

THE MIRROR

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Photos by Giorgio Minuzzo

Tibet Amdowas

by Donatella Rossi

This is part I of a two-part series on Tibet. This article is centered on a topic that is a favorite of mine: Tibetan Amdowas, their history and customs. Since A.S.I.A. is implementing projects in the Amdo area, I thought it might be interesting for the readers of The Mirror who are not very familiar with this fascinating region and its inhabitants, to share the little knowledge I have acquired by studying and living there for a few months in the past.

Speaking in general terms, my impression is that Western ideas about Tibet, when they exist at all, are based on the assumption that culturally and geographically 'Tibet' amounts only to the so-called Tibetan Autonomous Region, so that the actual presence of the Tibetan people and their culture in at least four of the biggest Chinese Provinces seems almost inconsistent. The Tibetan Autonomous Region was established on the September 9th, 1965, but as many of us know, its cultural and geographical borders do not coincide with what is today known as the Autonomous Region of Tibet. The existence of the Tibetan ethnic group is in fact widespread in the provinces of Sichuan, Gansu, Yunnan and Qinghai; it is also attested, on a minor scale, in several other towns and areas of China.

According to the data provided by the last census carried out on behalf of the Chinese Central government in 1992, the Tibetan population amounted to about 5 million individuals, showing an increase of approximately 25% with respect to the previous census of 1982.

Out of the Tibetan ethnic group, three main groups are to be distinguished, in view of the prevalence of spoken idioms and geographical settlements: the Tibetans of Central Tibet proper, the Khampas occupying the present Autonomous Prefecture of *dKar rdzas* (Chinese Ganzi), in Sichuan, which was established on the November 24th, 1950, and the

Amdowas. The latter are of particular interest, both from the historical and the cultural viewpoint, because of their peripheral position, the complexity of historical events which took place during the course of centuries in the regions they inhabit, and their interrelation with different ethnic groups such as the Mongols, the Uigurs and the Hans, that is to say, the Chinese.

Geography

The province of Qinghai covers an area of 736,000 square meters and it is mainly constituted by a vast highland and awesome mountain ranges.

To the North, part of the border with the Gansu Province is occupied by the Qilian Mountain range. The Northwest, bordering the Province of Xinjiang, hosts the vast salt lakes and marshes of the Tsaidam Basin, which in Tibetan is called *Tshwa 'dam*, the salt swamp. The city of Tshwa Kha, situated at the border of the Tsaidam Lake, was in the past a very important meeting place for merchants coming from adjacent regions to exchange various products for salt. In this area we can even today see a bridge that is entirely made of salt.

In the South, the Tangla Mountain range runs parallel to the Tibetan Autonomous Region, while the remaining territory is constituted by a highland, reaching 3,500 meters above the sea level.

In the South-East, the Amnye Machen Mountain range, the highest peak of which is above 6000 meters, runs along the border with the province of Sichuan. The sources of the Yellow River — known in Tibetan as *rMa chu*, and in Chinese as Huang He — as well as those of the Mekong, are located in this province. The Yellow river originates from the county of *rMa stod*, in *mGo log* Prefecture, while the Mekong originates from the county of *Drib chu* in Yushu Prefecture.

The central part of the highland

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In the Time of the Lunar Eclipse 1996 Autumn Retreat in Tsegyalgar Conway, Massachusetts

by Jacqueline Gens



Dancing on the Mandala on Buckland land

Jim Smith

Coinciding with the annual fall foliage display and harvest plenitude of the local region, Tsegyalgar hosted approximately three hundred people for its main retreat from September 19-29, 1996 and fifty-four participants in the first two levels of the Santi Maha Sangha training held immediately afterwards. Community members and friends travelled from as far as Buryatia, Latvia, Germany, Finland, England, France, Canada, and Venezuela, as well as from all the gakyils in the United States in order to receive teachings from Choegyal Namkhai Norbu and to practice together as a Vajra sangha.

The site of the former grammar school in Conway Massachusetts, now known as Shang Shung Institute and the location of the main offices of Tsegyalgar and the Mirror, provided a spacious and orderly container for the teachings to take place. As usual, the Conway community of practitioners rallied together in a spirit of efficient cooperation to host and feed the large group with gracious friendliness.

During the retreat, Rinpoche primarily taught on the practice of Avalokitesvara Korwa Tongtrug, a terma discovered by the master and former incarnation of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, Adzam Drugpa belonging to the cycle of the Secret Treasure of the Vajra of Clear Light (*'od gsal rdo rje gsang mdzod*). Rinpoche also devoted time to present essential and direct teachings summarizing many aspects of sutra, tantra, and Dzogchen, as explained in his Santi Maha Sangha foundation texts, The Precious Vase and the

Wish Fulfilling Vase. In particular, he taught extensively on the semdzins and rushan practices, the cornerstone of a Dzogchen practitioner's training. Although he has taught the Avalokitesvara Korwa Tongtrug previously, this retreat was the first time Rinpoche gave both the lung and transmissions for the practice at Tsegyalgar. On the morning of the full moon and a lunar eclipse September 26, considered especially auspicious for practice, Rinpoche gave the lung for the many practices done within the Dzogchen community. He then explained that even for individuals who had received these transmissions many times before, it was still beneficial to do so again and again in order to renew one's samayas.

During the main retreat, Rinpoche on a number of occasions stressed the importance of the Santi Maha Sangha training which he clarified as not just another "intellectual" academic approach but as a means to preserve the future of the teachings and the Dzogchen transmissions which he has given us for many years (see page 2). Indeed, as the foundation and first level exams coincided with Conway's annual Harvest Festival, a different kind of harvest took place as the fifty four practitioners taking the exams brought to fruition the seeds sown by Rinpoche and tended by their diligence.

Interwoven throughout the intensive retreat schedules of morning teachings by Rinpoche, afternoon Vajra Dance and Yantra Yoga practices, evening explanations to newcomers of many of the collective practices, was an oppor-

tunity for interested individuals to meet concerning the development of Shang Shung Institute and A.S.I.A., as well as provide updates on the progress of the Vairocana translation project. The film "Home to Tibet" produced by local filmmakers, Alan Dater and Lisa Merton about a Tibetan stonemason now living in nearby Greenfield, Massachusetts was shown. Several newer projects were introduced such as the Stupa project for the Buckland land where people could see the elegant construction of a Guardians cabin well underway.

Rinpoche's premature departure on October 14th to New York for knee surgery was met with poignant feelings of both full gratitude for his teachings and the bittersweet sentiment of the season with the knowledge that beyond the glorious manifestation of brilliant autumnal display is a cold winter of Rinpoche's absence from Tsegyalgar, in body, if not essence. Long live the Masters!

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SPECIAL FEATURE:

Healing and Practice:
Interviews with Practitioners of
the Healing Arts.
See pages 8 and 9.

I want to welcome everybody to this retreat. We should do our best to understand each other and collaborate with each other. This is main point of retreats. In general, when we go to retreats we say "Oh, here is this kind of teacher and we are going to receive this kind of teaching." There are very precise titles of this teaching. That is very normal. So, in this retreat I want to give the teaching of Korwa Tonrug ('*khor ba dong sprugs*) of Avalokitesvara. The title of a teaching is not the principle. The main point is that we understand something; what the teaching really is and what it is for. What is the use of the teaching in our existence and in daily life? There is something concrete in the teaching, and in daily life. What is the use of receiving these teachings if they are not understood, and we only go after techniques of practice? Techniques are useful for understanding and realization with these methods, but if we go too much after titles then we have lost the main point. There are hundreds and thousands of different titles and techniques, but they are all used for one purpose: discovering our real condition. This is the essential teaching of Buddha and Garab Dorje, and all important teachers. For example, there are the collections of the teachings of Buddha which are called the *kanjur* and *tanjur*. There are hundreds of volumes. So we know if we are going to study only one sutra and only one tantra, we need our whole life to really understand all of these different teachings. To learn all these things we need many lives, and then when we do we realize? This is the real condition. But this is relative, not really the main point. The main point is what Buddha said once "I discovered something profound and luminous, beyond all concepts, and I tried to communicate it with words, but nobody understands, so now I will meditate alone in the forest." This is a verse of Buddha. That is the conclusion of the teaching.

The teaching is not a title or book. The teaching is not sutra or tantra or Dzogchen, the teaching is knowledge and understanding for discovering our real nature. That is all. But it is not easy at all. That is why Buddha explained many different circumstances; for that reason there are so many kinds of teachings of Buddha. There are so many kinds of beings with different kinds of capacities. Some people do understand and discover what is communicated and how it should work. But many people don't understand and can't reach that capacity and must work in a different way. We must explain different conditions. That is why there are so many different kinds of teachings and techniques.

Some people consider that the teaching means not doing anything, just relaxing, and doing what one feels. That is not the teaching. That is the continuation of samsara. We do that always, but no one has realized in this way. Some people think that teaching is

judging, analyzing, thinking and then establishing a point of view, but this not the sense of the teaching.

Everything is relative. This is how Garab Dorje explained the teaching. There are three ways of

understand what direct transmission means. The teacher is giving examples and explains using symbols like the mirror, the crystal, and peacock's feather. Using these symbols we can understand our real condition and our potentiality.

A FEW WORDS ON SANTI MAHA SANGHA TRAINING

I want to explain a little about the Base of Santi Maha Sangha. Most of you already know something about it, but maybe there are some new people who don't know

stand what the state of Dzogchen is, how you can find it and get in it, and which transmission and method you can use because you will be ignorant of all these things. That is why we have the Santi Maha Sangha.

The Foundation of Santi Maha Sangha is open to study to all people who are interested in following the Dzogchen teachings, not only Santi Maha Sangha training; everybody can learn it. Everybody needs this teaching. If you observe a little the people who haven't done Santi Maha Sangha and then talk with people who have already done the first or second level, then you can understand what the difference is between them. They already know much more. It doesn't mean we are doing a kind of academic study like at the university for a very long time and with great effort. We are studying and doing practice, trying to develop something more concrete not only in an intellectual way. So this is the principle of Santi Maha Sangha.

But in the real sense, I am not asking or insisting that anybody does Santi Maha Sangha and I am not obliging anyone to study Santi Maha Sangha in order to follow the Dzogchen teachings. I have never said this. Everybody can follow the teaching because I am also always doing open retreats such as this one. I give all teachings of Dzogchen like those that belong to the *upadesa*, *semde* and *longde*. I have always done and will continue to do this. But if you wish to have deeper knowledge, it is not sufficient. This is true, so if you really want to do something to have knowledge in a precise way, then you should give more of your attention to studying and doing practice so that the teaching becomes more concrete. This is the Base called Santi Maha Sangha.

Santi Maha means Dzogchen. Sangha is community. Community means a community of people who can really maintain and protect the teaching and the transmission for the future — not only for today. If we consider the teaching to be valuable and important then we need that teaching for future generations. This is very very important. For that reason the teaching must remain and continue in correct way with pure transmission, pure knowledge and understanding.

Today there is also a great danger because there are so many people who think that Dzogchen teachings are being given everywhere. I remember when I first arrived in Europe, nobody knew what Dzogchen was. There was not a single person I met who knew what Dzogchen really was, only some professors who had heard about a kind of Dzogchen tradition mentioned in books. That is all. But today everybody is using Dzogchen like a fashion. In a real sense, not only like fashion because if it is fashion there is not a great problem. But it is becoming something like a business, which is dangerous because then we can really lose the sense of the knowledge and understanding of the Dzogchen teaching. People are jumping and only going after names and titles,

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Discovering Our Real Nature

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu



L. Hayes

communicating related to the three existences of our physical body, energy and mind. For that reason the teaching is communicated through working with our body, energy or mind. That is characteristic of the teaching. For introducing knowledge in Dzogchen we have direct introduction. This doesn't mean we are going to a teacher or someone realized who has high potentiality, and we stand in front of that teacher and get awakened or realized after spending a little time in front of the teacher. Many people have this idea, but this is not direct introduction. Nobody can do that; even Buddha Sakyamuni. If Buddha Sakyamuni could do that, why didn't he do that for all sentient beings instantly? Why isn't everybody realized? Buddha has infinite compassion. He is not missing any amount of compassion for doing actions for others. Buddha is omniscient, he knows the condition of samsara and suffering, so there would be no reason for him not to do that. But that is not the way. Even if there is a fantastic teacher, a realized being, and we receive a little vibration from them, we still can't realize in this way. If we go to a teacher, the teacher teaches; that is why he/she is called a teacher. The teacher teaches, not only sits or meditates. The teacher teaches how to get in our real nature; training with words and ordinary language. That is called oral transmission. That's the reason why a teacher is giving retreats and giving teachings and explaining for hours and hours different methods and ways of discovering our real nature. It's not because the teacher likes to talk. If the teacher does not talk, how can people

So by using these symbols and explaining orally, we can have an idea. Now you are more or less ready to receive direct transmission. In this case the teacher gives you instructions of what you do for having direct experience. It could be you are doing it together with the teacher. It could be you receive the instructions, apply and you discover. That is called direct introduction. It's important that you understand this. Sometimes people read Dzogchen books and teachings and they are explaining direct transmission; what Garab Dorje said about it and how to get in your real nature. Some people have the idea that the teacher can give direct introduction like a gift, an object, so they go to the teacher and ask, "Please give me direct introduction." And they think "Oh maybe he/she is not giving direct introduction to everyone so if I ask him/her alone, then he/she will give it only to me." This is not true. If the teacher can give for all sentient beings then he/she always does. The teacher likes it if all sentient beings are realizing and getting in their real nature. But this is not always easy. For that reason we need to work and explain one by one, orally and with symbols, constructing very precise ideas, and then we can go into the instruction of direct transmission. Then we can have such knowledge and understanding. Then we can really have a sense of the teaching. We must remember that this is the principle.

In the many days of a retreat we learn many techniques. But we must remember the purpose of all is that principle, to discover our real nature, particularly if following the Dzogchen teaching.

very much about it.

With Santi Maha Sangha we are starting a training for learning and doing practice to arrive at a more concrete knowledge of Dzogchen teachings. There are still many people who have different opinions. Most people are happy to do Santi Maha Sangha training, but some people may have a different idea. They think that Santi Maha Sangha is a kind of academic system for taking an examination and they feel this is something strange. But we should not feel strange if there is an academic system, because that is part of our society. If we really feel to be Dzogchen practitioners we must integrate everything, not reject things such as education and academic learning. In a real sense, with the Santi Maha Sangha we are testing people to see if they have learned or know something. If people don't know or don't study we try to inform them about learning and studying. This is something that is good for everybody. Nobody can say that they have studied and learned something that has no value. If we have certain knowledge, everything is better. If you want to be responsible for maintaining the transmission, maintaining the teaching, etc., then you really cannot do anything if you don't have some background. You must have background, not only in the Dzogchen teaching, but in the teachings in general, and particularly in the Buddhist system — sutra, tantra, Hinayana, Mahayana — you must understand the characteristics of these teachings even if you do not know everything precisely. If you do not know these things precisely, then you really cannot under-

CHRISTMAS RETREAT

Tashigar, Argentina

December 27th 1996 to January 3rd 1997

Rinpoche's teachings will be in English with Spanish translation.

Cost: \$220 US

Payment before November 30th and members: \$200 U.S.

Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance - December 27-January 3

Cost: \$70 US each Both combined: \$100 US

SMS Foundation Exam - January 10th to 12th

SMS First Level Training - January 13th to 18th

Cost: \$150 US

The cost of SMS examination and training as well as books and materials must be paid in full.

IN F O P A K

MEMBERSHIP

SMS means a deep commitment with the Teachings and the Community. To sit for the Santi Maha Sangha exam it is required that you are a paid member of Tashigar or one of the other existing Gars overseas. Base membership at Tashigar costs \$200 US and sustaining membership \$400 US, paid annually. In case of hardship, long term payment can be arranged.

ACCOMMODATION

Tashigar Camping: Good facilities, with bathrooms and hot showers.

Cost: \$2 per day and per person. Members: \$1

Dormitory: There are very few places, so you must communicate with the Gekos well in advance.

Ashram: Dormitory, 10 minutes walk from Tashigar. It's a very good option. Cost: \$7 US per day

Hotels: Located in Tanti, 5 km from Tashigar: Hotel El Bosque (54-541) 98297, Hotel Los Algarrobos (54-541) 98146, Hotel San Marten (54-541) 98130, Hotel Tanti (54-541) 98145, Hotel Las Margaritas (54-541) 98187

Houses: There are few houses to rent in Tanti. The cost of the rental is around \$800US per month, that could be shared between 4-6 people. Please contact the Secretary.

FOOD

It's not included in the cost of the retreat. Catering will be provided during the main retreat, Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance courses and SMS examination and training.

Breakfast, lunch, and dinner: \$12 US per day Vegetarian and non vegetarian options. It's possible to cook your own meals in the campground and also to buy food supplies.

CHILD CARE

Available during the main retreat, during teaching hours.

HOW TO GET TO TASHIGAR

You should be able to buy a ticket directly to **Cordoba City**, for the same price as to Buenos Aires. In this case you will arrive at

Ministro Pistarini International Airport, in Ezeiza, Buenos Aires and they will transfer you by bus to **Aeroparque de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires**, the domestic airport, where you will take the flight to **Cordoba City**. You can make a stop in Buenos Aires if you want. In that case, you should call Laura Yoffe (tel/fax 54-1-788-1728) for arrangements.

From Cordoba City Airport to Tashigar: Minibus to Bus Terminal (\$ 3 one way). From Bus Terminal take the bus "COTAP" to Tanti or Minibus COTAP to Villa Carlos Paz. From Villa Carlos Paz to Tanti, COTAP (\$1.80). From Tanti to Tashigar, Taxi Sol (\$4). You can take Taxi Sol in the Airport and go directly to Tashigar (\$35). We can make a reservation for you if we know your arriving flight.

Buses: From Bs. As. Bus Terminal (Retiro), company General Urquiza, Chevalier o Dumas (\$23 to 28 one way) to Villa Carlos Paz. From there to Tashigar as we said before. Remember that it's Christmas time and summer holiday season!

USEFUL NOTES

Tashigar is located in a beautiful mountain site (1133 m above the sea level) called "El Durazno", 5km from Tanti, in the province of Cordoba, 771 km from Bs. As., 58km from Cordoba City and 20 km from Villa Carlos Paz. Even though it will be summer time, Tashigar is usually very rainy. We suggest to bring rain boots and coats, together with a sweater and a warm jacket for nighttime. There's a swimming pool in the Gar and natural pools nearby, bring bathing suits and sunblock.

INFORMATION

In Tashigar: Fax: Martin Borthagaray (Gekos) 54-541-98300 (office hours, 8 am to 8 pm)
In Cordoba: Marisa Alonso (Secretary) Tel/Fax: 54-51-801829

In Buenos Aires: Laura Yoffe (Blue Gakyil) Tel/Fax: 54-1-788-1728 E-mail: nsaporiti@interlink.com.ar

AUSTRALIA

March 28-April 5:
Teaching Retreat
April 18-20: SMS Base Exam
April 21-25: SMS I Training
May 9-11: SMS I Exam
May 12-16: SMS II Training
See International Contacts on page 17

CHINA, BEIJING

June 6-10: Teaching Retreat

TIBET: AMDO

June 20: Inauguration of the school.

"Interdependent View"

A Round Table Discussion at a Square Table with
Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche,
Lauri Marder and Naomi Zeitz

The Mirror:

Rinpoche, what are the five principles of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche that you spoke of last night?

Rinpoche: They are

"Io godo, noi godiamo e non ci vergogniamo per niente, ma loro si vergognano; e poi si fa così". It means "I enjoy, we enjoy, we don't have any shame in our enjoyment, they have shame; then we do like this."

The Mirror: How can we learn this?

Rinpoche: By doing practice.

The Mirror: Any specific practice?

Rinpoche: Being in the knowledge of yourself, your condition. Then you can find it in that state.

The Mirror: So, Rinpoche, are you going to Tibet this summer?

Rinpoche: Yes.

The Mirror: And why are you going there?

Rinpoche: To visit. Visit my family, monasteries, our projects of ASIA.

The Mirror: Which projects of ASIA?

Rinpoche: There are so many projects. We are building a hospital, and schools in different places for preserving and developing Tibetan culture and knowledge.

The Mirror: Rinpoche, do you think it's useful for everyone to learn how to play bachen*?

Rinpoche: It depends. It depends if you have free time, if you want to play; if you don't have free time and don't feel to play, then it is not important. If you feel to play and you have time, it is fine. You can play. You must be free.

The Mirror: Do you have to have a certain kind of capacity to play bachen?

Rinpoche: Oh yes.

The Mirror: What kind of capacity?

Rinpoche: Knowing what bachen is and which way to play.

The Mirror: Is it very difficult to play?

Rinpoche: It depends.

The Mirror: On what?

Rinpoche: On your capacity.

The Mirror: Did you enjoy your stay in Conway?

Rinpoche: Very much!

The Mirror: How was the weather?

Rinpoche: Also the weather. I like this weather. It's very nice. Look at the sky.

The Mirror: Are you happy to move on to New York?

Rinpoche: Also. Everything is relative.

