nearly two years for the painting to be finished, but when it finally arrived at my house in Italy I was delighted with it. A small detail of minor but comic interest in the painting's history is that it almost didn't reach me. The community member carrying the thanka to me by hand from America felt the need to use the Men's room in the airport at New York. He put the thanka down in a corner at a respectful distance from the urinals while he relieved himself. But when he came to the boarding gate he felt anything but relief. He realised he had left the thanka in the toilet. Running desperately back he managed to

retrieve it before boarding his plane thanking his lucky stars and the protectors of the teachings that the had been able to find it just where he left it.

The *Karma Gadri* style in which Glen paints is a style of eastern Tibet, and it shows some influence of Chinese styles of painting, so the thanka includes more empty space than is often found in other styles of thanka in which the whole surface of the picture is filled with figures.

The thanka has gradually become the object of great reverence for my family, and I imagine it may take time for individuals who buy the poster of the thanka to feel the same relationship with the image that my family do after several years of living with it. At first many aesthetic considerations arise to the mind about the way the image is painted, but if they subside and one enters the dimension of the painting, one feels the real presence of the master. It is how an individual perceives and relates to an object, after all, that determines whether the object is filled with the power of the sacred or not. A thanka is obviously not an object of ordinary household decoration.

As for the nervous young man who met Rinpoche for the first time on the day that I asked Rinpoche if I could commission the thanka, he met Rinpoche again a year or so later.

He was still very wound up, but was trying very hard to deal with his problems. At this later meeting the young man told Rinpoche all about his family background in great detail, concluding that it was his parents and the way they had raised him that had screwed him up.

"Yes; maybe," commented Rinpoche. "But who is responsible now?"

What had happened in the past was already over a long time ago, and the young man had to stop looking for someone else to blame for his difficulties, as we all do. He had to let go of the past. He had to take his present situation, for which he alone was now responsible, in his own hands, and deal with it as best he could with whatever resources he could bring to the task, no matter how screwed up he felt himself to be.

In the same way, each of us individually must ask in relation to the teachings and the Community: "Who's responsible now?", and we must conclude that it is we ourselves.

I have personally found that even though I genuinely do not feel that I have much capacity when it comes to taking responsibility for the teachings and for the affairs of the Community - particularly when I compare myself to Rinpoche's extraordinary capacity, nevertheless I have found that when I follow Rinpoche's inspired example, I have been able to make a small contribution to our common aims. I believe that many of my Vajra sisters and brothers have had similar experiences. When we get over our self-limiting concepts, we are capable of great things.

To conclude this brief history of Glen's painting, I would just like to say that, although we understand that even a thanka as beautiful as the one Glen painted is ultimately only a material object ('ridiculous' - as Rinpoche remarked - when compared to the actual presence of the master himself), and despite the fact that we realize that such an object can never be more than a support for an inner quality of devotion that we aspire to develop within ourselves in relation to the master and the teachings, my family and I humbly offer the posters we have produced to the Community as a symbol of our deep joy at Rinpoche's recovery and return to teaching.

SPECIAL CALENDAR PRACTICE

9th Month, 30th day

Wed. 22nd Nov. 1995

NEW MOON. This is a good day 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

Fri. 1st Dec. 1995

This is a day for reciting the heart mantra of Ekajati as many times as possible.

10th Month, 15th day

Wed. 6th Dec. 1995

FULL MOON. This day is considered to be the day to honour the Lord Buddha in general, and it is one of the best days to do the Long-life Practice with the Dakini Mandarava particularly. Therefore try to do the Long-life Practice, "Cycle of Life's Vajra". Generally the best moment to do this kind of practice is at 7-8 o'clock in the morning. But if you don't have this possibility, then do it in the afternoon or later in the evening when you are free.

10th Month, 25th day

Sun. 17th Dec. 1995

This is a **Dakini day**, and the anniversary of Tsongkhapa (1357-1491), who made a synthesis of the previous schools and founded the Gelugpa school. Try to perform a Ganapuja with your Vajra brothers and sisters or the Medium Tun personally. In either case recite the heart mantra of the Dakini Simhamuka as many times as possible.

10th Month, 29th day

Thu. 21st Dec. 1995

NEW MOON. (There is no 30th day of this 10th month so we do the practice on the 29th.) This is an excellent day to practise Purification of the Six Lokas.

11th Month, 8th day

Fri. 29th Dec. 1995

This is a particular day for the practice of Ekajati so try to do a long or Medium Tun with intensive practice of the mantra of Ekajati.

11th Month, 10th day

Sun. 31st Dec. 1995

This is a special day of **Guru Padmasambhava**. If you have possibility it is good to do a Ganapuja collectively with your Vajra brothers and sisters, otherwise you can do the Long-life practice of "Union of Primordial Essences".

11th Month, 15th day

Fri. 5th Jan. 1996

FULL MOON. This is an important day to do the Long-life practice of Amitayus, "Union of Primordial Essences".

11th Month, 25th day

Mon. 15th Jan. 1996

This is a **day of the Dakinis** in general, so if you have the opportunity practice a collective Ganapuja, with the transformation of the Dakini Simhamuka, and recite her heart mantra as many times as possible. Otherwise you can do a Medium Tun either collectively or personally.

11th Month, 30th day

Sat. 20th Jan. 1996

NEW MOON. This is a special day for purification practices so try to do "Purification of the Six Lokas".

12th Month, 10th day

Tue. 30th Jan. 1996

The 10th day of the 12th month is doubled this year. This day is the **anniversary of Guru Padmasambhava's** coronation as Prince of Orgyen at the invitation of King Idrabodhi. We can perform a Ganapuja collectively or do the Long-life practice, "Universal Wisdom Union" either collectively or personally, according to circumstances.

Poems

1. All the summer
the window was open wide
and it was completely
like living outside
Now when the grey sky
brought the rains
I have to learn again
how to distinguish me
from all these things
freezing in winter breath
2. Around the empty Gonpa
there is still
this strange crystal light
But He is not here
I am going down to Arcidosso
in this rain
and I'm just a drop of a shower
I'm just a little child
at the foot of a great mountain
3. All these months
I was jumping around
to get some work

to get some money
and all these miracle days of retreat
with blessings and rainbows
gave me back unexpected
experience
And when He left
a big silence took place
in a great space
where you can really very clearly
see

Thank you Rinpoche
Jacek Machowski

Sunlight slants
through the gonpa roof

in the shifting air
each speck of dust
a sparkling dakini

millions and millions
Kathy McGrane