The Mirror: Can you give us some advice about how not to feel sad or miss people when they go?

Rinpoche: Knowing at the beginning when you meet someone and you are enjoying, you feel happy at that moment and then you remember that that is the starting point also of separating. And then you have no problem.

The Mirror: So you must be aware from the beginning that you will separate.

Rinpoche: Yes, of course. So, is the interview finished? We can't just have a few words. Now I will interview you. So, are you Naomi Mirror?

NM: Yes, I guess so. In this moment.

Rinpoche: How did you become Naomi Mirror?

NM: That's a very good question. I don't really know. No, really, I was in New Mexico and the telephone rang and someone said that they needed someone to do The Mirror because the person who had been doing it had left. At first I suggested some people and then said that maybe I could do it, but I wasn't sure. Then I had a dream of Rosa which gave me some indication that I should do it. So I did.

Rinpoche: Now you are enjoying The Mirror?

NM: Yes. Very much.

Rinpoche: How did you originally have a relationship with the Dzogchen Community and that teacher of the Dzogchen Community?

NM: You mean with Namkhai Norbu

Rinpoche?

Rinpoche: Yes, how did it happen?

NM: I met him through Tsaltrim Allione in New York City.

Rinpoche: Oh. What did she say?

NM: She said you should come and meet my Teacher.

Rinpoche: And did you have the idea to find some teacher in that moment?

NM: I had had one East Indian teacher. But it wasn't right somehow. I left after five years because of the politics and met a Tibetan Lama, Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche and took a Red Tara empowerment and retreat in Los Angeles. Then I met many Lamas and ended up living in a dharma center in upstate New York...but after some time this wasn't for me either. Then I called Tsaltrim Allione, did two Dakini retreats, and she said that I should come and meet her teacher, Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. I had liked the practices very much. I had read *Women of Wisdom* and *The Crystal and the Wiry of Light* and I wanted very much to meet him.

Rinpoche: And then?

NM: Then I came to Columbia University to see him and he was giving a talk on Yantra Yoga.

Rinpoche: What kind of experience did you have when you met your teacher at the university? Tell the truth.

NM: I felt very happy. I couldn't sleep the night before because I knew he was my teacher. But, when he walked in...all the other teachers I had met wore big hats, lots of robes, very formal, etc...we were sitting there very excited and looking around thinking "Where is this guy?" and then he walked in wearing a very simple yellow jacket. I remember it very well. And I was happy that he looked that way and very relieved. Then Tsaltrim introduced my friends and me to him. Then he gave a talk on Yantra Yoga. Not long after I went to my first retreat with him in Cazadero, California. This was in 1987.

Rinpoche: Now you have followed the Dzogchen teachings from Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche for many years and how do you feel?

NM: Much better.

Rinpoche: You don't feel too many problems?

NM: I still have problems. But much less than before. Sometimes I have particular areas where I have strong problems.

Rinpoche: Still? And when you have these kinds of problems, what do you do?

NM: Sometimes I cry, or talk to friends, sometimes I practice, but sometimes when I have a heavy problem I can't practice. I just have to experience the problem.

Rinpoche: Sometimes do you do the practice of thinking "Oh, everything is illusion, it doesn't matter. It's like a dream. With a dream when we wake up, everything is OK?"

NM: I try sometimes but it doesn't always work. Sometimes if I go and do some work or something physical, that helps.

Rinpoche: Then you are distracted. That is not really a definitive solution. That is a very provisional solution. The main point is knowing your real condition and that everything is an illusion. Then you have no problem. What is the problem? For example, they will cut my knee, but it's an illusion. You don't worry. They cut

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NAMKHA NORBU RINPOCHE'S SCHEDULE

NEW ZEALAND

January 31-February 2: Teaching Retreat. Contact: Annette Facer, Curator of Photographs, Hocken Library, University of Otago, PO Box 56, Dunedin. Tel.: 64-3-479-8870. Fax: 64-3-479-5078. email: annette.facer@librius.otago.ac.nz

Autumn 1996 Update on the Projects of the Shang-Shung Institute

The Shang-Shung Institute in Italy is closely linked to and works in collaboration with the Dzogchen Community founded by Choegyal Namkhai Norbu with the principal aim of safeguarding Tibetan culture. Besides the creation of a library and multi-media archives, the Institute has launched a number of projects to further its aims. This document briefly outlines ongoing activities at the seat of the Institute in Italy.

The Shang-Shung International Institute for Tibetan Studies was established in June 1993 to promote study and research to help safeguard Tibetan culture. Founded and inspired by Choegyal Namkhai Norbu, an internationally recognized authority on the history and culture of Tibet, the Institute aims to help ensure the survival of Tibetan culture through direct co-operation with those who are the custodians of this culture, at the same time creating a network of communication to allow knowledge to be shared between Tibetans and people of other cultures. Since its foundation the Institute's initiatives, carried out in co-operation with academic institutions, museums and libraries from all over the world, have made a widely recognized contribution to Tibetan studies.

The Institute is organized into various departments in charge of different activities and projects. The center of documentation is concerned with the collection, conservation and documentation of Tibetan culture by means of a library (containing more than 5000 volumes in both Western languages and Tibetan), an audio archive (with more than 4000 recordings made from 1976 to the present day), a video archive (of around 1550 hours) and a photographic archive (with around 10,000 photos). Other departments include the Center of Traditional Tibetan Medicine, the computer data center and the research and translation center.

Lhasa At the moment, the Institute is involved in a number of projects both in Italy and at the international level. In collaboration with the Shalu Association, the Lhasa Archive, the NGO A.S.I.A. and with

different departments of the Government of the Tibetan Autonomous Region, the Shang-Shung Institute is promoting two projects aimed at the preservation of the Tibetan cultural heritage:



- 1) Conservation of the old city of Lhasa - the project foresees the creation of a plan for the conservation of all the remaining historical buildings in the city and the restoration of those houses threatened with immediate demolition. The situation is extremely urgent because the present modernization of Lhasa has already created much damage and construction development agencies constantly go against attempts to conserve the old city. However, at the present moment, the Institute is in a position to reverse this tendency if sufficient funds are available.
- 2) Restoration of the architecture and the 17th century wall paintings of the Lukhang temple behind the Potala palace - the Lukhang temple was built at the same time as the Potala, during the reign of the 5th Dalai Lama and contains unique and exceptional wall paintings. In the mid-1980's it was badly restored and now the structure and the wall paintings are in great danger from water infiltration. The paintings have been severely damaged over the last five years. Very urgent intervention is needed to save them.

Tibetan Digital Resource Archive (TiDRA) The Institute is also sponsoring a series of initiatives to provide museums with substantial Tibetan holdings as a means to better realize the value of their archives through multimedia digitalization. Museums participating in the Tibetan Digital Resource Archive (TiDRA) will also be able to take advantage of an on-line forum in which they can share their digitized resources with other participating

museums and Tibetan scholars. The fundamental aim of the TiDRA is to help the Tibetans by giving them access to museum collections of Tibetan art. The project is a model of how technology can enable cross cultural dialogue and resource sharing, advancing understanding of ethnic cultures and providing cultures at risk with a key to their own cultural preservation.

The first CD-ROM of Tibetan art, containing the Avery Brundage Collection of the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco has been completed and presented to the Museum in San Francisco. It was well received and the Institute has been asked to create another CD-ROM including the Avery Brundage Collection of Tibetan bronzes. The second presentations of the project are planned for the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum in December. For further information or a full project description please contact Alex Siedlecki.

Shang-Shung Video: Tibetan Tantric Dance Shang-Shung video in collaboration with Tibet House, New Delhi is producing a documentary on Tibet Tantric Dance which will be edited into a home video for distribution both inside and outside the Community. At the same time a series of projects with the collaboration of Tibet House New Delhi will be initiated including the creation of a digital catalogue of their museum.

WWWShangShung.com The Institute now has a web site containing information about our projects and also news from the Shang-Shung Institute in America. The Institute site will be hosted on Daniele Colajacomo's server in Los Angeles.

Digital Dharma The Institute's recent "digital dharma" project aims at transferring all the audio tapes of the archive onto CD over a five year period. Thanks to project fundraising (which included sales of "Ambrosia" olive oil) the Institute has bought a CD recorder which will give the possibility to produce CD-ROMs, audio CDs, photo CDs etc. A CD-ROM containing the indexes of more than 100 Tibetan texts is currently being created. Audio material is currently being transferred onto DAT (digital

Shang-Shung Institute in America

Notice for Tibetologists, scholars, doctors, artists, and all others: The Shang Shung Institute in Conway is hosting a meeting in the Spring of 1997 to develop its programs for the next five



photo donated by F. Ward

years. This meeting will provide an opportunity to meet and discuss our potential, with a primary aim of producing a plan which utilizes the

insights and knowledge of those whose interest is both in the teachings and the preservation and dissemination of the most vital aspects of Tibetan cultural traditions. The date will be announced in the

next issue of the Mirror. For further information, please write to The Shang Shung Institute, PO Box 277, Conway MA, 01341 USA.

audio tape) with a generous contribution from Martin Bugter and the Dutch Community.

Library Catalogue For the second year running the Institute has received funding from the Regione Toscana in Italy for the library. Last year's funding was directed towards a "digital inventory" which involved digital scanning of the indexes of Tibetan texts and registration on CD-ROM. In spite of reduced budgeting, the Institute acquired basic equipment in order to carry ahead the cataloging of texts. With the help of Sasha Poubants visiting from St. Petersburg on an Institute scholarship last year, 2000 pages of Tibetan texts were scanned, 275 Tibetan texts were cataloged on bibliographical database and a multimedia bibliographical database was created to permit both the cataloging of Tibetan texts as well as audio, video and photographic material according to ISBD regulations. This year the Regione has funded the Institute's "digital archive" program, a five year project which aims to preserve and improve access to the Institute's documentary patrimony through systematic digitizing of material at risk (manuscripts, audio and video material) and by climatizing the audio and video library. The multimedia bibliographical database should be completed this year as well as the inventory and cataloging of each sector of the archives. Two people will be arriving on Institute scholarships to help with the projects this November. The Institute is currently studying a way to present the same project to the EEC and UNESCO for funding.

Transcriptions The transcription project is another of the Institute's ongoing projects begun this year with the aim of transcribing all the recorded teachings ever given by Choegyal Namkhai Norbu. At the moment they are being transcribed

by an international group of about 25 people in the language in which they were given (English or Italian) after which they are being put into the computer either directly or by scanning so that they can be indexed according to the type of teaching given. In this way by consulting the index, one will be able to access all the teaching given by Rinpoche on a certain topic. The task of transcribing is enormous. 142 long retreats (between 5-30 audio cassettes) are on tape in the archive of which 28 have already been transcribed and 25 are in progress. The rest are still to be done as well as 40 short retreats. The present group of transcribers is spread mainly throughout Europe. The organizer, Josef Heim, is trying to encourage someone in each country to organize a group of transcribers in his or her respective country to carry the work ahead.

Tibetan Medicine Starting in June 1993, the Institute organized a four year course in Tibetan Medicine at Merigar, Italy, divided into two seminars yearly. The course was initially taught by two Tibetan doctors, Dr. Phuntsok Wangmo and Dr. Pasang Yontan Acharya. The course covered the main points of the four medicine tantras as well as more specific subjects such as pediatrics, diagnoses of children's diseases, etc. Scholar and Tibetologist Adriano Clemente gave lessons in Tibetan to students during the course. After Dr. Phuntsok left to continue her work in Tibet, teachings in the 3rd and 4th year were given only by Dr. Pasan who devoted a whole seminar to diet and another to more practical work like moxibustion and the golden needle technique. The course provided students with a good foundation and a quite profound general view of somatic, tantric and dharma medicine. ■

The Association for International Solidarity in Asia was formed in 1998 as a non-profit organization in Italy under the direction of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, with a primary focus on Tibetan communities in Tibet, India and Nepal whose ethnic, cultural and environmental survival is seriously threatened. A.S.I.A.'s current projects include building an elementary school, hospital and cultural center in Galenteng village in Derge (Eastern Tibet), building a hospital and school in Dzamtog village in Amdo, where Rinpoche was born (see September/October 1996 issue of The Mirror, as well as the current issue), supporting Tibetan children attending school at the Tibetan Children's Village in Dharamsala, India (or at other A.S.I.A. schools), and a number of similar projects in areas where Tibetans have meager access to health care and education. You can look up A.S.I.A. at its web site, <http://www.mclink.it/com/makros/asia>.

At the September teaching retreat in Massachusetts, a Board of Directors was selected for A.S.I.A. in America including

A.S.I.A. is coming to America!

Paula Barry, President (New York), Jim Casilio (Santa Fe), Secretary, and Des Barry Treasurer (New York). A.S.I.A. will become a non-profit in the States and take up physical residence in the Conway Elementary School, along with Tsegylgar and Shang-Shung Institute. An enthusiastic group at the retreat donated \$8,000 in seed funds to get A.S.I.A. up and running in the U.S. There is still an opportunity to become a founding member of A.S.I.A. in America by contributing a minimum of \$100 — when our goal of \$10,000 is reached, the group of founders will be complete. Please make out your check to the Dzogchen Community and mail c/o A.S.I.A. to Dzog Chen Community, P.O. Box 277, Conway, MA 01341.

At the A.S.I.A. discussion meeting, founders and network-

ers brainstormed on next steps for fundraising, public relations, outreach materials, and committee membership. A truly astonishing breadth of contacts and potential partnerships emerged from this meeting, including collaborators in France, Canada, England and Australia; people who know other important people; people who are important people (!); and lots of discussion about presence on the internet, having an electronic discussion group, and beginning thoughts about projects needing support — such as professional development for Tibetans, and accessing educational materials. The level of potential resources is very promising, and A.S.I.A. in America is open to every suggestion of likely foundation or individual support, possible collaboration, or thoughts on strategies. As soon as the nonprofit status process is complete and brochures, flyers, and annual report are ready to go — we will be ready to visit with folks and write proposals. Please feel free to contact us at the Tsegylgar E-mail address: 74404.1141compuserve.com. ■

Lives of the Great Masters



Rongzompa

by Jey Clark

*My body appears as Dorje Nalgyorma radiantly clear
Atop her head on a thousand petaled lotus and a sun and moon
In the center of a mandala is the essence of Manjusri
Omniscient and victorious
In the form of the Lama embodying all, the actual presence of refuge
The Pandita who is victorious in all directions
Through his lion like speech, Rong Zom Chos kyi bZang!*

Thus begins a guru yoga of the master Rongzom Choki Zangpo (*Rong Zom Chos kyi bZang Po*) which was composed in the nineteenth century by the great Nyingmapa scholar Mipham Rinpoche.

That almost nine hundred years had passed between the two attestations to the influence and inspiration of this great master on later generations of scholars and practitioners. Rongzompa was renowned as a supremely "Great Pandita" throughout Tibet and amongst Nyingmapas is compared to Longchenpa in the breadth and depth of his understanding.

Choki Zangpo of Rong was born in Tibet in Narlung-rong, a subdistrict of Rulak in lower Tsang in the early part of the eleventh century. His grandfather was Rongben Yontan Rinchen, a practitioner known as Rongben Pelgi Rinpoche. Rongzom's father, Rongben Rinchen Tsultrim, received many teachings and transmissions; including numerous Upadesa of Padmasambhava through disciples of Nanam Dorje Dudjom and Karchen Palgi Wangchug who were direct disciples of Guru Rinpoche. As an auspicious gesture, Rongzompa's father performed the rite of the five awakenings of the causal phase according to Yogatantra which is done at the birth of an emanational being in order to bring about the five excellent results at the time of enlightenment.¹ It is said that Rongzompa displayed these five qualities during his life as: Dignaga's discriminative awareness, Vasubandhu's breadth of learning, Chandragomin's expressive style, Dharmakirti's analytical acumen, and Aryasura's flair for poetic composition.

Rongzompa was said to be the incarnation of one of several Panditas who had arrived in Tibet during the earlier propagation of the teachings. One of these was known as Smrtijnanakirti who had spent time in Do kham where he corrected translations of some of the Tantras and commentaries on the Tantras. He also composed several treatises on grammar. There is some question as to whether Rongzompa was his disciple or his immediate incarnation. Others regarded Rongzompa as an incarnation of a master called Acarya Trhalaringmo who also had been in Kham and translated and taught The Extensive Commentary on the Guhyasamaja Tantra (*gsang.ba.'das.pa.rgya-cher.'grel.pa*). The famous teacher Atisa met Rongzom shortly after arriving in Tibet and was so impressed by him that he suggested that he was an incarnation of the great Indian Pandita Krsnapada (Nagpopa) who had been one of Atisa's teachers. But for most people Rongzompa was a manifestation of Manjusri, the bodhisattva of wisdom due to his seemingly effortless mastery of all doctrines.

Since his childhood Rongzompa displayed great discriminative awareness and an uncanny ability to retain whatever teachings that he heard after only hearing them once. On one occasion while studying with Garton Tsultrim Zangpo in lower Nyang his father came to visit. While playing with other children, Rongzom would often recite by heart the teachings of his guru, having heard them only once. Many of the other students told his father "This son of yours has a wild disposition. As we have grown tired of his noisy chattering, it would be best to take him away now." The father asked the teacher if indeed he should take the boy and Garton replied "Do not speak

of it. He already understands the entire doctrine!"

Rongzompa had an affinity with every learned teacher that he met and comprehended all that he heard. He effortlessly learned several languages and was able to indicate subtle distinctions of meaning within them. It is even said that he comprehended the language of animals. He studied the sutric philosophy at the age of eleven and by the time that he was thirteen he seemed to have completed his studies, having become free from ignorance with respect to all that can be known. He himself said "My learning was not insignificant. There was no doctrine that I did not study. But neither were my studies great, for I did not need to review any doctrine more than once." Rongzompa studied all branches of knowledge and learned them in a single reading and he was considered irrefutable by other scholars of his time.

When Rongzom was thirteen and was studying with the master Doton Senge he had a dream that he was eating a porridge made from the Secret Nucleus (*gsang.snying*) with a vegetable broth made from the Buddhasamayoga (*sangs rgyas-mnyam.sbyor*). When he told his master about this, Doton said "How auspicious! It is a sign that you have completely internalized these doctrines. You should compose a commentary on each of them." In order to fulfill his teachers wish, Rongzompa set about composing three books containing profound instructions on the three trainings. These are: the Extensive Sutra of Commitments (*dam.tshig.mdo.rgyas*) which discusses training in appropriate behavior; the Commentary on the Four Methods and Fifteen Aspects (*'grel.pa.tshul.bzhi-yan.lag.bco.lnga.pa*) instructions for settling into proper contemplation; and the Commentary on the Buddhasamayoga (*mnyam sbyor-gyi.'grel.pa*) instructions on the view and meditation of Dzogchen and training in discriminative awareness. Rongzom also composed many commentaries and essential instructions, such as those on The Tantra of the Secret Nucleus (*gsang.snying, 'grel.pa*) which is one of the two major Tibetan commentaries on this tantra; The Tantra of the Purification of Unfavorable Existences (*Sarvadurgatiparisodhanatantra*) and on the Vajrabhairava Tantra. On one occasion a doctrinal debate was held in which many of the greatest scholars from the four Tibetan provinces assembled. Many of these teachers were of the opinion that native Tibetan writers were diluting the teachings through inserting misleading doctrines of their own creation. Assuming this attitude, several of these scholars confronted Rongzompa in debate. Through his natural brilliance which was unstained by any intellectual limitations, Rongzom easily dispelled their attacks and as they listened and examined his teachings they were awed by his seemingly limitless insight. Many of them then became his disciples. Rongzompa was an essential link between the earlier transmissions (*Nying, ma*) and the later (*Sar,ma*)

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BOOK REVIEWS

DRUNG, DEU AND BON
by Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche
1995 Dharamsala, India

From a talk given by Giacomella Orofino at the presentation of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche's book *Drung Deu and Bon*, in the council chambers of the Arcidosso Town Hall, Arcidosso, Italy. This talk was translated from the Italian by Des Barry.

"It is a great honor for me to present Namkhai Norbu's new book *Drung Deu and Bon*. The author is well known to most of you and has no need of any introduction. Certainly everyone knows Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche as the leader of a spiritual movement which has engendered, and continues to engender, great interest in almost every country in the world. Rinpoche has founded Dzogchen teaching centers (other than the one here in Arcidosso which all of you know very well) in every major city in Europe, Russia, the United States, Argentina, Australia and New Zealand, etc. I am certainly not exaggerating when I say that thousands of people have shown a great interest in his teaching due to an increasing need for us all to participate in other cultures, even those that are more distant in space and time, as we search for those fundamental and absolute values which are at the base of human existence.

Not everyone knows perhaps that Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, in the field of his study and research in Tibetan history, serves as a touchstone for all Tibetan people and this is especially true of the younger generation. Those born in exile resulting from the diaspora set in motion by the tragic events that have diverted the course of Tibetan history in the last forty years still look to Tibet for their cultural identity. Those born in Tibet, a country that has been seriously wounded and humiliated, have kept intact the seeds for the rebirth and continuation of their civilization, and Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche's work in Tibetan History is highly valued by them.

The study of a country's ancient history is of primary importance for its future development. As the great professor of Italian history, Rosario Romero said twenty years ago: "A country that has been separated from its past is a country in an identity crisis and is potentially lost. It has no values from which it may draw inspiration. It lacks that feeling of faith in itself which grows out of the consciousness of a coherent development in which the past is presented as the premise and guarantee of the future." These words are so important for every civilization. They appear to be very appropriate for us to understand and appreciate how important Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche's studies are for Tibet.

In his numerous historical works, the professor Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, who has taught Tibetan Language and Literature for thirty years at the Istituto Universitario Orientale in Naples, has principally focused his attention



on the history of Tibet that precedes the epoch of the Tibetan Empire and the introduction of Buddhism. Norbu Rinpoche has concentrated above all on the history of the ancient kingdom of Zhang Zhung, the region of West Tibet that lies close to Mount Kailash, the most sacred mountain in Asia, which according to Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche is the cradle of Tibetan civilization.

In order to fully understand the originality and importance of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche's contribution we need a brief aside to discuss the traditions of Tibetan historiography concerning the origin of Tibetan culture and the indigenous religion called Bon.

The official introduction of Buddhism into Tibet by King Trisong Detsen in the eighth century A.D. marks a major change in the history of Tibet. As often happens in the history of a people, the introduction of a new religion by the reigning power is governed by precise political motives. In this case, as the author sharply underlines in his introduction on page 21: "The attempt to strip political power from the clergy was successful when King Srong tsen Gampo (and later Trisong Detsen) availed himself of the Buddhist culture which came from India and China to found the base for a new religion which could hold its own in a confrontation with that of the indigenous one."

The official introduction of Buddhism into Tibet in 791, proclaimed by royal edict is witnessed even today by an inscription on a column near Samye, in fact signals the beginning of the apogee of the Tibetan Empire which became one of the great powers of Asia extending from India to China.

Beside the kingdom of Zhang Zhung, Tibet annexed the kingdoms of Turkestan, the caravan oases of Kucha, Kashgar, Kotan and Yarkand and extended in the east as far as Liangzhou, Songzou and Maozou in China.

With the introduction of Buddhism a strongly ideological tradition of historiography began which played down the political objective of the emerging power. According to this tradition, Tibet before the seventh and eighth centuries, that is before the introduction of Buddhism, was a country immersed in the darkness of barbarism, and the king Srong tsen Gampo, a manifestation of Avalekitesvara, the Buddhist god of compassion, tamed the country and civilized it by the introduction

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Pre- history of the Buddha: *a simplified snapshot*

by John Williams

Religions don't arise spontaneously. Any account of the genesis of a religious tradition needs to consider the particular cultural context in which it was embedded, and of which, it is intrinsically a part. Buddhism is no exception. Reconstruction of Buddhism's pre-history can give us a clearer insight into the seminal philosophical ideas and social forces that shaped the birth and development of a remarkable spiritual tradition, as well as affording a greater appreciation of its founder, Siddhartha Gautama, whose heroic quest resulted in a profound insight into the true nature of reality and Man.

The Aryans Around 1500 BC successive waves of nomadic herders made their way into north-west India from an original homeland in Central Asia (present day Turkey, southern Russia and northern Iran). The indigenous inhabitants of this "homeland" (a locale whose existence is based upon purely linguistic evidence) spoke—it is postulated—Aryan, which became the basis of a number of Indo-European languages which spread by migration to India, Greece, Italy and other parts of Western Europe. The form of the Indo-European language that reached India is known as Sanskrit, from which Pali is derived.

The arrival of the Aryans with their horse-drawn chariots (then state-of-the-art), their powerful military strength, and a confidence derived from a pantheon of fierce protective gods, makes the beginning of a new epoch for the Indian sub-continent. This new period is referred to as the Vedic Age (c. 1500 BC-500 BC): an age in which the long, slow, but inexorable sweep of Aryan migration eastwards resulted in the eventual colonization and Aryanisation of the aboriginal peoples and their culture. The Aryans encountered little resistance through their movement east, finding mainly scattered communities of hunters and farmers.

The Indus Valley Civilization By the time the Aryans entered north-west India, the once great cities of the Indus Valley civilization (c. 2400 BC-1500 BC) were in decay. The archaeological finds from the two main metropolises, Mohenjo-Darro and Harappa (both in modern day Pakistan) reveal a sophisticated urban culture; one that suggests a high degree of organization and a centralized administration, and based, it seems on the worship of deities such as the Mother Goddess figure and what has now



P. Koernig

come to be regarded as a prototype of the Hindu god, Siva. Evidence also suggests the existence of a well developed sanitation system as well as constructions used for ritualistic public bathing.

Yet little is really known of this archaic civilization. The ideas and beliefs connected with the cults—the Mother Goddess and proto Siva—no one can be sure of. Perhaps when the symbols inscribed on the artifacts found at the archaeological sites have been deciphered, a clue to these people will be found.

The Aryans upon encountering this foreign and decaying culture did not however destroy it completely; they learned from it, and it is speculated that some of the key religious beliefs may have been assimilated into their own cultural framework.

Aryan Culture The Aryans brought several distinctive features of their own culture to India. Firstly, a pantheon of gods—paralleling the ancient Greek pantheon—with names such as Indra, Varuna and Rudra, who were worshiped with offerings to the sacrificial fire. Secondly, they brought a threefold division of society: a hierarchical order of priests, warriors and cultivators. This threefold division was the forerunner to the Hindu "varnas" or "colors" (later to evolve into the caste system) which included the Brahmins (the class of priests), the Kshatriyas (the class of warriors and aristocrats), the Vaishnas (the class of traders and other professionals) and the Shudras (the class of peasants and land cultivators). The Aryans also brought with them an intoxicant known as Soma. This may have been an alcoholic beverage or some form of hallucinogenic mushroom ("fly agaric") which was used in the ritual sacrifice, inducing states of ecstatic intoxication and trance.

Vedic Religion The religion of the Aryans was based upon the Veda (pronounced vay-da), a body of "revealed" oral teachings and hymns. Veda translates as "knowledge" and there were four in all: Rig Veda (a collection of 1028 hymns to the gods), the Yajur Veda (comprising hymns from the Rig Veda and instructions governing the performance of the ritual), the Sama Veda (a liturgical collection of hymns arranged solely for the Soma sacrifice) and finally, the Arthava Veda (collection of spells and incantations concerned more with popular cults and practices). Only Brahmins had access to this sacred literature. The Aryans worshipped thirty-three deities, personifications and anthropomorphized aspects of nature:

storm, fire, the Sun and so on. At the center of religious life was the ritual of the sacrifice in which Brahmin priests chanted the praises of the various gods, offering sacrifices (grain, milk, and sometimes animals) into the sacrificial fire. In return they hoped for such boons as good health, increase in cattle, plentiful progeny, etc. Although the Vedic visionaries, the "seers", composers of the inspired hymns, marvelled at the glory and power of nature theirs was not a crude and rudimentary naturalism or unsophisticated polytheism as may suggest. The first stirrings of the sense of a divinity behind the manifest world of phenomena can be discerned; the beginnings of a metaphysics was implicit in the poetry of the hymns. The world according to the Aryans was created by sacrifice (the dismemberment of Purusha, the cosmic man) and was maintained by ritual sacrifice. The recitation of the sacrificial verses, mantras, was also seen as a way of manipulating a sacred power called Brahman, so the ritual was regarded as placation and coercing the gods into maintaining cosmic order and harmony. Later, the identity of Brahman (or Ultimate reality, the ground of Being), and its immanent aspect, the abiding essence of human beings, Atman (or soul), was to be expanded upon in the more mystical teachings contained in the Upanishads. The Brahmins, or priestly class occupied the highest echelon of the social division—a division that was regarded as divinely ordained. The Brahmins thereby monopolized religious life and ritual. The rationale underpinning the maintenance of these class divisions was the motion of Dharma, a word which underwent several shifts of meaning during the course of Indian history. For the Aryans (and for Hindu culture in general), the word has the sense of universal law, or duty and related to how people of a particular "varna" or caste, should live according to the duties and responsibilities ascribed to it. If a person lived dharmically, in this life, then in their next life they may be reborn into a higher caste, preferably that of the Brahmins thereby vouchsafing the possibility for liberation.

The Parivrajakas Alongside the Brahmins religious hegemony was a alternative tradition dating back at least to the eighth century BC, possibly with roots in pre-Aryan civilization. This was the tradition of the Parivrajakas or "homeless ones", the wandering ascetics. The Parivrajakas rejected the

The Gyal.po

*from a talk by
His Holiness the
Dalai Lama
given before the
Kalachakra Initiation
held in Sydney,
Australia, September,
1996*



His Holiness in Australia

and reasonable teachings. Even though we have a reasonable teaching, due to malpractices and misunderstanding of this profound practice, people indulge in appeasing a local deity or something like that; there is a danger, if we continue on in this way, that Buddhism will degenerate into spirit worship or something like that.

The second point of this restriction is that I've always adopted a non-sectarian attitude and worked towards bringing about religious harmony in general, and particularly a very strong non-sectarian attitude in the four Tibetan schools of thought. In fact, I have asked people to simultaneously practice the four Tibetan schools of thought. Those who engage in a sectarian attitude, where they say if someone who is Gelugpa goes to study with one of the other four schools, like Nyingmapa or Sakya, then this Shugden will harm them as well as others who say the downfall of the 8th Panchen Lama and the Regent are due to the practice of Nyingmapa, etc., they all have a very strong sectarian attitude.

The third point is that since the third time of the inception of this spirit it was not in good harmony with the Tibetan government established by the 5th Dalai Lama. Because of this the practice of Dorje Shugden doesn't go well with the Tibetan government. It's because of this that the 13th Dalai Lama put very strong restrictions on this practice. I'm just continuing what he has started. These are the three points. So, there's nothing more to say. ■

I have some words of clarification for some of you who are staying for the initiation (Kalachakra). Some of you might be aware in recent times of the controversy about a protector or spirit called Dorje Shugden. In fact, if you read the story of that practice, it has a history of more than three hundred years. All these three hundred years it has proved extremely controversial and somewhat disturbing. Therefore for seventeen or eighteen years I have set out some restrictions on this practice and have recently intensified this restriction.

In the initial stage, out of ignorance, I also did this practice. But meanwhile, as I have explained to you, I have put more restrictions on this practice. So those who consciously practice this practice, I have asked that they not attend this initiation if they are continuing this practice.

The question is why have I restricted this practice? I have mainly three reasons. The first is that Buddhism, as all of you know, that flourished in Tibet, is a very comprehensive teaching, which includes the practice of the complete teaching of the Buddha—the Theravada tradition, the Hinayana tradition, the Mahayana tradition and within that we have the practice of the sutra, and the tantra, and we have such wonderful, profound

authority of the Vedas and efficacy of the ritual sacrifice. They sundered all ties with family and society in their renunciation of the world, and set forth on a life of often severe asceticism, begging for their food, and in search of ultimate truth. Although some of the Parivrajakas came from the Brahmin class, most of their numbers were gleaned from the Kshatriya or warrior. The wandering ascetics would either travel the countryside alone or in small clusters (sangha) under the guidance of a teacher (sramana). Many techniques to aid the apprehension of the truth were practiced: meditation, fasting, celibacy, self-denial—rather than honoring the sacrificial fire they sought the "inner heat" (tapas) which would liberate them from the cycle of birth-death-rebirth (samsara), conditioned as this was by the accumulated merit of one's past and present actions (karma).

The Upanishads ("mystical teachings") The Upanishads are a collection of texts (composed between c.800 BC 400 BC) which

make up the last part of the Vedas and consist of philosophical and mystical speculations which replace the older Vedic concerns with ritual sacrifice. The dissemination of the teachings contained in the Upanishads was to play an important role in the cultivation of the ground on which Buddhism was born. By about the 6th century BC, the Upanishadic principles of karma and rebirth started to gain a wider acceptance in society, filtering out into the wider intellectual community and rigorously debated by both the Brahmins and the ascetic philosophers.

The times are a changin' The popularity of this new type of religious practitioner, the Parivrajakas, in the 6th century BC, was largely the result of the turmoil created by the changing political and social conditions which prevailed. Politically, the tradition hitherto of small clan-based communities was beginning to be undermined by the more aggressive and expansionist kingdoms or tribal republics, two of

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Amdowas

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is crossed by the Kun Lun mountain range that stretches down toward the Bayanhar mountains. The Bayanhar mountains act as a watershed between the Yellow river and the Mekong.

The Eastern area, which also borders the Province of Gansu, is formed by highlands situated at an altitude of 2,500 to 3,500 meters above the sea level. The greatest part of cultivable land, which in ancient times the Hans used to call "the fertile corner", is concentrated at the South-East of Xining (Tibetan Si ling), the capital of the present day Qinghai Province. The remaining territory surrounding the city, and the area around the Blue Lake, from which the Province draws its name, are all pasture lands. Wild antelope, yak, camel, lynx, deer and pheasant roam over the vast grassland. During the summertime, it is also possible to see a cute little rodent peeping out of the holes it digs all over. Tibetans call it A bra (in Amdo dialect pronounced Ab-ra). A famous Tibetan proverb is inspired by this animal.

The lake was known to the Mongols as Koekoenoer, or Blue lake. The Chinese name is a translation of the latter, Qing, blue and Hai, lake or sea. Also the Tibetans call it the Blue Lake, mTsho ngon. It is situated at about 130 km North-West of Xining, and it extends over a surface of 4,456 square meters at 3,200 meters above the sea-level. It takes an entire day by jeep to tour it. Out of the five islands of the lake, the most famous is called Bird Island, because every year gulls and geese go there by the thousands to deposit and nest their eggs.

History

This whole region has witnessed many important events during the course of history.

In ancient times it was known as the land of the Qiang. Historical references to these nomadic tribes appear in the New Tang Dynasty chronicles called "Xin Tang Shu" (the Tang dynasty ruled from 618 to 907 A.D.), and in the chronicles of the Late Han (947-950) called "Hou Han Shu". A sketchy description of the Qiang is also found in another work of the Tang period called "Shuo Wen Jie Zi". The Explanation of Literary and Spoken Characters, where it is said: "Qiang xi fang mu yang ren ye": the Qiang are those people who herd sheep in the West. The presence of Qiang tribes is attested in this area from at least the 14th century before the Christian era. It seems that the use of sheep was transmitted by these tribes to the Han population during this period, when China was ruled by the Shang dynasty (a period that goes from the 16th century B.C. to the 11th century B.C.). The Shang dynasty has remained famous for the production of bronze artifacts of great artistic value that can still be admired today.

It maybe interesting to note that if we analyze the ideogram used by the Hans to identify these tribes, it

is in fact composed by the character Ren, which means human being, surmounted by the character Yang, which means sheep. Curiously, the character Yang, sheep, has come to be used to compose ideograms that in the Chinese language are associated with the idea of beauty, like the character for America (mei), good or fresh taste (xian), good, in the sense of morally good (shan) and also group or crowd (qun).

At present, about 100,000 individuals are identified as members of what the Chinese call the Qiang nationality. They live in the County of Mao Wen, which was established on July 7th, 1958, and also in the Counties of Wen Chuan, Li He Shui and Song Pan, which now fall under the administration of the Sichuan Province's Government.

During the fourth century of the Christian era, protomongol tribes coming from the North West, known in Chinese chronicles as the Xiong Nu (Hun), moved to this area of Qinghai. They conquered the Qiang and established the kingdom of the Tu yu hun, 'A zha in Tibetan.

At the beginning of the 7th century, they ruled most part of the region, except for the above-mentioned fertile corner in the South East, which belonged to the Chinese Tang emperor. Later, they established an alliance with the Chinese emperor who offered a princess in marriage to the king of the Tu yu hun.

In 634, when Tibet was in the process of acquiring supremacy in Central Asia, the territory was invaded by the troops of the King of Tibet *Srong btsan sgam po* (born in 617) who defeated the Tu yu hun.

Since the fall of the Tang dynasty in 907, northern China was ruled by non-Chinese people. The first were the Khitai, a Central-Asian nomadic tribe. The term Khitai has later become the Mongolian and Russian equivalent for China itself, and through the travelogs of Marco Polo, the Cathay of European literature.

The ruling class of the Song dynasty (960-1279) was pushed away by "the northern barbarians", and settled to the south of the Yellow River to preserve the authentic Chinese culture, just as it happened in 220 B.C. after the fall of the Han dynasty.

At the beginning of the eleventh century a Tibetan population called Minyag, known to the Mongols as the Tangut, and to the



Chinese as Xi xia, established a kingdom in this Amdo area. Its capital was Ning Xia, situated on the upper reaches of the Yellow river. This kingdom survived for two centuries. The Tangut were Buddhists and spoke a Tibetan idiom. Eventually they were defeated by the Mongols of Chinggis Khan, and were absorbed into that much bigger empire. It



was precisely during the campaign against the Tangut that Chinggis Khan met his death in 1227. It is narrated that on such occasion the whole population of an important Tangut center was sacrificed without mercy to mourn his death.

Nowadays, Minyag is the name of a region inhabited by Tibetans that corresponds to the area of *Dar rtse mdo*, now in the Ganzi (Tib. *dkar rdzas*) Autonomous Prefecture of Sichuan. In Chinese, this area of *Dar rtse mdo* is called Kangding. This name was attributed to the region during the Chinese Republic (1912-1949) and remained after the Revolution of 1949: it means "Kham submitted".

Mongol tribes occupied the region until the end of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), by confining the Tanguts in the areas included between the sources of the Yellow River and at the Eastern side of it.

Under the Manchus, who ruled China as the Qing dynasty from 1644 to 1911, the area was occupied by Mongolian and Tibetan nomadic tribes. The Prefecture of Xining was established in 1725, but until 1911 Tibetan and Mongolian tribes were still enjoying a certain autonomy, ruled by their chiefs.

When the Chinese Republic was created in 1912, the Chinese capital moved from Da Du, i.e. present-day Beijing, to the southern coastal city of Nanjing. A commission was then created to control a protectorate that included not only the Qinghai region, but also the adjacent Gansu and Ningxia; the name of the latter Province is drawn from that of the historical

capital of the Minyag people and nowadays is prevalently inhabited by the Central-Asian population of the Uighurs, who follow the Islamic religion.

The Qinghai Province was established in 1928. During the 30s and the 40's, Qinghai was ruled by a Chinese Muslim governor, while the year 1950 witnessed the beginning of the so-called 'Peaceful Liberation', perpetrated by the Chinese Army.

The People

After the Tibetan Autonomous Region, the Province of Qinghai is the less densely populated area of China. According to the last available data, the

Tibetan population of Qinghai contains about one million individuals.

Amdowas owe their name to the term used by Tibetans to indicate a region that not only includes Qinghai, but also Gansu and the Northeastern

part of Sichuan. A theory concerning their origin would see them as the encounter between local populations with Central Tibetan troops that settled in this area during the epoch of maximum expansion of the Tibetan monarchy (seventh to ninth century A.D.). This thesis about the ethnic origin of Tibetan Amdowas was mainly sustained by a very famous Tibetan Amdo historian, *Ge 'dun Chos 'Phel* (1905-1951). It is still considered valid by many Tibetan scholarly and religious people.

In Qinghai, Amdowas correspond approximately to the 20% of the total population. They are distributed in the eastern agricultural area, and in the Autonomous Prefectures of Yushu (created on the Dec. 25th, 1951), Hainan (created on the 6th dec. 1953), Huangnan (created on the Dec. 22nd, 1953), mGo log (created on the January 1st, 1954), and Huixi (created on the January 25th, 1954). In Gansu Province they are mainly concentrated in the Autonomous Prefecture of Gan Nan. In Sichuan, they are to be found in the Autonomous Prefecture of Aba (Tib. *rNga ba*).

Qinghai is a real ethnic melting pot, since it is home to Tibetans, Mongols, Tu, Kazak, Sala and Hui. These three last ethnic groups originate from Central Asia and profess the Islamic religion.

Life Styles

Qinghai is certainly not a land favored by a good climate. The Qinghai plateau, even if it hosts areas that are suitable to agriculture, is witness and victim of such considerable and sudden climatic changes that sometimes in one sin-

gle summer day it is possible to experience the weather of virtually the four seasons altogether.

The majority of the Amdo population is now dedicated to agriculture. Barley, wheat, grain, millet, maize and various vegetables are cultivated.

Dietary habits have changed after the Liberation, since they underwent Chinese influence, so that apart from the traditional staple food made out of roasted barley flour (*tsam pa*), rice, white flour bread, and refined sugar are consumed as well. According to what farmers say, the recent "system of responsible production" has brought along a certain well-being, when compared to the period of the agricultural communes. Wealthier farmers now invest in the construction of new houses built in mixed architectural styles. In some areas, Amdowas dedicate themselves to both agricultural and nomadic activities.

A famous Tibetan proverb says that if one is looking for the best religion, that will be found in Central Tibet. If one talks about the most heroic of Tibetans, these are none others than the Khampas. And if one is looking for the best horses, Amdo is the right place. As a matter of fact, at least twelve different breed of horses are said to exist there. However, Amdowas herd also yak, sheep and goats.

Qinghai is one of the most suitable pastoral areas in present-day China. Nomads are generally wealthier than the sedentaries, because wool and skins sell very well. During the period of the agricultural communes established when Mao Zedong was the new 'emperor' of China, many previously open pasture lands in Qinghai were delimited, at first by digging deep channels in the ground. In Tibetan they are called '*rTswa mdzod ra ba*', the enclosure of pasture land. Later on, barbed wire was used to the same purpose. Such a measure, which was implemented not only in Qinghai but also in other pastoral areas of Tibet, has never been popular. Nonetheless, the tendency to create enclosures does not seem to have ceased.

Nomadic Amdowas live either in groups of family or separated. Fully nomadic Amdowas move twice during the course of the year. From the beginning of spring onward, flocks start moving higher and higher on the mountains, to look for fresh and tasty grass. In October they come down from the mountains and reach more adequate places to spend the very cold and snowy winters.

Some nomadic Amdowas live quite isolated most of the time. A professor of the Qinghai Institute of Nationalities where I was studying told me that when some Amdo nomads received the visit of Chinese authorities just a few years ago, they showed these authorities the famous Red Book of Mao Zedong, as it was customary to do during the Cultural Revolution (1966 to 1976), ignoring the fact that that custom was an obsolete

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HEALING & PRACTICE

An Interview in two parts with Gerry Steinberg and Verena Smith

Gerry Steinberg and Verena Smith are both long time practitioners involved in the Tsegalgar Dzogchen Community. Gerry is an allopathic physician and Verena is a practitioner of Chinese medicine and herbology.

Mirror: Can you give a brief description of your healing profession and how long you have been practicing?

Verena: My primary healing art is acupuncture and herbal Chinese medicine. I began practicing in 1982 and apprenticed for a couple of years in England with an MD and acupuncturist, then attended various schools. I came to the States in 1985 and have been steadily working here as a doctor of traditional Chinese medicine.

Gerry: I'm a physician, and my specialty officially is internal medicine, but I really practice rehabilitation medicine. I've been a medical doctor since 1971. I have been basically doing some aspect of rehabilitation medicine since the late 1970's, primarily with people with neurological disabilities as well as geriatric rehabilitation. The rehabilitation medical training was basically on the job.

M: Could each of you define what a "healer" is to you and if you consider yourself a healer.

V: A healer, in as much as helping to make something whole, yes. That is my gut feeling as to what healing is all about and it is not really about doing something to someone. It's to help enable the system to heal itself, to make the yin and yang even again.

G: I never really thought of medicine as a healing profession when I first went into medicine and it's only been over the years that I've looked at the difference between someone who works with the health professions and a healer. Especially in Western medicine, many people can provide a service to an individual that may benefit that person in terms of their health, but the person themselves is not necessarily a healer. Healing has a certain intuitive aspect, whereas in a Western perspective, what is done is more related to objective information that is learned and applied. From that perspective there are Western physicians who are healers, but that has to do with something you have a capacity for, one can probably develop that capacity, but from that standpoint I don't know if I consider myself a healer as much as I consider myself a professional.

M: Do you think the same could be true of practitioners of Chinese medicine as well, that someone could be just a technician?

V: Yes, but within Chinese medicine there is the aspect of energy as opposed to chemistry, and a good practitioner of Chinese medicine needs that kind of intuition. A lot of practitioners of Chinese medicine have it, but not everyone. In America the label of healer is more common; I call myself a health care provider or Oriental medical practitioner. I see my role or my path as a concept of making whole; not as a romantic notion.

M: Do you think there is something innate in certain healing arts that would assume a practitioner a healer, for example, a shaman, or a medicine person and how might that differ from what you each do?

G: It's a matter more of the practitioner than the discipline itself; within any of the healing professions you will find people who are healers and some who are not. In certain of the healthcare professions it's much more critical that one has that capacity in order to be effective, whereas when you get into more abstract types of activities it might not be as critical.

V: I also think that it takes time to develop vision and sensitivity, and certain practices of medicine lend themselves to time. Traditionally, practitioners of Oriental medicine take one hour to one hour and a half to do intake. I know that in contemporary modern medicine now some people take more time, but generally that's not the case. Generally you go in, say what you've got, get your bottle and leave. There is more opportunity or someone or a Chinese medical practitioner to develop the sensitivity or a 'healer' as opposed to the monetary orientation of Western medicine. In the last twelve years I have had the time, taking pulses, looking at people, their coloring, and feeling their emotions when they walk in. The framework is in favor of developing those intuitive qualities.

G: If a person has a propensity for those qualities that they will find the situation or circumstances that allow them to develop them. I see for myself that I have developed those qualities and use them in my profession.

M: What do you see as limitations, if any, within your own field of medicine; how other forms compliment or compensate your own?

V: Someone may come with an already weak immunity and get a tenacious infection, and you try to get their bodies to respond but

there's nothing there to respond. If you have to you recommend antibiotics, they may have a chronic urinary tract infection and its been kept at bay, but you may need a stronger weapon. I like using Western medicine, I like using it as a window; if there's something I can't see or feel, I'm the first one to say have an MRI or a pap smear.

G: I think the conditions and



circumstances under which one practices dictate the types of treatments available to the patients. There's a subset of people who would go for an acupuncture treatment and those that refuse allopathic medicine, and there's a larger number of people who use acupuncture who have had a fair amount of experience with allopathic medicine. In the circumstances and conditions in which I work, the majority of the patients, their view and vision of what is possible for them and what circumstances they would be treated under, allow for certain types of treatment and I have to respect their condition. If you feel certain methods are right and the person is open, then you suggest it. The other thing is that many of the people I work with are the ones who need the strong treatment—often older people who have had involved problems and the circumstances are already predetermined. I feel the majority of the people I don't see because of the kind of medicine I practice could greatly benefit from other types of treatments. Working in an allopathic hospital and in the setting where I work, the kind of work I do in the short period of time I do really does not allow for that. Some of the pain patients I have have been involved with acupuncture, chiropractic medicine and massage in the past.

M: That brings up an interesting point in the notion of how important the relationship between the health care practitioner and the patient, how essential or important to the healing process do you see the nature of that relationship?

G: I think it is important, but I

think there are certain circumstances where it's not so important. Like if you're having your knees replaced, you want the best technician to do it, not necessarily that the relationship is an issue, but the person who knows how to do it the best. I work in an environment where I work with a whole group of practitioners, and our goal is very practical and that is to get the person back home so they can function independently after they have had some kind of major event. And there is a whole series of individuals working with that person. A psychologist, social worker, occupational therapist, physical therapist, myself, a physician, and a nurse.

M: So, the team approach covers all the aspects that maybe one practitioner of say Oriental medicine is responsible for.

G: Yes, and my environment is unique within the medical environment. It is important to have a connection to the patient on some level, but how that relationship develops

is different for each individual and that's a manifestation of one's own condition and circumstance as well as the patient's way of manifesting.

V: I think it is important but I think it is not an absolute necessity. When I was training with this MD in England, we had a dog patient. We lifted him up on the table for treatment; the dog had arthritis. Before his treatment we had to lift him up and after he would just hop down from the high table and walk off. This was kind of my ultimate example of how believing in something doesn't make it function. As long as you have the possibility to open yourself to the experience that's sufficient. I doubt if the dog had faith in acupuncture. It just worked. Regarding the relationship between the health care provider and patient, for me is very important because that's the way I operate. It's a totally intimate setting for me and very important to the people who come, important that they know that that one time they are there that they can let it all be there, whatever it is. I can't imagine working in other ways, even though I have, I've worked in a Tibetan refugee camp in India where there were fifty people in one room and I hardly ever got off my knees, and we would crawl around the narrow rows of people and treat knees and shoulders and headaches, eye problems and what have you and there was no opportunity of a "deeper" contact beyond the basic recognition of human-ness. But there was a relationship innate to the circumstance.

M: How did you decide you

wanted to be a doctor or healer, do you remember a point in your life where you made that decision?

G: I think I evolved into it and was interested in science and biology when I was a student and was interested in the healing aspect of it and when in college I realized I was more interested in the healing aspect than the hard science aspect, but I entered more from the hard science and knowledge side of medicine.

V: I was a jack of all trades and did everything from pottery to weaving to painting to writing to translating. I can't even remember all of the things I've done—this is not uncommon in my profession. I always wanted a passion and never had it. I'd watch others who had it, and always longed for it. Then I had sciatica and ended up going to an acupuncturist for treatment, the doctor that I ended up studying with. I could barely move when I got up on the table, and when the treatment was over I was able to move. That's all it took, just that moment, and then I had to work really hard. I was already 33 or 35 when I started, and now I'm 52, I was really a late bloomer and a very passionate one, and I had to study really hard.

M: Could you talk a little about how you met Rinpoche and how the teachings have effected your professional life?

G: How I met Rinpoche is related to how Rinpoche came to Conway. I was a student of Mr. Anderson's (a Gurdjieffian teacher) and he got involved in Buddhist teachings and I met Rinpoche when he was invited to Conway in 1982 by Mr. Anderson. I had an instantaneous connection with Rinpoche. The way it effects my practice is the way it effects my entire life. I can't separate anything in my life from the teachings. I've become a little more relaxed in my life and my tensions have decreased a little bit, that has helped me in personal life and my professional life. It has also helped me to be able to see people with an objective kind of compassion. The strongest thing it has brought to me is to try and bring my presence and sense of the teachings as myself to what I am doing in the hospital. Making a connection with people on a basic level of recognizing their suffering, and being able to just accept the act that this is our condition as human beings and we try to do the best we can with the circumstances.

V: I met Rinpoche in 1981 because someone sang the Song of the Vajra to me and talked about the Six Lokas practice. I traveled about 1000 miles in the back of an old van to see Rinpoche. I was living in England at the time and came all this way to meet this incredible master and arrived in Montebelluna and the retreat was in a ruin and it was raining heavily, there were crowds of people, and I thought, "Somewhere here

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WINDHORSE

Interview with Molly and Jeffrey Fortuna of
Windhorse Associates, Inc.
Northhampton, Massachusetts, USA

Windhorse Associates is a therapeutic action group committed to working with psychologically disturbed persons in individual households. The household may be the person's current residence or a special therapeutic household created with the Windhorse staff. Skilled therapists join with the client and their family to form an integrated learning team to facilitate the natural process of recovery. The natural community setting for the program is in Northampton, Massachusetts, USA.

"Windhorse refers to a mythic horse, famous throughout Central Asia, who rides in the sky and is the symbol of man's energy and discipline to uplift himself. Windhorse is literally an energy in the body and mind, which can be aroused in the service of healing an illness or overcoming depression." (Podvoll, 1990, p.24, *The Seduction of Madness*)

Jeffrey and Molly Fortuna are the co-founders of Windhorse, Inc., in Northampton. Jeffrey is the Executive Director, and Molly the Director of Nursing. They are married.

Mirror: Windhorse Associates, Inc. was originated by Dr. Podvoll in 1981 in Boulder, Colorado. Could you describe his dissatisfactions with the treatment available in this country for the mentally ill, if indeed there were, and on what did he base the principles of the Windhorse Program?

Jeff: In 1978 Ed Podvoll came to Boulder, Colorado to become the director of the Contemplative Psychology Program of the Naropa Institute. I had finished that graduate program and Molly had been his student in that graduate program. Ed Podvoll was a psychiatrist who had become a student of Tibetan Buddhism and Trungpa Rinpoche around 1974. At that time he was the staff psychiatrist and director of education at Austin-Riggs, a hospital for the mentally ill in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. He held that position for nine years, so he was steeped in psychoanalytic tradition, and particularly was trained in intensive psychotherapy for highly disturbed people, which is its own line of work with the mentally ill initiated

by Sandor Ferenczi who was a student of Sigmund Freud, and there were several generations between Freud and Ferenczi and the current group. Otto Will and Harold Searles were members of that group and Ed Podvoll was a student of them both. Podvoll was 37 years old when he got involved with contemplative practices in the 70's, and had already devoted his life and career to intensive psychotherapy with highly disturbed people. He brought that love of psychology, the mind and that radical approach to his work to Naropa Institute. I met Ed and we hit it off. I also had had an interest in working with highly disturbed people, and I became a teaching assistant of his courses in the late 70's at Naropa Institute. Ed initiated a teaching supervision group at Naropa for some of the graduate students around 1980. There were about eight graduate students and we would present our work week by week, and he would give us feedback and we would dialogue about it, which is a standard supervision format. We were all involved in Naropa Institute and all practicing Buddhist meditation. So our work was really bringing together our contemplative practice with our clinical work. Both Molly and I were in that group.

M: So this was a Master's degree program in contemplative psychotherapy? Did you each have a background or degrees in psychology?

JF: Yes. I had a BA degree in psychology and was working in the field and was a client in various kinds of new age therapies. I came to Colorado to be a student of Trungpa Rinpoche and get involved in this graduate program.

MF: My background is in nursing; I was a psychiatric nurse. I

worked in hospitals and health centers in the traditional medical model. I was also interested in Buddhist teachings and that's why



Jeff and Molly Fortuna

G. Marler

I ended up at Naropa. To give you some background, we had graduated from Naropa Institute and were working in the mental health field. It felt like a cut off. We wondered about our own 'aftercare'? We obtained our degrees and wondered how do we go further? That's when the graduates got together and asked Ed to continue with us in another way. That's how the supervision group was formed.

M: What do you mean by Podvoll's "radical" approach?

JF: The line of intensive psychotherapy that handles deeply disturbed people is a radical approach. Engaging in three to five sessions a week with someone in or coming out of a psychotic state is very unusual, increasingly unusual. As a matter of fact it's hard for us to find places where it's happening. There's some at Austin Riggs, some at Chestnut Lodge, related to the students Sandor Ferenczi and Freud, and that might be it. It's kind of an obscure line of psychotherapy. Most of the care these days is medication and cost effectiveness driven, so to spend a lot of intensive time with someone in that framework is virtually unheard of. So we are continuing on in that vein, so it's radical from a cultural point of view. From the traditional medical model the argument is "Why would you talk so much to someone who has diabetes or, by analogy, why would you talk so much to someone with a brain disease?", which is the current popular theory of mental illness. In that sense it's a radical departure. The Windhorse Project was born out of this supervision. There was this client who needed to come out of the hospital and had nowhere to go and Ed wanted to continue to work with her; so we all said "Hey let's get an apartment and we'll all work with her." We would make some kind of environment, a holding environment, a container for her. So it was the members of that group that formed the first Windhorse team.

MF: It was a kind of spring-

board for treating her at home rather than in the hospital. Ed's concern that being in the hospital was creating more confusion for her, being with other people who are disturbed, so there is this notion that if anybody is in an environment with disturbed people it would cause them to take on or become disturbed themselves. So Ed said let's do something opposite of that. Let's surround the person with health and order and a

pleasant environment; if the hospital isn't working, the answer must be in its opposite.

M: Is this view of surrounding the sick person with 'health' somehow related to the teachings of Trungpa Rinpoche or traditional

practices of working with the mentally ill in Tibetan Medicine?

MF: It has had a lot to do with Chogyam Trungpa as a teacher and as a person. He lived his life in a way that people were inspired in regards to the possibility of art in everyday life. His approach was that every moment of life could be an art form, or a moment of sanity or you could create an environment that would enhance someone's sanity. So we were always challenged with that. How to create sanity, not only in one's mind but in the environment, surrounding the mind, surrounding many people's minds. That was our challenge. And the further challenge was: you can't provide it for someone else if you're not living it yourself. So therefore it was a double challenge, provide it and live it. That's very hard in a hospital.

JF: In the Shambhala tradition the definition of illness and a simple definition of psychosis is that the mind and body are out of sync, out of harmony with the environment, so again it's a notion of environment particular in the notion of sane household. All the primordial elements comprising the household: the earth element, the fire element, that's where they're all experienced. So there needs to be a strong household base for mind to return to; the mind of the psychotic person as well as the mind of the team members. So that environment was created as a place where one could really live on this earth.

M: Are you using any sorts of Tibetan Medicine in treatment?

JF: The way it's gone is that along the way in the 80's we've had several consultations with various Tibetan physician lamas; notably Trogawa Rinpoche and Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche. We had a lot of contact with them and they came to Boulder and we'd talk to them about our work, and Ed Podvoll was a student of Tibetan Medicine but never learned the diagnostic arts, it was more on a psychological and personal level than actually learning the diagno-

sis and about the application of the actual medicines. But there is a group in Boulder, Kontrul Rinpoche's group that have developed a program like ours and one of them who is an acupuncturist who has begun using Tibetan Medicine and herbal supplements under Rinpoche's guidance also under a Dr. Dolkar in Delhi, India. So we've been using some of these medicines in consultation with this fellow and we are slowly finding our way. They are called the Agar medicines and help with relaxing lung (wind) disorders.

M: Do you also use other 'non-traditional' methods of treatment?

MF: In addition to the traditional psychotropic medications, we use relaxation, acupressure, acupuncture, cranial sacral work. We've tried homeopathic but that requires that the patient not use caffeine or other substances, which can be very difficult sometimes for our clients. We also use yoga, tai chi, and shiatsu. We use visualizations and meditation when it's appropriate. We have to use that really carefully because meditation can be used to take the mind away, rather than being present with it. With some of our patients we do a practice called maitri space awareness practice which is a practice to develop loving kindness with different mind states. I would say that we are an alternative but at the same time we honor traditional Western medicine, the best of it hopefully, and that we use other things to complement it. We try to bring medication to an optimum level, rather than necessarily trying to eliminate it completely, because some people just can't do that.

M: So, you don't see as a goal of your treatment to wean clients forever from psychotropic medications?

JF: That's right.

MF: That's a very tricky goal. We try to honor the desire to be free of the medicine, but also we try to honor the hope and fear cycle someone could get into if their goal was to be med. free and they weren't able to achieve that.

JF: We're also inviting people to live in Northampton, in an ordinary setting, so we're not in an isolated retreat where a lot of disturbing behavior could be accommodated. So, we have a great deal of responsibility to the town and our neighbors; bringing disturbed people into their midsts, uninvited by them, so there is some balance we're trying to achieve of tolerating and allowing people to be who are they are and express their individual energies; but at the same time they need to live in an ordinary setting, so we can't really tolerate a lot of violence which is a traditional problem for any program.

M: In terms of realistic integration into society maybe that's more healthy in the long run.

JF: Yes. ■

To be continued in the next issue of *The Mirror*.

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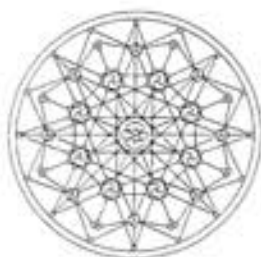
is this master." Then I saw him sitting right in the middle of all the people, talking and chatting, and children were screaming.

M: And how does Dzogchen effect your healing practice?

V: It does constantly. In the whole process of listening, feeling and sensing where somebody is. Over the years I have managed to leave myself at home and to just go to work and really be there, and that's a kind of a presence. Things like the Vajra recitation really help me while I work.

While I'm figuring out where to put the needles or decide how to work on a person or how the energy is flowing, I do the purification of the elements, a practice that really speaks to me because that's what my medicine is all about. The practice has brought what was sympathy and empathy into the realm of compassion and bodhicitta; into a clearer place. In the beginning it was hard for me because I would get every sadness and pain. ■

To be continued in the next issue.



I N T E R N A T I O N A L COMMUNITY NEWS

Autumn Report from Tsegyalgar

by Marit Cranmer

In the last month, after the retreat with Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, life at Tsegyalgar is preparing for the winter season. For some time many people have been busy with the fallout of getting things back in order after all the activity; with the landing of more than three hundred people who

cabin for the winter. The gakyil had a meeting with the Shang Shung Institute and they have decided to guarantee a grant under their auspices to Jim Valby, the resident Tibetologist, so that he can continue his important translation work of the Dzogchen tantras.

The weekly schedule is as usual



Guardian cabin on Buckland land

J. Smith

attended the main retreat and the following two Santi Maha Sangha exams and trainings.

In the office: the mailing list and inventory of the bookstore are being updated with the many new people's addresses, the pledges are carefully written out, the last of the tape orders are being sent, and the energy of the schoolhouse is back to the normal daily routines under the consistent care of our gekos, Nicole Bini.

With some income from the retreat, the Red gakyil decided to put a new roof on the annex and winterize some of the windows. Glen Eddy is preparing his new studio on the first floor, where in months to come he will work on a newly commissioned thangka. The Buckland workers, led by Joe Zurylo, are preparing the guardian

with Ganapujas on special practice days, Tantra club and Santi Maha Sangha study groups with Jim Valby twice a week. There is Vajra Dance practice every Tuesday evening as well as other practices. This weekend we will start group Rushen practice on the advice of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. On December 14th and 15th we will have a weekend of the Purification of Six Lokas practice. Tsaltrim Allione is visiting Tsegyalgar in January and we hope they'll be time to do Chöd together. The woman lama Sakya Jetsun Kushok from Vancouver, Canada, has promised to come and give teachings some time shortly after the Tibetan New Year. Although no date is set, we will be doing Yantra Yoga weekends with Michael Katz and Paula Barry and Vajra Dance with Bodhi Krause. ■

Karma Ling Institute

The Karma Ling Institute in Savoy, France was founded in 1979 by Kyabje Kalu Rinpoche (1904-1989), a great master in the Kagyupa tradition, who entrusted spiritual direction of the center to Lama Denis Tondrup, his oldest Western disciple. Lama Denis has developed the Vajrayana teaching in a strong spirit of Rime (non-sectarianism) and has opened the center to other Oriental and Western traditions such as Christianity, Sufism, Taoism, Zen, etc. In this spirit of openness Lama

Denis recently met with Choegyal Namkhai Norbu on several occasions since he was interested in his teachings and experience of transmitting the Dharma in the West. As a result of this contact a relationship of collaboration and exchange has developed between the Karma Ling Institute and the Dzogchen Community which has led to the organization at Karma Ling of a Course of the Dance of the Six Spaces. The course given by Adriana Dal Borgo was open to everyone, particularly the French

practitioners in the Dzogchen Community. Furthermore, Choegyal Namkhai Norbu has accepted an invitation to hold a teaching retreat at Karma Ling in September, 1998. At a meeting with one of the Gakyil members during his last visit to Merigar, Lama Denis said that Karma Ling offers possibilities for personal retreats either in individual rooms or in isolated chalets. Those interested in doing a retreat at Karma Ling can contact: Garuda Ling tel.0033-79255490, fax 0033-79257573.

Latvian Community News

Hello! We are very glad to be able to have this opportunity to speak with our Vajra family through the vehicle of The Mirror. We are your Vajra brothers and sisters from Padmaling, the Dzogchen Community of Latvia. We want to tell you that we exist and practice and are always together with you in the teaching. We are in the same boat, and are trying to reach realization like you. For this reason, we would like to introduce ourselves.

Until the end of the 80's all the spiritual activity and interests were not officially allowed in Latvia and were seen as undesirable. There was very strong disapproval from the authorities and from public opinion as well. It was like this in any country of the ex -USSR and until 1990 Latvia was a part of the ex -USSR. But we always had people who wanted much more than what was allowed. People couldn't believe that reality was as simple as what we were taught. At the times of "Perestroika" came the first little streams of information and people started to choose their paths. But

most religious and philosophical movements that were given us, couldn't answer our interests or questions. The search did guide us to Buddhism and some people went to Buryatia to receive Buddhist teachings in reality. It was a turning point in our minds. We understood that the teachings of the Buddha was exactly what we were looking for. And soon we knew of the existence of our Master, Choegyal Namkhai Norbu, and without interruption we read *The Crystal and the Way of Light*, and the *Talks in Conway*. At that moment we understood that to receive a teaching from this Master was very, very important. Maybe it was our karmic connection. In our Community there are many lucky people who didn't have to look very far or too long to find our Master. For many of us, just to hear his name was enough.

In 1991 we had the first visit of Fabio Andrico, and then in May of 1992, Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. After that retreat our Community began to become alive. Some people left, but others came. We came to learn the teachings and the practices. Now four years have past. Almost every one of us has had three or more retreats with Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche in Russia and Buryatia. We regretted very much Rinpoche's illness and are very happy that he is getting better. We do practices and

try to be in the state of presence that manifests and develops within us. With time, we have the understanding of the value of the Master and his teaching, which he gives us with all his unlimited loving kindness, and through more and more teachings and practices we and our lives are slowly changing. In this year, thirty three Latvians attended the retreat in Moscow. A few people couldn't come. Eight of us passed the Santi Maha Sangha Base level exam. The desire for practicing and being on the path becomes bigger and stronger year after year.

Thanks to our sponsor we have a hall in the center of Riga where we meet regularly to practice. Everybody takes part in it according to their own possibility. During the time between retreats, twenty to twenty-five people are active, and around five of them practice daily and even a few times a day. Now practice becomes a way of life, like the air we breathe. Now we have a wonderful piece of land which is 200km from Riga, 2km from Estonia and 10km from Russia. On this land is forest, three ponds, and a house. In our hearts we have hope that someday it would be a place for a Gar. Then everyone of you could come and practice together with us. For now we can meet together at retreats with Rinpoche. We hope to meet you there! ■

NEW GAKYILS 1996 WELCOME TO ALL NEW GAKYILS!

TSEGYALGAR

Blue: Steve Ezequille, Neil Murray, Alexis Merritt
Yellow: Efreim Marder, Treasurer: Sally Atkinson,
Diane Sievers
Red: Jim Smith, President; Joe Zurylo,
Paolo Carini
Secretaries: Sara Renner and Marit Cranmer

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Reid Fossey
Red: Paul Tuell, Margaret Bradford, Gene Kim
Yellow: Carol Fields, Secretary, 755 Euclid Ave.,
Berkeley, CA. 94708 Community telephone:
510-559-9753; Lynn Weinberger, President; Steve
Goodman
Treasurer: Ruth Corwin

ALASKA

Yellow: Dale Brandenburger, PO Box 240717,
Douglas, AK 99824
Red: Jim De Vincent, PO Box 22444, Juneau, AK
99802
BLUE: Son Tcher Pak, PO Box 32598, Juneau, AK
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The Month of the Stupa

December, 1996



M. Logrosino

After carefully reflecting on the proposals that emerged from several meetings that took place during the summer retreats in Merigar, we thought of launching a world-wide enterprise: a fund raising month dedicated to the Great Stupa of Merigar throughout the whole of the Dzogchen Community.

On the 15th of June this year, Rinpoche laid the first stone of the stupa in the presence of many of the local authorities, who are intrigued and fascinated by the idea of having a great protection on their territory.

Work has started again, after a break during the period of the summer retreats, and will continue for an estimated eighteen months until completion. At present the structure does not require a large work force but we predict that towards the end of next spring there will be work for all volunteers who wish to participate. The team for the building work is composed of four or five people, and another four or five are needed for making the tsa tsa to be placed inside the structure.

To facilitate the organization of hospitality for the volunteers, we ask all those interested to let us know when they can come and what they prefer to do.

Another, but no less important aspect, is the raising of funds for the construction. Many people have asked whether it is true that we need 150.000.000 lire and the reply is always that this estimate is based on several similar stupas which have been built in France. In any case, we can have a more precise idea when we have completed at least the main structure and defined the details of the decorations and finishings. In fact, there has never been something similar built in Italy.

Keeping in mind the fact that up until now, through local enterprises, members donations and subscriptions from the business people of Arcidosso, we have raised around 40.000.000, and we are still a long way from our goal. So we have decided to proclaim December 1996 the Month of the Stupa; thus, together with everyone of the Dzogchen Community all over the world, we can concentrate on this problem. In short we want to apply the well known saying "together we stand" or as Rinpoche so often says "many drops make an ocean".

We think this should become our working method. If now and then we focus all of our energies on one specific goal we can produce a much greater synergy than if we act in isolation. Thus, when we have finished the month of the stupa, we could dedicate ourselves to collecting funds for the house of Rinpoche in Australia, for example, and then for A.S.I.A., for the Shang Shung Institute, for the translators fund, for the teachers and so on. Anyway we'll never finish....

Anxiously awaiting your reply, we are all singing together
KALE KAPORE, KALE KAPOREEEEE!

Giovanni Boni

The Director of the Merigar Gakyil

MERIGAR STUPA FUND

If you wish to simply make a donation to the building of the big stupa in Merigar you can send a check or bank transfer to an account which has been opened specifically for funds for the stupa:

Bank name: MONTE DEI PASCHI DI SIENA, filiale di Arcidosso

Address: 58031 Arcidosso, (GR) Italy

Bank sorting codes: ABI 1030 CAB 72160

Account number: cc 568705

Cheques and bank transfers should be made out to "Comunita Dzogchen"

TO ALL GAKYILS OF THE DZOGCHEN COMMUNITY

If possible please send to Loek Jehee, Tseggyalgar and Merigar an official e-mail link where we can send all important and urgent messages. Loek Jehee INTERNET: loekjehe@xs4all.nl
Tseggyalgar 74404.1141@compuserve.com
Merigar 101572.3265@compuserve.com
<http://www.mclink.it/com/makros/asia> (web-site for ASIA)
<http://www.magna.com.au/~ibrown/dzogchen/retreat.htm> (web-site from Australia)
<http://scil.npi.msu.su/pub/religion/> (web-site for Russia)
<http://www.xs4all.nl/~loekjehe/> (web-site from Holland with pictures)

Otherwise you can send an international money order from the post office, made out to Comunita Dzogchen and in the space on the right you can write "Stupa fund".

There are also other Stupa projects in progress within the international Dzogchen Community. One is at Tara Mandala, in Pagosa Springs, Colorado, USA and the other is beginning on the Buckland land at Tseggyalgar in Massachusetts, USA. ■

COURSE OF THE DANCE OF THE THREE VAJRAS

December 21-24

with Stoffelina Verdoni

KARMA LING INSTITUTE

Hameau de St. Hugon, 73110 Arvillard,

FRANCE

Tel. 33 79.25.54.16,

fax 33 79.25.78.08

URGENT REQUEST FROM NAMGYALGAR

Rinpoche's house is proceeding well, but more money is needed to finish it in time for his arrival in three months. We still need to establish a water supply to the house and some gas and solar lights, etc., as well as many little bits and pieces. All donations, no matter how small, are most welcome! Please contact Namgyalgar. (See International Contacts List, page 17) The following is a letter from the Namgyalgar Community:

Dear International Community, Here at Namgyalgar things are moving ahead at a good pace. We had a very beneficial stall at the Kalachakra teaching which raised a lot of interest in the Dzogchen Community and \$3,000 dollars from selling chai. This was very exciting for us! Now we have moved ahead with the building of Rinpoche's house so that now it is nearing completion. At this stage we are faced with some big sums in terms of expenditure. Now we need to think about electricity and water. We are thinking of putting solar electricity on to Rinpoche's house which although relatively expensive, should save us money in the long term. Also in terms of the environment, it seems important to be using alternative electricity. The water supply to Rinpoche's house and the rest of Namgyalgar is a very important issue. In our dry country there is the ever-present threat of bushfire, and during retreat we have some two hundred and fifty people here using water. We have to have a large water tank installed to be safe and to be sure we have enough water for both Rinpoche and the rest of the Gar. The electricity will cost at least \$12,850 and the tank will be \$7,500. All this requires is the influx of funds. Please, if anyone in the Community could assist at this time it would be very helpful. We would be extremely grateful and much relieved. If you would like to make a donation please contact us here at the office as to how to send payment.

Thank you,

Ellee

(Secretary, Namgyalgar)

Merigar Program

DECEMBER 26, 1996 TO JANUARY 2, 1997:

HIS HOLINESS THE XII

GYALWANG DRUKPA

will give the initiation of Chakrasamvara and other teachings at Merigar

DECEMBER 6-8: Adriano Clemente will give a course on reading the phonetic transcription of Tibetan and will explain of the practices contained in the new booklet of the Foundation Level of the Santi Maha Sangha.

The course will start on Friday, December 6 at 6pm. On Saturday there will be two sessions at 10am and 4pm and a single session on Sunday at 10am followed by a Ganapuja at midday on the occasion of Choegyal Namkhai Norbu's birthday. The course is free and open to all.

1997

JANUARY 3-6: Retreat of Chod practice and the Three Secondary Practices of the Fifth Paramita. The retreat starts on the 3rd at 4pm. The mornings will be dedicated to the three practices of samten according to the instructions in the Santi Maha Sangha. In the afternoons, Adriano Clemente will explain how to play the damaru in the chod. Cost: Lit.90.000 with discounts for members.

JANUARY 18 & 19: Retreat of Karma Yoga and Purification of the Six Lokas

JANUARY 25 & 26: Retreat of Practice of the Dance of the Six Spaces. Two sessions a day at 9am and 3pm.

FEBRUARY 7: Karma Yoga and Purification of the Six Lokas

FEBRUARY 7-8: Losar Celebrations

FEBRUARY 8: LOSAR: 6am Long life practice; midday Ganapuja

FEBRUARY 9: Karma Yoga and Purification of the Six Lokas

THE TEACHERS FUND

Merigar has opened a bank account to receive fees for the International Teachers Fund (I.T.F.) for all the courses of Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance held in Europe.

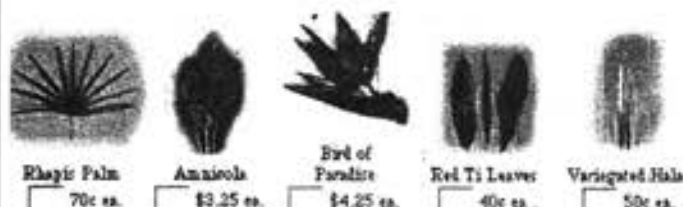
Contributions can also be sent to the same account:

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Emergency Tsa Tsa

by Rita Bizzotto

"Stupa: is the concentrated form of all the Buddhas of the past, the present and the future... it is the supreme receptacle of the Mind of the Buddhas of the past, the present and the future." (From "The Legend of the Great Stupa" by Padmasambhava)

On September 15th work began on the construction of the Great Stupa on the hill overlooked by the Gonpa at Merigar. Several important events had preceded this: the first ceremony to consecrate the place and to make offerings in October 1995; another propitiatory ceremony by Tai Situ Rinpoche in December of the same year; the laying of the first stone on June 15, 1996 in the presence of Choegyal Namkhai Norbu, the local authorities and numerous practitioners who had come from all parts of Italy for the occasion; the ceremony on September 3rd of this year to authenticate the Stupa by placing in the foundation precious relics and other objects in order to develop positive energy and control negative energy.

After all this spiritual activity much physical work remains to be done. The Stupa project set up by Mingyur Dorje on Rinpoche's instructions, involves different floors or levels in which the cardinal points will be filled with tsa tsas (clay images of stupas of various dimensions and forms of realized beings, each containing a grain of rice authenticated by the Master) for a total volume of 8 cubic meters. Rinpoche gave an approximation of the number of tsa tsas required: 80,000! After five months of work the number of finished tsa tsas amounts to 4,750. So even though collaboration is always open to everyone and welcome in any moment, it has become necessary to organize weekends of Karma Yoga so that lack of tsa tsas does not slow down the construction of the Stupa. In fact, the places where the tsa tsas

will be placed must be gradually filled while the construction is going ahead, not when it is completed. It is expected that the general structure, without the finishings, will be completed in about a year. These weekends will be advertised in the "bollettino", the Merigar newsletter. Ten people will be able to participate in making the tsa tsas at the same time since this is the number of moulds that are available. Shifts will be worked out so that work can proceed uninterruptedly from the morning to the evening. Hopefully there will be the same seriousness and enthusiastic participation that the children showed this summer as they were seen continually peeping into the room where we were making tsa tsas, hoping to be able to participate in the work even outside the times scheduled for them. The benefits of this practice are great: besides relaxing body and mind, it accumulates merit and wisdom (this Stupa will have an inestimable value for future generations, too) and allows one to purify one's karma through continual recitation of the hundred syllable mantra. We offer sincere thanks to the Master who has offered us this possibility!

"Thanks to the pure mind which has created the desire to construct this Great Stupa, which is the supreme receptacle of the Body of Infinite Simplicity, which is inseparable from the mind of the Victorious Ones of the past, the present and the future, for merit of this good work whatever supplication you make will be perfectly fulfilled. This Great Stupa is the gem which fulfills all desires; its benefits are incalculable because these stones are laid in order to bring great joy to humanity. Whatever supplication... will be fulfilled and one can even attain supreme realization and spiritual power."

From "The Legend of the Great Stupa" by Padmasambhava. ■

Passages

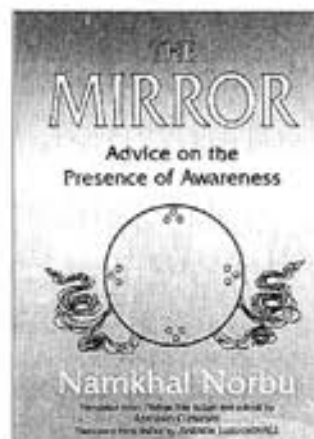
Died: Tony Leitner died on Monday, November 4th, at home in meditation with a meditation text in his hands in Los Angeles, California, USA. He was 62 years old. Tony Leitner was the major sponsor of Dharma events in the Los Angeles area and was instrumental in presenting Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche in LA, California, USA. He had attended teachings in Conway and has given unstintingly of his time and financial resources in support of Dharma and numerous Dharma teachers and students. As an extremely generous man, he devoted almost all of his life energies to practice and support of the Dharma.

Born: Malik Louis Renner was born on September 26th, 1996, on the full moon and lunar eclipse at 10am. He weighed 8lbs.14ozs. He and his parents, Tilman Renner and Domica Davis reside with the happy grandmother, Sara Handley. Malik's grandfather is Ernie Renner.

THE MIRROR ADVICE ON THE PRESENCE OF AWARENESS BY NAMKHAJ NORBU

TRANSLATED FROM TIBETAN
INTO ITALIAN
AND EDITED BY
ADRIANO CLEMENTE.
TRANSLATED FROM ITALIAN BY
ANDREW LUKIANOWICZ

PUBLISHED BY STATION HILL
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IN COOPERATION WITH SHANG SHUNG EDIZIONI.



In this concise text Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche gives detailed instruction on discovering the "State" of rig-pa both in sitting meditation, as it is practiced in Dzogchen, and in integrating this awareness with all of one's activities.

Available from: Shang Shung Edizioni, 58031 Arcidosso GR,
Italy for Lit.17.000 including post/package
or
Tsogyalgar, PO Box 277, Conway Mass 01341, USA
for \$13 including post/package.

The Australian Lottery & The West Coast Raffle

The Australian Community raised about \$1000 US through a lottery at the Tsogyalgar retreat in September, 1996 and the winners were:

First Prize: Mary Gilliland,
Ithaca, New York, USA
Second Prize: David Petit,
Pagosa Springs, Colorado, USA
Third Prize: Jodi Santry,
California, USA
Fourth Prize: Tsultrim Allione,
Pagosa Springs, Colorado, USA

A note of thanks to everyone who participated and we want to let you know we are proceeding with the work on the house and the land.

As we had promised at the September retreat to the many who purchased tickets, we would like to

announce the winners of our latest West Coast raffle in the Mirror as follows:

Tony Leitner of North Hollywood, CA, won the Guru Rinpoche thanka; Paula Gould of Princeton, New Jersey, won the Milarepa woodblock drawing; Rosanne Welsh, of Albany, California, won the Chod damaru; Lynn Hays of Langley, Washington, won the Blue Book transcription, Volume III Carlos Munoz of Pacheco, California, won the Mani bracelet; Tsultrim Allione of Tara Mandala, won the Dorje and Bell

Congratulations to all winners and many thanks to all those who purchased tickets! Yes, we will be starting a new raffle soon. ■

Rongzompa

continued from page 5

influx of tantric teachings which were occurring during his lifetime. Several of the great teachers and lot-sawas who were key figures in the newer translation schools studied with him such as Atisa and Marpa Chokyi Wangchuk the great translator and teacher of Milarepa. Rongzom thoroughly understood all of the teachings and wrote many commentaries on the older tantras as well as producing excellent translations of many of the newer tantras such as the Vajrabhairava Tantra, the Tantra of Black Yamari, the Esoteric Manjusri and the Root Tantra of Cakrasamvara. Several essential transmissions from the time of Guru Rinpoche were unified in Rongzompa. These were Upadesa teachings of Padmasambhava received from Rongzom's father; the Upadesa of Vimalamitra through Ma Rinchen Chog and Nyak Jnanakumara; Vairocana's instructions of Semde through Yudra

Nyingpo which is one of the primary Semde transmissions and Upadesa teachings from the siddha Aro Yeshe Jungne who possessed instructions through seven successive masters of India and seven successive masters of China, this came to be known as the Kham tradition of Dzogchen. Although three hundred years had passed since Guru Rinpoche arrived in Tibet, these transmissions had been maintained and again merged in Rongzom Chokyi Zangpo. From him flowed the quintessence of the three inner Tantras according to the Khams Tradition. With a clear intention to awaken and clarify the confusion of beings, Rongzompa faultlessly guided anyone who had interest in the profound teachings. Endowed with the ability to "know" the proper times and situations for particular teachings and instructions to be given, he matured all who were fortunate enough to hear these. Through the atmosphere of his compassionate presence many people who had no interest in the teachings were deeply affected by the attitude

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Errata

In the interview with Doboom Tulku Rinpoche published in the last issue of The Mirror, #37, Doboom Tulku was mistakenly quoted as saying that Tibet House had received one thousand Buddha statues from the King of Thailand as a gift on the occasion of his 50th anniversary. The statues are actually to be a gift from the Sangharaja, the Supreme Patriarch of the Thai Buddhist Order on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Thai Crown.

There was an error in a previous issue of The Mirror in an article concerning the incarnation lineage of Situ Rinpoche, where it was stated that the Fifth Karmapa was Karma Pakshi. Karma Pakshi was the Second Karmapa, while the name of the Fifth Karmapa, on whose head the Chinese Emperor Tai Situ clairvoyantly saw the Vajra Crown or 'Black Hat', was Teshin Tsepa. My apologies for this mistake, and my thanks to my vajra brother Cisco of Brescia for pointing it out to me.

Andy Lukianowicz

of this great master. There were two primary lineages which practiced his teachings, that of his sons and of his disciples. The lineage of his sons continued for several generations as was known for the practice of Vajrakilaya. In the lineage of his disciples, there were seventeen great translators; thirty five accomplished masters; one hundred and eighty great meditators and masters of yoga and five hundred others who upheld his teachings.

The masters Longchenpa and Rongzompa are known by followers of the Nyingmapa as the two omniscient ones which indicates the vastness of their knowledge and depth of their understanding. Unfortunately for us, in these dark times only a few of their works survive. Through contact with any of the teachings of these great masters our lives are enhanced and our understanding deepens. Seek them out! ■

1. These are the excellent results associated with the Sambhogakaya dimension of reality: those of the perfect teacher; place; retinue; time and teaching which are continually occurring within the Sambhogakaya dimension.

and that is very dangerous.

I am not saying we should fight with these people who are performing or teaching. We don't care about that. But we do have a responsibility to maintain the teaching, particularly if I am transmitting to you that which I received from my teachers Changchub Dorje, Ayu Khandro, and my uncle, Togdan Ugyen Tendzin. I feel that these teachers are very serious and the transmission I received from them and which I have been transmitting to you for years is really important. So I have the responsibility to protect that transmission and also to continue that transmission purely. That is not only my duty, it is also your duty, your responsibility because today I am still alive, but tomorrow, or after a few years, I will disappear. People will say, "Oh, once there was a Tibetan teacher called Namkhai Norbu who came here to give teaching — he gave this and that teaching." People will talk. Maybe there will be some books to read. That is all. But the transmission will be alive for my students. They must have that transmission and they must continue. But how can they continue? For that reason we must have a kind of preparation not only for having our realization, but also that continuity, transmission, knowledge, understanding, learning, studying, and practicing. For that reason, we have Santi Maha Sangha.

Sangha. That means practitioners who have knowledge and understanding. We have this Sangha which is collaborating; then there is this continuation. We can guarantee there will be continuation of the teaching and the transmission. For that reason we created this Santi Maha Sangha. The first and most important thing is to test everybody a little about the Base of Santi Maha Sangha. I have prepared this Santi Maha Sangha Base level book. After you have studied well, if you go to listen to a teacher who is giving, for example, Theravada teaching, Mahayana teaching, or tantric teaching, you can find a different taste, you can understand what is going on, what is the point which is being explained, and then you can understand, particularly in tantric teaching, that there is lower tantra, and a higher tantra. You can have a clearer idea and capacity about Dzogchen. So for that reason, Santi Maha Sangha is very, very important. ■

Transcribed and edited by
Elisabeth Stutchbury, Jacqueline
Gens, Liz Granger and Naomi Zeitz.



tomorrow, maybe the day after tomorrow I start to feel better. Otherwise there is no reason to cut. When something is happening there is always a secondary cause or reason; something exists. You don't give anything too much importance. What do you think?
NM: It's good advice.
Rinpoche: Using distraction is not a solution. You are just kidding yourself. It's similar to someone being upset and then they are taking a bottle of whiskey and drinking it up, but that is not so useful. It's the same thing. What do you think?
NM: I think it's true. It's hard to realize that all is an illusion.
Rinpoche: It doesn't work if you are only thinking it in that moment. You should train in general, like what we said about training in how not to feel sad when we separate from someone. Because we are not thinking that separation exists. Maybe we know, but we are not thinking. Only we meet and now we enjoy, but that is also the starting point of separation. In the same way, when we give birth to a small child, we are very happy, but in the real sense it is the starting point of death. A young person like Nina Paparazzo, for example, we never had the idea she would die that way. When we train this way, there is nothing to be upset by. We are ready for everything. That's how we do. Particularly in the Dzogchen teachings, we say "Being aware". What do you think? I do that. I live that way. I don't care very much. I like to do many things, because even if I die, everyone doesn't die together. There is some continuation. I never think, "We'll do this

and that, and then this and that and everything is stable." I never think this way. Sometimes when I am writing something not good I immediately throw it away because after I am dead some people will say, "Oh, Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche wrote something strange." I am always preparing, but not because I feel afraid. You don't do that?
NM: I should! I delete on the email.
Rinpoche: E mail is a really good thing. It's wonderful really. Then? What do we do? This is not really an interview; it's a round table discussion.
Lauri Marder: A square table discussion.
NM: Lauri, do you want to talk about how you met Rinpoche?
LM: I met Rinpoche in a group the first time he came to Conway.
Rinpoche: And which kind of impression did you have?
LM: I was afraid. Very afraid.
Rinpoche: Why?
LM: Because you seemed very powerful to me and I was afraid. I was accustomed to my old teacher who was also very powerful, but he was familiar. It was really frightening. It took me many years to still feel afraid.
Rinpoche: Interesting.
NM: Are you surprised when people are afraid of you?
Rinpoche: Yes. Because I don't do anything like a lion or something.
LM: But I thought you would. Maybe just like a lion.
Rinpoche: But I don't do. I try to be very gentle and polite.
LM: You were very nice to everybody.
Rinpoche: So then there is no reason to feel afraid.
NM: But sometimes you are strong.
Rinpoche: How?

NM: Wrathful.
Rinpoche: Wrathful? That's normal. Otherwise how you do?
NM: I don't know. I don't know how you do what you do. It is really a mystery to me. It's not so easy, or maybe it is.
Rinpoche: So this is an interdependent view, not really an interview. That is the title.
LM: If anyone should be afraid it's Rinpoche when he meets us!
NM: When you see all these students come to you, do you sometimes think "oh no, not this one"; do you sometimes feel tired or afraid or think you just don't want to do this anymore?
Rinpoche: Why?
NM: Because we have so many problems?
Rinpoche: How can I feel when someone has more problems than me?
NM: Compassion.
Rinpoche: Sometimes I feel a little annoyed because sometimes some people ask something they consider very important, but it is really an egoistic question, and then they repeat, again and again, always repeating and then I feel a little heavy. I feel heavy because that person is manifesting his or her egoistic question and purpose and then insisting. And I feel, why should I always listen or talk with that person. Sometimes I feel that. But it's very rare. Some people also write letters, and I understand their character by what they write and I overcome this problem because I know they need a place to release their tensions, so I don't read them, it's not necessary to read them all, sometimes I throw away letters but first I open them and see how many pages there are. Some I keep. For example in Merigar there is collection of only one person's letters that I have

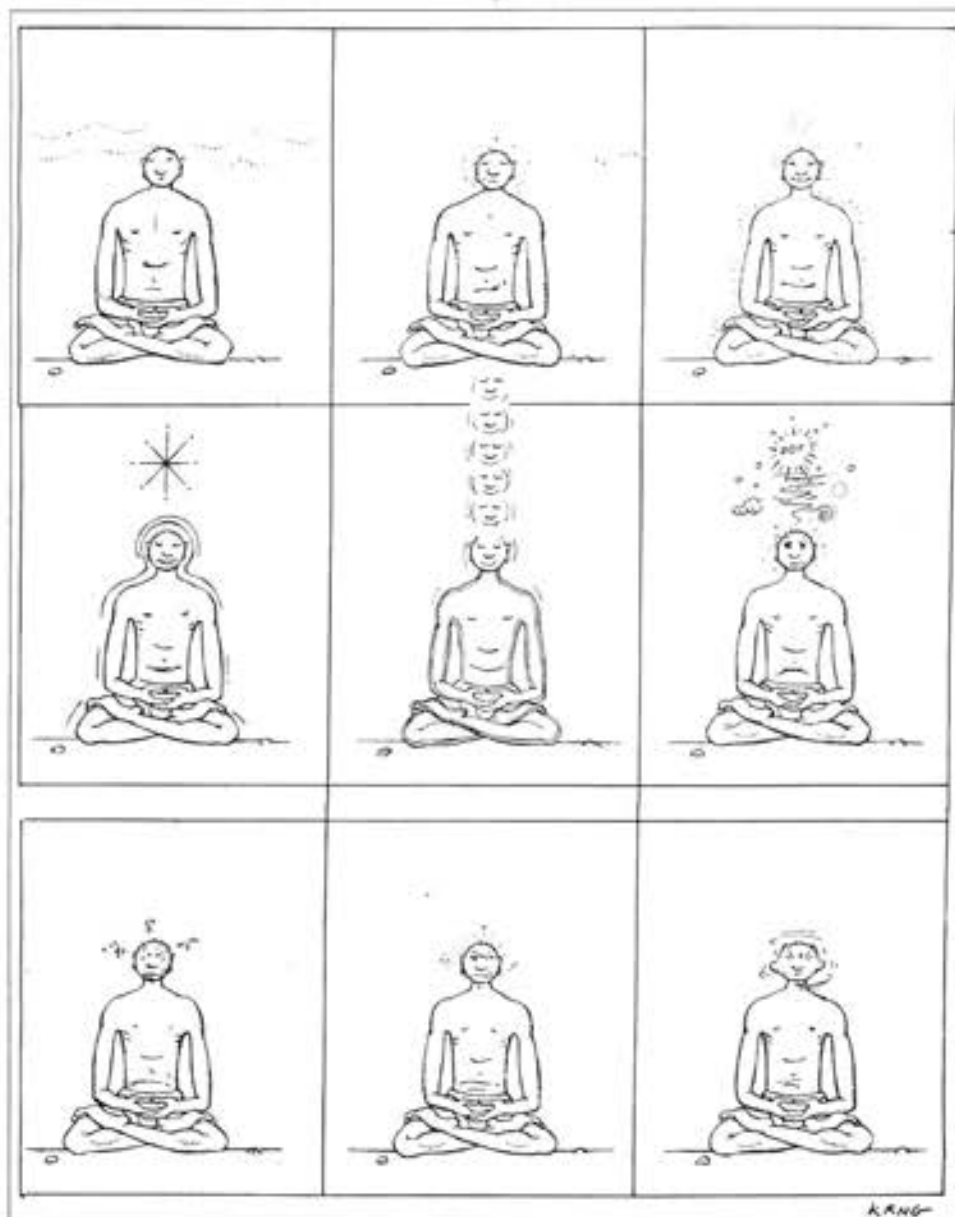
never thrown away as an example of this kind of letter. I have kept them for years. Maybe each week I receive one or two letters from this person. They are very nervous, and there is not much meaning or sense in the letters, so their idea is that I am some kind of trash. If someone is coming and asking me seriously and they have some problems or want to know about teaching or practice, etc., even if I am really tired I don't feel something bad and I try to do my best. But mostly people are asking about personal problems, and that is all right sometimes, but sometimes they give it too much importance and they come again and sometimes I give advice and they don't apply it, they talk and talk and it's not necessary that they talk to me, they can talk also to their friends.
NM: But you are more important to them than a friend and they think you can make it better.
Rinpoche: I have said already I'll do my best, it's not necessary to keep asking.
NM: Do you feel hopeful about the future of the Dzogchen Community?
Rinpoche: My idea is that it will not be destroyed in all countries and there will be some disaster. That is not my idea. In samsara I know there are always problems. Otherwise, that is no more samsara. But at the same time there are many nice things. It depends on people. If we do everything better then everything manifests better, if we do worse then it gets worse. It depends on us. We are trying to do practice and be responsible for ourselves through knowledge of the teachings, then of course, it must go better. That's my hope. My idea.
The Mirror: Thank you, Rinpoche.

*bachen is a Tibetan game

GARAB DORJE

Within a diamond cave
sheltered
a crystal wisdom child
Silent unmoving
bright blue eyes
gazing skywards
Animals come sniff graze
outside the cave
Garudas fly
around & around
paying homage
to the wisdom child
Passions pacified
transformed released
his only action
gazing at the sky
Blue eyes
blue sky
the barrier crumbles
crystal diamond universe
wisdom child
Garab Dorje

Zeljka Jovanovic



Lady of the Mountain

by Jacqueline Gens

At the base of the Dzoqchen Community's land in East Buckland, Massachusetts, in a semicircle of glaciated land under the crest of Putnam Hill, can be found the architectural remains of the birthplace of Mary Lyon, the foremost woman educator of her time and the founder of America's first college of higher education for women, Mt. Holyoke College.

Even by today's standards, the unpaved road leading to the Community's land seems remote and inhospitable during the winter months. How much more so it must have been two hundred years ago, almost to the day, when, in 1797, Mary Lyon was born there, at the place in her later years she would lovingly recollect as "that wild Romantic Farm made more to feast the soul than to feed the body."

In an interesting parallel to the Dzoqchen Community's own legal travails in recent years, it seems that Mary Lyon's great grandfather, Chieab Smith, the lay patriarch of an extended family of Baptists who were the earliest settlers to the neighborhood, himself waged a long protracted legal battle to worship freely there without taxation finally winning his appeal from the British Crown in 1773.

From the outset, Mary Lyon displayed a prodigious intellect for learning matched by an equally passionate diligence. She mastered within days the venerated texts of the day, Alexander's English Grammar and Goodwin's Latin Grammar, an achievement which did not go unnoticed. During her teen years she drew on the educational resources of the region where she in turn attended the high school equivalent of a number of "select" academies for young ladies in Ashfield, Buckland, Amherst, and including one in Conway run by Edward Hitchcock who was to become a mentor and eventually her biographer. Although of limited



financial means, she was able to pay her boarding fees by using her talented weaving skills to make coverlets for the families with whom she lived while attending school.

By the age of twenty, Mary Lyon alternated teaching others while she continued to expand her own studies. With a small savings, she founded a successful girls school in Buckland Center where she spent winters teaching in her own school. However, during the summers she assisted her life long friend Zilpah Grant in the running of the newly founded Ipswich Academy in Sandwich, Massachusetts and attending lectures in the sciences whenever possible. Together they both aspired to found a New England Female Seminary for Teachers which would address the needs of women seeking higher education, at that time unavailable.

When the modest backing initially secured for this project evaporated, Mary Lyon diagnosed the lack of support as good men's fear of "greatness in women." Regardless of this and several other failures, Mary Lyon persisted in formulating a unusual vision of higher education for women. Where her more prosperous contemporaries were thwarted in their efforts, her own humble origins seems to have actually worked in her favor. Soliciting support and funds from the local community from which she came, she endeavored to found a permanent and independent institution which owned its land and buildings but conducted all domestic maintenance

by the pupils themselves thus allowing the fees to be as low as possible. This unusual departure from the elitism of the 'select' academies deeply appealed to the local population who unconditionally contributed the necessary funds. Finally inaugurated in 1837 with eighty pupils age seventeen and older based on a three year curriculum matching that of Amherst College, by the following year an astonishing four hundred applications had to be turned away.

As an educator, Mary Lyon



Mary Lyon's birthplace N. Murray

introduced many progressive methods for her era such as group discussions and classes organized around a topic rather than by rote. She was the first to teach geography making use of colored maps, now a universal practice. Over and over she cited that "we are making an experiment." She seems to have possessed extraordinary vitality as both an administrator and teacher. Many recollections by her former pupils and contemporaries indicate a study in motion. Evidently impervious to fashion, her pupils would often dress her for public occasions and provide her with 'stylish caps' since she favored the turban, an unacceptable head dress. By all accounts, her energetic liveliness seems to have had a compelling effect on everyone she had contact with. One gentleman noted that in his memory he had never known a woman with so

much "physical, intellectual and moral power all combined in any one female." By the time of her death in 1849, Mary Lyon had indeed established a permanent college of international prestige. Her tombstone reads simply, "Mary Lyon, the Founder of Mt. Holyoke Female Seminary for twelve years its principle and a teacher for thirty-five years of more than three thousand pupils."

Before me in a xerox provided by the Special Collections and Archive at Mt. Holyoke College, I see the spidery delicate 19th century cursive signatures of the first class of Mt. Holyoke. With names like Minerva, Lucinda, Clarissa, Fedelia among the more commonplace Lucys and Emilys and Abigails — brilliant jewels scattered to the four corners of the world to become the first generation of American women rescued from the dreary limitations and small mindedness of convention. To me it's no accident that the brightest jewel of all was born at the foot of sacred land, with its window into the dimension of wisdom which neither went unappreciated nor unrecognized as a source of sustenance to her throughout her busy life.

I can now see that 'mountain home' with its sweet rivulet finding its way among rocks and cliffs and hillocks and deep craggy dells. Then just beyond the precincts of the family domain was the 'top of the hill,'

crowned by its high rolling rock, ever inviting the enterprises of each aspiring heart. Everyone was amply repaid who would climb that steep hill and ascend that high rock. (From *Missionary Offering* the only book published by Mary Lyon in 1843.)

So, too, with us fortunate students in the lineage of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, who have drawn such delight from the Dance of the Vajra and who may well have the opportunity to deepen our practice there. Perhaps too, it's not so far-fetched to consider that Shang Shung Institute in the future might become in its own right a leading educational presence within the region. In any case, one thing we can be certain of is that the birthplace of Mary Lyon will always be the nearest neighbor to the sacred land of Tsegialgar and those familiar signs, MARY LYON BIRTHPLACE, the welcome directions of how to get there.

Thanks to the Mt. Holyoke College Library and Special Collections Archive This article was inspired when I came across in a local used book store, *The Power of Christian Benevolence Illustrated in the Life and Labors of Mary Lyon* by Edward Hitchcock, a citizen of Conway, published in 1858 by the American Tract Society. ■

Jürgen C. Aschoff

Annotated Bibliography of Tibetan Medicine (1789-1995)

Garuda Verlag, Dietikon/Switzerland and Fabri Verlag, Ulm/Germany

1996, XVIII + 426 Pages, cloth, ISBN 9802975 9 4, SFr. 126.-

The author has listed and commented more than 1700 printed works published in different languages. According to the sources, more than 80% of the commentaries are in English, about 20% in German language. Tibetan original texts are not considered. For orders or further information please contact:

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Book Reviews

continued from page 5

of Buddhism and establishing regal power in Lhasa. Since that time Buddhism has always been the official religion of Tibet and Bon, the indigenous religion, has been since the beginning of the seventh century demonized and banned. The decline of the Tibetan Empire in the eleventh century was followed by a long period of darkness and political void.

From the eleventh century on, the Bon religious tradition underwent major changes, having to compete with the Buddhist ecclesiastical system that was developing and which culminated in the theocratic establishment of the Dalai Lama in 1578. In order to adapt to the new forms in Tibetan society, Bon had to take on a monastic aspect, modeling itself on Buddhism, and thus bringing into being the so called Reformed Bon, yet another school of Tibetan Buddhism that had

purged itself of many aspects of ancient religiosity.

The whole of Tibetan historiography tends to repeat in one way or another the official version of history which we can define as xenomania. It considers that before the introduction of not only religious systems from India and China but also these countries' literature, sciences, mathematics, astrology, art etc., Tibet was an uncultured country where barbarism reigned supreme, and the Tibetans were not dissimilar to monkeys, from which they were said to have descended according to popular legend. In this way, a systematic cancellation of ancient Tibetan history was brought about. That the facts in no way correspond with the historiographic traditions is very evident and is accepted by contemporary Tibetan scholars.

If Tibetans of the seventh century had not already reached an advanced level of civilization, they would never have been able to produce such a vast artistic and literary

corpus or have elaborated philosophical and scientific knowledge which included medicine, astronomy, astrology, etc. This syncretized knowledge certainly has Indian, Chinese, and Central Asian elements but it also has its own extremely autonomous characteristics. The Tibetan people therefore made place for a cultural system with its own unmistakable properties that is well defined and distinct from that of neighboring peoples.

Furthermore, one should add that the great literary heritage that was preserved in Tibet over the centuries represents the enormous wealth of the wider heritage of Asia, for over a thousand years, Tibet has conserved knowledge that was lost from other Asian countries. In this context, the research work of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche assumes great importance.

In his many books on the history of Tibet and the kingdom of Zhang Zhung preceding the imperial age, and in this book in particular, the author has drawn on an enormous

number of sources. The bibliography of over a hundred Tibetan texts is very rich and includes rare works that are inaccessible to most scholars. The author has uncovered the origin of Tibetan culture among three different components: the *dring* or epic poems and legendary sagas; the *deu* or riddles; and the *bon* which include the magical religious traditions.

As in other ancient traditions, such as those of the Celtic bards, through the *dring* the rich cultural heritage contained in the epic deeds and oral stories which exemplify a great deal of indigenous culture has been handed down to succeeding generations. These tales include the origin myths which formed the basis of religious rites. The *deu* represented a means used both in the religious field in order to communicate initiatory and gnostic transcendent systems, and in politics where it constituted a secret symbolic language used in military strategy. According to ancient conception, the forces of nature were in direct contact with

humankind and capable of imposing themselves on one's being. The job of controlling these forces was entrusted to the priests of the *bon*. The author examines, one by one, the twelve *bon* sciences and his description furnishes a wide and documented picture of the magical religious traditions of ancient Tibet.

It is not necessary for me to dwell on the particulars of this study because we have the great good fortune to be able to ask the author himself to illustrate for us the fundamental characteristics of his work.

I wish to conclude with a brief reflection: In our present century geographical distances have been drastically reduced. Today, more than ever before, we may not ignore the events of international history because they include every one of us. The historical events on one part of the globe have repercussions everywhere. This pertains also to the Tibetan people and their history. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that the extermination of one

continued on bottom of next page

It isn't far from Cuneo to the entrance of the Val Grana and in a few minutes we find ourselves in the mountains. The scenery of broad, flat cultivated fields of maize and orchards changes abruptly as the road begins to climb the wooded slopes of the gorge at the bottom of which the Grana roars impetuously, now in flood after this year's endless enervating rains. Above the torrent, near the foot of the valley, rises Pradives with a few hotels and small shops and a beautiful church. Leaving Pradives, we really begin to climb in the direction of Campomolino and the sanctuary of Castelmangno. After a while there is a signpost on the right indicating Colletto. A narrow twisting road soars up ahead of us, putting to the test the capabilities of driver and motor and finally depositing us in a spacious square where we can park the car. Cars cannot go beyond this point.

Colletto is perched above here; a small group of stone-roofed houses with narrow alleys, an imposing church and, joy of the wayfarer, Signora Maria's little trattoria. At the center of the tiny square, below the church and above the inn, is the paved, river pebble Occitana cross, white on a dark grey ground. From there, looking up towards the north, you can see the white houses of Batuiria solemnly standing out below the austere cliffs which protect them. One then begins to understand why Choegyal Namkhai Norbu, on seeing this hamlet, decided to make a Gar of the Dzogchen Community there, giving it the name of Adzamgar. From Colletto to Azamgar is more or less a two hour walk along an old mule track, which not having been seriously repaired for years, is ruined in several places, and this year's rain has been pitiless.

Before arriving in Batuiria one passes through Valliera, a real, proper little village complete with a small church with a bell tower. Many of the houses are still in good condition



Working at Adzamgar

A Week at Adzamgar (where squirrels dare.....)

by Franco Branca and Giancarlo Aleotti

and now and then some of their owners come up to see that at least they don't collapse, but the village has been practically deserted for dozens of years. One last gasping climb and here we are in Adzamgar, quenching our thirst at the wonderful fountain, built and roofed in stone, which collects the water from a spring above the hamlet. Smaller than Valliera, Batuiria comprises about fifteen constructions in all, including stone barns and hay lofts. The Community owns only part of it. There isn't a church, but there are two fantastic caves and maybe in the not too distant future we will be able to inaugurate a Gonpa.

We arrived on Saturday afternoon with Nina and Nicola, preceded by Laika, the dog, the only one who showed no signs of breathlessness, trotting back and forth she must have completed the path at least four times. A group of practitioners who had come up for a weekend of Karma Yoga from Torino and Canelli awaited us. We immediately did a practice of purification of the Six Lokas together and later in the evening we did a Ganapuja. The next day we were to start work.

Our main objective was to replace the roof of the stone stairs between the two high houses with the plastered, white-washed facades. Water filtering between the flat stones of the roof had rotted the main beams in several places so all the covering stones had to be removed, the rotted beams replaced and the planking to support the flat stones of the roof had to be renewed. As soon as we had finished uncovering the roof, it began to rain and it continued uninterruptedly for three days and nights on end.

On Monday afternoon Moreno and Beppe of the Adzamgar Gakyil arrived so we were able to make a program of jobs for the following days as an alternative to rebuilding the roof. We fixed up several things indoors, especially in the store rooms. When it didn't rain too hard we worked outside anyway. Gerard felled trees for fire-wood, helped by the others carrying the trunks and branches to the barn to be sawn, chopped and stored. Another group demolished the front wall of a large stone barn which was in danger of collapsing and will have to be completely rebuilt. Valeria

took care of meals and provisions, going down to do the shopping almost every day with a huge backpack, even in the pouring rain. We even tried to console ourselves saying that the pouring rain made it possible to really check thoroughly all of the attics to find places where rain could do damage.

We were just about to start crying when the sun came out. It was like another world, the following days were all more beautiful than each other. We took advantage of the warmth and the blue to finish the roof above the stairs, trying to keep to the local style, replacing the stone slabs in all of the visible places. In the middle we put a few rows of cement tiles which are lighter and easier to lay than the stone slabs. The stone slabs are of various sizes, shapes and thicknesses, the largest of which weigh over fifty kilos. Laying them well requires the experience and skill of a master stone-roofer such as Gigi, for example, who over the past few years completely rebuilt the roof of the highest hay-loft in Batuiria, a really remarkably successful job. The local builders judged it the "strongest roof in the whole valley".

This is the same barn and hay loft which needs to have the front wall completely rebuilt. It is hand-

some edifice which could contain two large luminous rooms, or maybe several smaller ones. This has yet to be decided.

In the meantime we made an agreement with Moreno to return next Spring and early Summer repair the track and build the wall. Periods of work will be organized during which it will be possible to insert the precious contributions of those who would like to practice Karma Yoga. Maybe it will be possible also to find time to make the occasional excursion to some of the surrounding peaks where one can contemplate, gazing at the wonderful panoramas and sometimes meet a chamois goat or a capercaillie.

But the animal most often spotted in these parts is the greater gannetated-squirrel. What is a greater gannetated squirrel? It is a huge, rather fat squirrel which always appears punctually at mealtimes. It can be easily recognized by the impeccable style with which it spreads the butter on the toast and the jam on the butter, holds the coffee-pot always by the handle and the wine-bottle tightly by the neck and like all good rodents, when he works is untiring and very constructive.

Greetings and Tashi Delegs to everyone. We hope to see you again at Adzamgar. ■

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of the most ancient cultures on earth does not happen. The intense historical and bibliographic work of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, apart from having a great historiographic value, goes far beyond the confines of historiography itself, steps through the sometimes restrictive limits of universities and scientific academies and becomes a propulsive force of history itself that nourishes the ethical political movement of national identity. We recognize today in the work of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, a rigorous and irreplaceable contribution to his field which figures at the same time as a moral force that is based on the intelligence of his cultural, historical and national values." ■

THE GOLDEN LETTERS by John Myrdhin Reynolds

389 pages, Snow Lion Publications, 1996

This book contains several clear translations and detailed commentaries by John Myrdhin Reynolds. The principal focus of this marvelous book is the Three Essential Statements from Garab Dorje's last testament which are the basis of



Dzogchen Teachings.

The 9 page foreword by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu provides a framework for the discussion of the authenticity and variety of Dzogchen Teachings.

The 4 page preface gives some history about these translations. In his 15 page introduction, John Reynolds discusses the primordial origin of Dzogchen, the place of Dzogchen in Buddhist Teaching, and Manjusrimitra's classification of Dzogchen teachings into three series: Mind Series, Space Series, and Secret Instruction Series.

The contents of Part One which deals with the Three Essential Statements and their context are:

1.1 precise one page translation of the 3 essential statements: one is introduced directly to one's own nature; one definitively decides upon this unique state; one continues directly with confidence in liberation

1.2 beautiful 1 page commentary by H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche.

1.3 exquisite 21 page commentary by Patrul Rinpoche entitled "The Special Teaching of the Wise and Glorious King"

1.4 meticulous 64 page commentary by John Reynolds which clearly elucidates the ideas in Patrul Rinpoche's commentary

1.5 inspirational 9 page last testament of Garab Dorje which presents his three statements in context with more details

1.6 remarkable 35 page interlinear commentary by John Reynolds which explains the meaning of the 75 lines of this last testament of Garab Dorje

The contents of Part Two which deals with the life of Garab Dorje and Guru Sadhana are:

2.1 1 page introduction by John Reynolds

2.2 11 page hagiography of Garab

Dorje from *lo rgyus chen mo*

2.3 6 page Guru Sadhana for Garab Dorje by Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche

The contents of Part Three which deals with the historical origins of Dzogchen are:

3.1 5 pages on the problems of historiography including mythological figures, authenticity of books, and oral traditions

3.2 9 pages concerning the historical existence of Garab Dorje whose possible birth dates include 516 BC, 360 BC, 184 BC, 55 AD, 550 AD, and 555 AD, whose possible Sanskrit names include Anadavajra, Surativajra, Praharshavajra, Pramudavajra, Prahevajra, Prajnabhava Hevajra, and Vetakshema, and whose possible countries of origin include Uddiyana, somewhere northwest of Bodhgaya, Bengal, Orissa, and the Swat Valley in Pakistan.

3.3 13 pages concerning possible historical sources of Dzogchen

3.4 32 pages concerning four early texts relating to Dzogchen

3.5 23 pages affirmatively answering the question "Is Dzogchen an authentic Buddhist teaching?"

The contents of the 7 sections at the end of the book are:

1. 10 page discussion of the translation of Dzogchen technical terms

2. 9 page appendix with a brief biography of Patrul Rinpoche

3. 28 page glossary of Dzogchen terms

4. 33 pages of notes

5. 4 pages of selected bibliography

6. 9 pages of general index

7. 5 page index of Tibetan texts and terms

John Reynolds is exceptionally qualified to translate Dzogchen teachings. For many years he has studied and practiced Buddhism both in the university setting and in the traditional manner with Tibetan masters. The clarity and precision of his translations from Tibetan into English is unsurpassed. Western students of Buddhism, especially students of Dzogchen, owe him an enormous debt for his many invaluable translations over the past 20 years. Any student who is seriously interested in Dzogchen will discover that careful study and practice of the knowledge revealed in *The Golden Letters* is indispensable.

Jim Valby

Two Kinds of Language

Part II

Poetry and Mysticism

by Dorothea Franck

Let us take a brief look now at the nature of poetic language: what enables it to have this enchanting and inspiring, sometimes even a bit enlightening effect on our mind? How is it possible that language, in general a functioning of the discursive conceptual mind, can lead towards - or at least hint at experiences beyond conceptual thought? Even though we cannot make a clear-cut division, we have to state, as poets and literary scholars throughout the ages affirm, that there are two kinds of language and accordingly two visions of language. In modern linguistic terms we call it the motivated and unmotivated nature of language. This concerns the relation between the form of the word or utterance and its meaning content. This dispute appears in western culture already in early Greek philosophy and was expressed by the two positions "physei" and "thesei". The first position, also to be found in the Hebrew tradition, defends a motivated, non-arbitrary connection between sound (or shape of the letter or number) and its meaning. The specific quality of the sound or shape has an impact on the concept expressed in it and vice versa. It is based on an synesthetic analogy between the level of form and the level of meaning. "Synesthetic" means a kind of similarity which transcends the level of one sensory organ. E.g.: when we call a sound "sharp" or "rough", i.e. describing it through qualities of touch; or calling tones "high" or "low", i.e. in terms of spatial orientation; or when we call a color "loud", mixing visual and auditory qualifications etc.

Language is full of these concepts which transcend the range of one sensory organ. In the other position, "thesei", the relationship between form and content is seen as arbitrarily connected by mere convention. Strong common-sense evidence for this position seems to lie in the fact that different languages express the "same" meaning with different sounds. This is also the position of modern linguistic science, Structuralism or functionalism, the predominant view in linguistics and social studies in this century, and philosophical basis of our modernist and digital culture, stressed only the "the" side. Language was defined as a system of arbitrary signs. A fixed conceptual content is seen to be coded and decoded in arbitrarily designed codes.

Religious tradition and poetic practice, both in the East and the West, favor the other view,

Though for profane (or "distracted") everyday use of language, the arbitrariness of language seems obvious, it is a limited and limiting view of language.

It seems to me that there exists a connection between arbitrariness and alienation. Doesn't it reflect the profane view of a meaningless world without the hidden order of the karmic laws of cause and effect? Things, good luck, bad luck, disease, accidents and death seem to happen completely arbitrarily. Subject and object-side of the world are experienced as absolutely divided, we are closed up in the perspective of one isolated and lonely ego, the world as a whole makes no sense. Poetry nevertheless always manifested the reality of the other side: sound and form, the physical manifestation of language is inseparable from the meaning aspect since language is an experience, sound and form enter into that experience. The poetic use of language activates a resonance between form and meaning and thereby creates an experience of wholeness or inseparability of seemingly different and unrelated aspects of reality. The layers of form and meaning are interrelated and reflect each other. For me this seems to hint at the ultimate oneness of nirvana and samsara, or even at the inseparability of the three kayas.

The most extreme manifestation of the non-arbitrary nature of language of course is mantra. The sound of it is considered even more important than a conceptual meaning related to it. It carries a meaning which is not or not primarily a concept or cognitive content but an energetic pattern which is able to transmit an empowerment or transmission linking the mindstream of the one who pronounces it to enlightened minds or to higher levels of his or her own mind which comes down to the same. For this reason mantras never get translated.

Perfection and completion: Another "teaching" hidden in poetry I find in the experience of completeness. Reading a poem links two seemingly contradictory experiences: at the one hand, a poem is an open text, which can be interpreted in an infinite number of ways, according to the perspective of the reader. At the other hand, we have to take the poem as one completed whole, we have to take it exactly "as it is", as final and optimal version and in that sense as perfect. This sets in motion an interesting self-fulfilling prophecy: the more we trust it, the more we get out of it. The more we expect, the more we find. The poem reveals its multi-layered wealth of beauty, mean-

ing and insight only to the one who is open to the experience and shuns no effort in the process of interpretation. A shallow reading will get a shallow poem, a profound reader will find a profound meaning. Of course, we first have to have a critical look at the text whether it is worth the effort. Not just any text will do at least for the normal reader. For an enlightened reader, every text might reveal the perfection of the universe.

This reminds me of the instructions concerning the choice of a spiritual friend or Guru: first we have to be critical and scrutinize the integrity and authenticity of the person—but once we have accepted the teacher, if we want to have benefit, we have to have total trust.

In interpreting a poem, a similar attitude is required, because otherwise we would not go deep enough into the process of interpretation, beyond seeming contradictions, gaps and superficial meaning-layers. We would be unable to find all the subtle correspondences in the composition the poem. Only when we exist that it is perfect and meant to be exactly as it is, we can discover its perfection. In this respect, the process does not only resemble the choice of a Teacher but also reflects the experience of "suchness", the way of living in a state of contemplation, taking everything "as it is" and hence accepting every moment in life as perfectly meaningful.

The power of image: As I have said above, the particular power of poetry lies in its particular way of using sound and image.

Since I do not want to get into exercises of textual interpretation here, I want to conclude with an example of an image not from poetry but a shamanistic ritual, which had the same kind of evidence and Aaha-feeling to it as certain poetic images.

Many years ago I saw a ritual performed by several female shamans from an island at the coast of Korea—a purification rite for a recently deceased person. Although not familiar with the language and the religious and cultural codes, I was deeply touched by one part in which the purification and liberation of the deceased was symbolized by shaking a long white sheet which in the beginning was just a heap of cloth consisting of multiple big knots tied into it. Two of the women took the outer ends and just by chanting and shaking the cloth slowly and gently and patiently for a long time, the seemingly very tightly knotted knots loosened and untied all by

themselves, and in the end the women held a very long straight smooth piece of cloth—as long as the hall was wide—between them. This image now often comes to my mind when our Master or other Dzogchen teachers talk about the self liberating power of pure awareness: the knots of our conditioned mind can spontaneously untie themselves just like a snake gets out of its spiral windings or knots spontaneously without effort or conceptual "having to figure it out". This ritual worked very convincingly for me on a direct visual level like a poetic image, (before I had heard of any of these teachings) with the particular evidence which cannot come about by conceptual argument but only by spiritual teachings or certain

works of poetry or art which are speaking in a non-dual way to our senses and our mind.

Let me close, without further comment, with the famous poem by William Carlos Williams, in which the suchness, the interdependence and the equality of all things are expressed in a lucid, colorful and humble way.

THE RED

WHEELBARROW

*so much depends upon
a red wheel barrow
glazed with rain water
beside the white chickens.*

■

Songs from Tsegialgar

may i be to you all,
like a bowl for a beggar,
fuel for a fire,
dog to its master,
and all such things that can be used without asking.

may we be to one another,
the love of a mother,
passion of a lover,
blood of sister and brother,
and all such things that produce bonds everlasting.

may we be to our father,
children of his blessing,
cause for his giving,
learning without taking,
and all such things within his state everlasting.

may we be to all others,
true words always spoken,
love always given,
a state always present,
and all such things by example of the state everlasting.

conway joe

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“Everything is relative.” This is what we always hear our Master say. To some degree we all know that, of course. However, it is far harder to really know the meaning of this very simple statement in practice, especially in the relative world of living in an organization, working with the people, trying to get things done, and making our life easier in the process.

Having worked for quite a few years in an international company, I have learned many things which I feel to be of great relevance to international collaboration. Even though it may well be my own experience that tells me that the training I have gone through in my job is very useful, I would like to share some of the methods and principles learned with everyone in the community, based on the principle that we are like Bodhisattvas on the path, and we should always try to learn to improve ourselves without limitation. What I feel to be important and useful are matters regarding inter-personal relationships, and communication both within the community itself and with outside organizations.

Regarding this, I would like to treat the following topics in a series of articles in *The Mirror*:

1. How to receive/give feedback
2. Processes and the effective running of businesses within an organization
3. How to cross collaborate across organizations
4. Basic principles of project management
5. How to influence people without using authority
6. How to run a meeting.

A central theme runs through these aspects of the operation of an organization: how to be aware of our circumstances and work with them. The key to it is about how to communicate more effectively to achieve our aims. If we did not set the context of organizational matters, this theme could well appear to be something about our behavior in relation to the teaching. The reality is actually very close: if we can fully apply our relative awareness we will be able to run an organization well—conversely, if we can learn the skills of running an organization, we can make better progress on our path!

What I would like to do is to introduce these topics and explain ways of dealing with these topics as recommended in the organizational behavior world, with references to basic Buddhist concepts on conduct. I will also attempt to relate the discussion to the behavior part of the Dzogchen teaching, and draw the strength of the practitioners who try to be aware at all time in relative matters. In this way, we might be able to reap even greater benefit from being aware!

Giving and Receiving Feedback Introduction

Our life is entirely made up of doings. Even if we are doing nothing, that is what we do: nothing. Based on the fundamental law of karma from Buddhism, as well as the law of physics from science, there is always a consequence accompanying such doings. As we live in a society, such consequences will always be felt or experienced by our fellow beings. Limiting the beings to the human realm for simplicity and because it is rather more obvious to us, we can understand that many people will feel either positive, negative or neutral about our behavior. In the same way, we as individuals will have one of these feelings about others behavior. In order to improve our relationship with other people, it is important to provide feedback among ourselves as a form of communication.

Types of Feedback

Our emotions are fundamentally related to one of the three passions: attachment, aversion and ignorance. In the relative world, they manifest as positive, negative or neutral feelings. If something went well, we want to rein-

force that positive aspect, but if something went badly or inconsequentially, we want to avoid it. So, broadly speaking we can give positive or negative feedback, depending on whether something went well or not.

Why Give and Receive Feedback:

It is probably obvious to most people but sometimes we forget the reasons for the communication of feedback and this leads to very sad and undesirable consequences in our relationships with others. The real purpose of giving and receiving feedback should be about improvement of our situation. This is none other than the training of generosity to wish everyone to have happiness and joy; one of the Four Immeasurables. It is fundamental as practitioners to remember this point, even under the most distracting circumstances. Why so? Let's look at positive and negative feedback one at a time. Most people like praise, even when nice words are spoken brainlessly. If we want to improve a situation concretely, it is not enough to simply please another person by blind flattery, because, should timely advice and correction not be given, the consequence in the long run could become much worse. Blind flattery will be like the example of the bird from Darjeeling, where the baby birds peck the feathers off the mother bird's body thinking they are doing a great act of kindness, but kill their mother as a result: good intention may accompany an act that causes subsequent damage. On the other hand, when something goes well, heart-felt encouragement and appreciation will lead to further positive actions. When we do not like someone, it is not at all easy to say positive things about them or hear positive comments from them, even when that is the reality. In this case, it is up to us to train ourselves to overcome such personal limits, and be open and gracious in acknowledging others. It is easier said than done! On the other hand, we all have our own frustration and dissatisfactions, otherwise samsara would not be samsara. Sometimes the object of our dissatisfaction is a person we can express it to. This is great because we can let that person know. But do we always let them know, and do so in the right way? It is not uncommon that some people sometimes bottle up grievances until one day the accumulation leads to a volcanic emotional eruption. People don't express themselves broadly due to habitual tendency, a lack of awareness of one's emotions, and being limited, from which the teaching tries to free us. It is, therefore, a good training! If we are on the receiving end of negative feedback, there is only one reason: to learn and improve ourselves, as is our attitude as a Bodhisattva on the path.

Timing and Location to Give Feedback:

Timing and location could drastically alter the impact of the feedback given. For example, let's say someone is doing a job wrongly without being aware of it. If feedback about the mistake is given to that person in an early stage, possibly a lot of time, money and emotional tension could be saved, because only a small amount of correction would be necessary. If someone is struggling with a job, a timely positive feedback about what the person has done well so far can lift the spirit immediately. However, good timing must be combined with the appropriate setting. Most people don't like to be criticized in the open. Therefore, it will often be terrible to give feedback to a person in front of others, openly

telling everybody this person's mistakes. On the other hand, should the person be one who is humble and has little attachment to the ego and would not mind being told about personal shortcomings, feedback of mistakes can be shared by others so that everybody can learn without first getting it wrong. Similarly, there are people who really shy away from praises in the public, and giving them positive feedback would only become an embarrassment. In this case, a private acknowledgment is appropriate. From experience, taking a person aside and suggesting a time and place to give mutual feedback can prepare all parties to generate a positive attitude for the encounter. Once feedback has been given, ideally some action should follow to improve things further.

Related to the aspect of timing and location is the bigger issue of project review. The sole reason for any organization to exist in our community is that we have projects to carry out. Given our samsaric condition of not enough money, insufficient time and shortage of people, all projects could strive to be as efficient and well done as possible. To do so, one fundamental aspect is to have appropriate review in which the people doing the work should let others know of the progress and the situation as nakedly as possible. This sounds logical, and almost natural, but if we look around, we would notice that many cultures in the different communities around the world simply would not accept that sort of surgery. Sometimes we have a good friend doing a bad job, sometimes we have a relative who is known to be touchy about mistakes, sometimes we know someone who is emotionally fragile in the face of any form of comments; we wrongly protect these people instead of the interest of the community, leading to great losses of money, increase of frustrations and tension, as well as missed opportunities. Not only from the point of running a project or an enterprise, but from the point of trying to help people to develop in the community, not recognizing or wanting to recognize a close friend's mistake is a double failure: we do our friend a disservice, and we are not being responsible to the community as a whole. We are actually breaking our own Bodhisattva promise of helping others! Clearly, jumping into conclusion without allowing people a chance to show their ability to do a good job is very damaging as well. This involves good judgment and the ability to be aware of people's circumstances and intention. We have to be very aware indeed in order to find the good moment and the good place to give people feedback!

How to Give Feedback:

It is well known in the therapy circle that when the therapist and the client are in a session, they talk about issues, not about the person. This should sound perfectly straight forward in a Buddhist context if one had truly realized the emptiness of I. Yet, we know that it is not uncommon that when we are criticized about something, we get angry as if we are being attacked. So, in order to reduce the amount of inflammation when we give feedback, there are a few golden rules in modern day feedback training course:

- All feedback is about issues and behaviors, not about a person.
- All criticism should be accompanied by suggestion for improvement.
- It is always possible to find both positive and negative feedback.

The first point is probably as close to the Buddhist's analytical view of emptiness as any modern behavioral science can get. Yet, we are not used to giving and receiving feedback with such attitude at all. We often say that so and so is right or wrong, even though really we should refer to the view or the behavior of such person. By disassociating a person from the view and the behavior, we make the feedback more palatable, but we should still be aware of the interdependency of the parts and the whole; without the view and the behavior, we will not be able to talk about the person! So, it is really useful if we all train ourselves in understanding the interdependency of existence well, and employ the insight to gainfully make someone understand our concern to improve the situation.

The second point is totally mundane and purely logical. It is better that we suggest a way to improve things than being a whining baby. This is what our teacher always says; that a practitioner should be active. Being active is to make a contribution, not just sit back and complain passively.

The final point is to encourage ourselves to have a positive outlook in life. There is no secret to the fact that positive attitude breeds positive energy, and good energy feeds itself to reinforce our situation. By focusing on positive things we can move forward to overcome more problems than if we only try to think badly. As the Tibetan proverb says, When good fortune arrives, her sister bad fortune is never far behind. Turn it on its head, we can see that when bad things happens, by noticing the good stuff we can also welcome bad fortune's sister!

How to Receive Feedback:

In order to gain most by the feedback given by others, the attitude of going beyond the eight worldly concerns and acute awareness are called for. If we can be free from the worry of gain and loss, fame and notoriety etc., then neither type of feedback will cause us pride or anger. Coupled with acute awareness, we shall be able to distinguish the true nature of the feedback, which is not always the same as the words spoken by others. Take the case of positive feedback. If something truly went well, receiving good comments should lead us to understand how we did well, how we can maintain this good result, and how to do better.

If we are not doing as well as the praise we get, the same approach must apply. This is no different from receiving negative feedback. We should be very aware of the motive of people's criticism. Is it innocent, or truthful, or just senseless attack? Examine all the points raised, check it with someone who is fairly uninvolved, ask the critics question to elicit clarification, before deciding whether or not there is truth in the matter. If the criticism is valid, we should act upon improving what we do. If it is not, watch out to make sure that such accusation will not become true in the future. The most difficult aspect of receiving feedback is when the criticism is accompanied by strong emotion. It is not easy to always keep a cool head and remain open. An effective way of dealing with difficult situations is to be able to ask pointed questions to understand the real underlying problem. Often misunderstanding is the cause of negative reaction, rather than true disagreement.

Summary:

Positive and negative feedback both need to be given at the appropriate moment. Giving negative feedback may in general be more delicate, it is always better to follow a format similar to this in any case:

Suggest a time and place. If it is minor, we can say I want to give you some feedback. Is it a good moment to go to the bar to have a coffee? If it is major, it will be better to fix a

continued on bottom of next page

Relatively Speaking

by Cheh Goh

The first in a series about methods of communication within the Dzogchen Community.

REFLECTIONS

Sangha Energy

John LaFrance

of energy. His ability to speak to each person directly while teaching the whole group seems to create a direct link with him and a bond among all those present. Amazing! It's also this bond among Vajra sisters and brothers that I experience as so joyful.

What is this bond? How does it manifest? How do I experience it as different from other relationships? Does it only exist in the presence of the master or does it transcend his presence? Is there something more I/we can do to foster the bond, make it flourish?

During retreats we meet old Vajra friends and make new ones. In many instances the only time I see or talk with "old" Vajra friends is during these periodic retreats. Despite not having maintained contact, I'm always delighted at how easy it is to reconnect. It's as though there has been a common thread between us during our separation and we now cherish renewing the connection. Then there's the delight of meeting new Vajra friends. It's mind-boggling to hear the stories about how people found their way to our teacher. It's like seeing some amazingly complex interrelated karmic web being unfolded before one's eyes. To hear the joy in the stories about finding such a teacher brings tears to my eyes and joy to my heart.

For lack of a better term I'd like to call this bond our "sangha-energy". I experience it as a force very much like the master's presence. Perhaps it is our collective master that is present. It manifests in the quality of the interactions which seem to have an easy and intense directness; being in the "others" place seems natural. It's like no other set of relationships I've ever experienced. I believe it is unique and intensely precious.

This community's "sangha-energy" has already created so much...Gars around the world, places to practice, opportunities to communicate such as The Mirror, projects to participate in such as Shang Shung Institute and ASIA. All reflections of our Master and the sangha. I feel a deep gratitude towards all the older sangha members who have helped create these possibilities and I want to contribute whatever abilities and energies I can to make this special "sangha-energy" available to others. I hope others feel the same way. It is such a joy! ■

being alien

by Mathew Johnston

montage india, moments of clear insight surface/ as expectation proves frustratingly pointless it is abandoned leaving space/ momentary meetings with dreadlocked elfin eared yogis or laughing buddha whisky drinking lamas or that wandering trickster nagpa bring transient flashes of a rambling path amidst the elemental landscape/ fortuitous arrangements of mountain stream or rock open awareness like the play of a fish in the holy lake/ overlooking the vajrayogini secret place in the valley below (in which it is possible to bathe) the view from extremely quiet place where several dzogchenpas achieved rainbow body echoes with an energy that eases the eyes open/ the journey leads to a home that no longer or never exists/ in the process of cultural withdrawal dis-illusionment, alien-ation/ how wonderful/ in all it brings to mind the preciousness + fragility of that sublime network of secondary causes our precious jewel master, the teachings + land/ such a rare + opportune jewel in this ceaseless display/ now the karmic wind blows, sails set, mind like a leaf + body following. ■

Relatively

continued from previous page

meeting some days in advance to do it in a room with privacy.

Be timely. When there is something we like or dislike, raise the point early. If we are not certain if we have jumped to a conclusion, ask questions first.

Use the phrase: What I like about this is and what I don't like is because Follow positive feedback by negative ones helps us to think in a more balanced way and shows that we are not out to get the feedback receiver. Make a practical suggestion for improvement where possible. Receiving feedback is often hard, especially if it is aggressive criticism.

The main point is to look out for the real motive and be aware of oneself and the situation. This can be achieved by asking questions, and solicit further opinions from other people. Remaining unattached to our work and ourselves will help us a long way to understand other people's concerns. When improvement is possible, take action immediately. If we can accomplish this aspect of life well, we will be fulfilling some of our Bodhisattva commitment! ■

Pre-history

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which, Magadha and Kosala, vied for the control of the "Ganges Plain" at the time of the Buddha's birth (c.563 BC). This "middle kingdom", as it was known, into which the Buddha was born, was the locus for political ambition and maneuvering, and the hub of the rapidly changing Indian consciousness. Economically, since around 800 BC 600 BC, Vedic India came under the influence of Iron Age technology and methods of agriculture which allowed the clearing and cultivation of large tracts of land for agriculture around the Ganges basin. This increase in production techniques and technological advance enabled the population to tap into hitherto unrealized sources of economic potential. Surplus production produced wealth. "The population grew and property burgeoned, great trading cities emerged and with them a sophisticated urban culture and new individualism." With all this social upheaval came the concomitant existential uncertainty and spiritual restlessness (a good parallel being our own 20th century) which was only exacerbated by the growing disillusionment with the traditional Brahmanical system. The time was

now ripe for....

The Buddha-to-be The future Buddha was born into these turbulent times; times of political uncertainty and great social change; times of diverse intellectual debate and spiritual searching. The legends tell us that the Buddha-to-be renounced his privileged social position (as the son of a minor clan leader) and a life of relative luxury, to be caught up in this religious ferment, and to seek tuition from several highly respected sramanas of the day. The future Buddha was eventually to reject his own teachers and find his own enlightenment only after intense personal struggle, alone, and having fallen into disfavor with his former companions in ascetism. After some initial reluctance, the Buddha began to teach, and soon acquired his own following of disciples. Five main sects of wandering ascetic were predominant after the Buddha's enlightenment: the Determinists (Ajvaks), the Materialists (Lokayatas), the Skaptics, the Jains and those whose doctrines were to transcend the boundaries of India—the Buddhists. ■

Footnotes: 1. John Snelling, *The Buddhist Handbook: a complete guide to Buddhist teaching and practice* London, Rider, 1987, p.17

John Williams is a student of Eastern religion and philosophy in Australia.

Amdowas

Continued from page 7

practice since at least a decade. On the opposite side, nomads that are more exposed to 'modernity' can be seen following their flocks and herds riding motorbikes while listening to hot tunes transmitted by big and fancy tape recorders — something that would look quite in contrast with the 'pure and uncontaminated' nomadic life-style that came to be idealized in the past by historians and poets of Mediterranean origins.

Concerning marriage, Amdowas now utilize two forms: a traditional one and an imported one based on the Chinese model, which is more simplified. Till not so long ago, marriages were arranged by the two parties. Now, although this tradition has not disappeared altogether, free-choice marriages are admitted, so that young people have the possibility of choosing their own spouses without too many obstacles. Nonetheless, marriage is still seen as an important and almost indispensable social step, particularly among farmers. Amdowas were not traditionally polyandric, but it seems that polygamy was indeed practiced until about 1959.

When two young people decide to marry, it is customary that they meet with a religious teacher, so that he may verify through astrological calculations the feasibility of their union.

Marriages are generally celebrated in concomitance with the New Year, not only because the beginning of a new year is by itself an auspicious moment, but also in view of economic considerations: preparations and celebrations for a marriage thus coincide with the annual festivities that have to be celebrated in any case.

However, New Year's celebrations do not start until a ceremony called "the renovation of the La rtse" has taken place. This is a ceremony entirely carried out by the male lay population. La rtse is the highest point of a mountain. Since ancient times, Tibetans believed that mountains, as well as rivers, lakes, trees, rocks and the land in general, were inhabited by non-human beings, gods and goddesses, who were the original owners of those sites. To maintain a good relation with those beings is important, in order to insure health, prosperity and happiness. When a deity-owner of the place is said to reside in a particular mountain, long spears, flags and arrows are placed all together at the top of that mountain. This symbolic concentration of objects is itself called La rtse.

When the La rtse has to be renovated at New Year, all the men, after having reached the mountain top, take down the old spears, flags and arrows and substitute them with new ones. Fragrant arbusts are burned, libations are offered and invocations are sung, in order to please the deities and thus reno-

vate the pledge existing between them and the human beings.

That done, the New Year can be celebrated, with different families or tribes taking turns every year to be the first to invite all the males who participated in the renovation of the La rtse, so as to receive the positive influences entailed by that ceremony.

Donatella Rossi was born in Rome, Italy in 1958. She met Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche in the year she graduated from High School. She pursued Oriental Studies at the University of Rome and after that lived in Asia for a number of years, doing research, studying, and working. At present she is engaged in her doctoral research on the Great Perfection in the Bon religion. She is presently living in Portland, Oregon, USA. ■

To be continued in the next issue.



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THE TEA BAG SUTRA

by John Shane

“Why is a human being like a tea bag?” a friend recently asked me over lunch at a favorite grungy coffee bar here in Bermuda where all the local arty types and young executives hang out to get away from the tourists in the glitzier main street cafes.

I had just come back here after the autumn retreat at Conway and, full of stories of my travels, couldn't guess the answer to her riddle, so she told me: “Because you don't find out what a tea bag is really made of until it gets into hot water!” And then she burst into wild laughter, prodding with her fork at the piece of carrot cake on her plate.

In English ‘hot water’ can mean ‘difficult times or situations’, and my friend's wise-but-foolish riddle suggests that although we all are certain to encounter adversity at some time or other in our lives, how we handle that adversity and how much we can learn from it reveal more to us about our real condition than how we fare in the good times that come our way.

Even though we are following a teaching whose name is the ‘Great Perfection’, and even though, as that teaching reminds us, our state is self-perfected from the very beginning, we live our lives ‘doing our best’, and at the relative level, we are, of course, often far from perfect.

Since this is so, I think it is healthier for us individually to have a tolerant attitude towards ourselves and others, and collectively as a Community to have a newspaper with a relaxed attitude so that we can be open about and comfortable with our imperfections, while of course not being complacent about them.

We need, as Choegyal Namkhai Norbu always says, to ‘allow ourselves space’ = a space that is compassionate towards ourselves and towards how we really are.

Given the size of our Community it seems safe to assume that at any given moment some of the readers of The Mirror will be going through a difficult time, whether because of a challenging new project at work, a business opportunity involving a high level of risk, the arrival of a wonderful new baby that totally disrupts the parents' sleep pattern, the loss of a loved one, the illness of a relative, the break-up of a relationship, the loss of a job, problems in the family created by an unruly teenager, the apparent monotony of a life without enough variation, and so on.

Sometimes we even get ourselves in a mess for no good reason at all: we are just ‘all mixed up’. And the fact that we then have no reasonable explanation for our suffering only makes it worse for us, because on top of the confusion we are already feel-

ing we add another level of suffering as we beat ourselves up for suffering in the first place, perhaps feeling we should somehow be ‘above all that’ now that we are on a spiritual path.

But whatever we are actually going through right now is of course the spiritual path. And, as I think most of us will have found, that path does not so much run in a straight line as in a kind of spiral, with downs as well as ups, and times when we seem to be going backwards as well as times when we seem to be moving forward.

The truth is that the heart of what we call ‘the spiritual’ is not to be found somewhere else: it's not ‘back’ or ‘forward’, ‘up’ or ‘down’, or anyplace other than right here and now, in the state of presence that is there in midst of whatever we are going through, whether we judge our experience of the moment to be ‘good’ or ‘bad’.

But even after years ‘on the path’, difficult inner or outer circumstance may arise in the ever-changing flux of events that challenge us to the core of our being.

A few years ago, for example, just after the death of my father, I was in deep shock. My father at aged eighty had been staying in a hotel on a brief visit to London when he had a stroke that blinded him, and in his confusion, trying to get out the door of his hotel room to get help, he walked out of a high window onto a ledge eleven stories above the street.

He stood there alone waving and holding on to a wall for twenty minutes before he was noticed by a taxi driver in the courtyard below who shouted up to him to turn round and go back in through the window.

We later learned what happened from an old lady who saw my father from another building across the street. She told us that while my father stood there on that ledge she was frantically phoning the hotel without being able to get anyone to reply because the switchboard operator was busy making dawn wake-up calls to the airline crews staying in the hotel. When the old lady did finally get through, the operator thought her description of a man standing waving his arms about on the roof just meant that someone was up there exercising, perhaps doing Tai Chi. So my poor father remained there for twenty minutes until he heard the taxi-driver's voice calling to him. And then he walked towards the sound of the friendly voice and fell to his death.

I still shiver when I think of what he must have gone through alone on that ledge, but at the time I was devastated by knowing how much he suffered, I could not bear the clarity with which I knew exactly what he was going through at the time that he died.

At the precise moment of my father's fall in the dawn light of

that London morning, I was still asleep in my house in Italy - with the time change it was an hour later there. But for as long as I live I will never be able to forget the jolt with which I awoke that morning from a terrifying dream so startling that I immediately wrote it down in the journal that I keep beside my bed.

When, several hours later, I heard by phone at Adriano Clemente's house - where I had gone for a Tibetan language lesson - how my father had died, I knew for sure that in my dream I had lived through both my father's time on the ledge, and his fall; so many of the details of what had happened to him were the same as the events I experienced in my dream.

A dream of clarity is usually a wonderful thing, but in this case, instead of being comforted by my ability to perceive the experience of another in this way in a dream, I was really very deeply disturbed by the vision I had had. Attachment to our dualistic world view goes very, very deep, and, from the point of view of our clinging mind, even glimpses of the possibility of awakened mind can sometimes seem profoundly threatening. We believe enlightenment is a good idea, but often only as long as we don't have to give really anything up, least of all our cherished view of the solidity of self and other, the precious separation of reality into little boxes that so seductively, so convincingly, makes us feel safe while at the same time completely entrapping us. But as Rinpoche so often says, the little bird in its cage may long for freedom, but it must learn to fly before it can safely come out, and it seems somehow inevitable that at times in the process of this learning we will fall flat on our faces.

On top of the trauma of the tragic way he died, my father's death immediately brought me face to face with some very complex practical business problems in areas in which I had little experience. These problems at first seemed so heavy and so impossible for me to solve that I became very agitated. Finally I went to Rinpoche, and in deep anguish told him what had happened.

He listened patiently as I recounted all the details of what was I was going through and then suggested some simple but insightful ways in which I could solve the problems, beginning with recommending how I should practice to enable me to work with the agitation I was experiencing.

Later Rinpoche did the Phowa transference for my father, and we practiced the Xitro together. During the Phowa, the emotions I had been holding back as I struggled to find the strength to handle my responsibilities came to the surface as tears streamed from my eyes, and I sobbed with the release

of my pent-up feelings as we set fire to the little piece of paper with my father's name written on it that was placed in front of Rinpoche to represent the man who had given me so much, with whom I had such a complex relationship, and whom I knew I would never see again in this lifetime.

After we had finished the practice, I felt much better and, and later, when I had thanked Rinpoche, I said to him: “You know, I'm really embarrassed.”

He looked puzzled.

“Why?” he asked.

“I don't really know,” I replied. “But I think, if I am honest, I am feeling afraid that you will always carry the memory of me in this stupid state of confusion with all these problems.”

I know, of course, that this kind of judgment is completely useless, but I was honestly trying to tell Rinpoche about the strange way I was feeling. I could see too the pride and attachment to self-image that I was revealing, but Rinpoche didn't scold me.

Instead he stared at me with a puzzled look. “What problems? What confusion?” he asked. “What are you talking about?”

Then he smiled fondly and added quietly: “I've already completely forgotten every word you said!”

As he burst out laughing, I too collapsed into helpless laughter, and I don't believe I've ever been so grateful to anyone in my whole life.

It took me some time to really find my feet again after that difficult time, which was certainly a humbling experience for me. But in the long run I really believe that what happened - perhaps especially my loss of ‘control’ - helped me to understand myself better in many ways. Among

other things, the deep pain I suffered obliged me to drop a subtle mask I was wearing even for myself, and I feel that since that experience I have been able to find a little more compassion for others who are in difficulty.

Rinpoche's example in simply staying with my suffering without becoming caught up in it, and then showing me that he would never carry the image of me in that condition forward pre-judging me because of it, is, I believe, so deeply liberating an example, that if we were all able to follow it would release us from an ocean of gossip as vast as the sky and free our natural compassion for one another in such a radical way as to cause a Buddha realm to come into existence right here on this troubled Earth.

Writing this on the eve of my fiftieth birthday, a fitting moment to think of birth and death, of joy and suffering, of love and pain, and of the interrelatedness of all that exists, I bow my head in gratitude for the great generosity of Rinpoche, for the great kindness of my mother and father, for the love of my dear wife and children, for the kindness and acceptance of so many friends, and for the wonder of my connection with all who may come to read this.



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